

THE RUDIMENTS OF GANDHIAN ECONOMICS: A TO Z APPROACH

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ABSTRACT:

Mahatma Gandhi worked towards the goals of truth, peace and permanence. The literature in business and economics today barely mention Gandhian methods, and if they do it is likely to follow a derogatory tone. An original thinker in Economics in innumerable respects, with virtually no qualification in economics, his ideas deserve a closer examination than have received. The study, thus, intends to present Gandhi's contribution to economics. The purpose is to reiterate the strength of his ideas that are highly relevant in the global world. Thus, to systematically present the wide expanse of his ideas, they are briefly summed up in a simplistic yet methodical A to Z approach. All ideas from A to Z are carefully chosen on the basis of scope and potential for future research in these areas. Such an approach seems crucial not just to expand the knowledge base and initiate the young minds to Gandhian vision, so relevant in present times, but to motivate researchers in economics to undertake research on these upcoming themes. The aspects chosen here are highly relevant and recognized in the literature and the knowledge of these is expected to motivate further research..

Keywords: Gandhian Economics, A to Z approach, Morality, Rural Economy

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the calls and cries for finding efficient and sustainable alternative to capitalism, it is not possible to dismiss the problems such as poverty, inequality and environmental degradation that the system is clearly unable to solve. In addition to these, the individuals are facing rising ailments in the form of alienation, stress, insecurity, frustration resulting in rising violence, corruption and crime. All these need an immediate and lasting solution. Can one hope to derive some solutions from Gandhian ideas?

M.K. Gandhi, globally known by the sobriquet Mahatma expressed his thoughts on diverse political and socio-economic aspects. Gandhi did not build a theory per se but lived a life based on certain principles and ideals. His life is a paradigm devoid of variables and equations but of practical experiences that can be used to draw valuable inspiration. His unrelenting pursuit for truth, peace and permanence are universally recognized and are relevant spatially and temporally. But, are the Gandhian methods only restricted to ideas such as truth, non-violence and equality? There is certainly much more to Gandhian economic philosophy which is becoming more and more relevant over time.

The present article, therefore, intends to succinctly review the essence of Gandhian economic ideas and the related literature. The study is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the objectives and need for the study. Section 3 elaborates on the methodology adopted. Section 4 takes the task of summing the essence of Gandhian Economics in an interesting and methodical approach based on alphabetical order. Section 4 concludes.

OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR THE STUDY

While exploring Gandhi's ideas on Economics, one realizes that the writings encompass several branches of Economics including agriculture, industry, environment and development. An original thinker in Economics in innumerable respects, with virtually no qualification in economics, his ideas deserve a closer examination than have received.

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The study, thus, intends to present Gandhi's contribution to economics based on his own statements, ideas and involvement in several movements with the objective of integrating Gandhian ideas into the mainstream. The purpose is to reiterate the strength of his ideas that have many implications on the ever-changing global economy. All this is done with the aim to rightly place Gandhi's economic ideas (that have been largely dismissed, overlooked or mocked) into modern economic discourse.

METHODOLOGY

The present work is based on multiple sources with the primary intent to scrape historical writings by Gandhi himself (which forms the primary source for the study) and to provide a succinct and comprehensive essence of Gandhian economics. It then goes on to season them with the secondary writings on Gandhi and then integrating them with the current academic discourses in political and economic literature pertaining to inequality, poverty, unemployment and environment. Thus, to systematically present the wide expanse of his ideas, they are briefly summed up in a simplistic yet methodical A to Z approach.

All the ideas from A to Z are carefully chosen on the basis of scope and potential for future research in these areas. Such an approach seems crucial not just to expand the knowledge base and initiate the young minds to Gandhian vision, so relevant in present times, but to motivate researchers in economics to undertake research on these upcoming themes. While a number of studies are now available on Gandhian Economics, none of the studies have adopted the all-encompassing approach and methodology adopted in the present study.

GANDHI'S ECONOMIC IDEAS: THE DISCUSSION

Economics is said to have originated with the Adam Smith's magnum opus, *An Inquiry into Nature and Causes of Wealth of Nations*, that emphasizes on the concepts of division of labour, distribution of income and celebrating the market mechanism. Also, is commonly known that the need for economics originated from scarcity, i.e. unlimited wants and limited income, that requires optimal allocation decisions to be made based on suitable optimization (maximization of utility or minimization of costs) exercise. In contrast, in Gandhi's framework, the solution to such problem is based on the principles of non-possessiveness, limitation of wants and renunciation that can be attained through simplifying life and minimizing wants.

He favored capitalists and wanted them to generate wealth for the society. But, with the added consideration of acting as trustees so that there is no wastage of wealth and talent. The study discusses these Gandhian ideas to establish the fact that Gandhian economics deals with the normative and distributional aspects without compromising on growth and modernization. It would, thus, be of value to briefly introduce the essentials of Gandhian Economics using an over-simplified but interesting A to Z approach. There is immense scope of undertaking further research in all the Gandhian ideas enumerated here.

What landscape comes to your mind when you think of Gandhi? Towards what activity was Gandhi deeply inclined in his reforms? Agriculture and village economy¹ lies at the core of Gandhi's reforms program. In those times, around 85% of the population lived in rural areas and agriculture was the only means to provide employment and livelihood, "Rural development was also thought to be a means for correcting the urban bias. Gandhi's main argument for the development of village industries was to remove poverty through the generation of sufficient employment opportunities for the unemployed, underemployed and surplus (idle) labor." (Ghosh, 2007:220).

This inclination towards agriculture explains the anti-modernization characterization that Gandhi was subjected to. So, was Gandhi anti-modern? No, and there is ample existing literature² that demonstrates Gandhi's desire to promote appropriate technology. He himself writes in the context of agriculture, "There is nothing wrong in an engine plough in itself and it may be a great advantage to a man who owns thousands of acres of ... which will not yield under the indigenous plough. What, however, we want is an implement that would suit owners of small holdings from one acre to three acres..." (CWMG 50:14).

¹ With strong determination Gandhi emphasized the traditional techniques such as charkha and other crafts "... in order to make the village self-sufficient and capable of earning a little income." (CWMG 78:162).

² "... a number of intellectuals both within India and outside are taking academic interests in some of the Gandhian ideas enunciated in Hind Swaraj like critique of modernity ..." (Pradhan,2011).

Consequently, Gandhi recommended a comprehensive program for agricultural reform including, maintenance and inoculation of cattle, use of modern implements and good seeds, to stock the manure in pits, to stop making dung cakes, to prevent wastage of rain water, consolidation of land holdings, adoption of good agricultural practices and technological improvements³. In his words, “In regard to agriculture, we must do our utmost to prevent further fragmentation of land, and to encourage people to take up co-operative farming.” (CWMG 78:162). In addition, to these Gandhi alludes to the education of the farmer. For him, it remains the pre-requisite for the above set of reforms to succeed. He also believed that education is incomplete without physical labour of which the highest priority is accorded to agriculture. So, according to Gandhi it is the balance between mental and physical labor that has to be ensured, and this idea is captured in the concept of ‘Bread Labour’ that is explored next.

Bread Labour, a concept popularized by Tolstoy profoundly appealed to Gandhi. In 1919 in an address to students, Gandhi stated, “Service is not the right way of earning a living. We should earn it only through the labour of our bodies.” (CWMG 15:484). All Scriptures such as Bhagvad Gita, Koran and Parsi preach that whosoever eats his bread without offering the necessary daily sacrifice (yajna) do not deserve to live and referred to them as “haram” (CWMG 25:404). Accordingly, Bread Labour became a constituent of Gandhi’s constructive programme.

The essence of the concept, thus, is that a man should utilize both his brains and hands to live a veracious life that is happy, healthy and satisfied. While labour reducing technology eases the manual work, it complicates the former. This has resulted in heightened levels of not just physical ailments but stress and psychoneurosis in humans. (Schumacher, 2011). Studies have also demonstrated that positive emotions associated with empathy, social service and caring for others result in lower anxiety levels (Morrison et al, 2016). Of all kinds of physical labour, agricultural and spinning wheel accorded the highest place in Gandhi’s view.

Charkha or the spinning wheel was Gandhi’s tool to bring together diverse set of people for a common cause and to pave the way towards empowerment, equality, non-violence, truth, physical strength and eventually swaraj. He believed, “... if every son and every daughter of India took to spinning for at least half an hour each day and gave the yarn to the Congress to make cloth to be distributed among the poor, they could free their country” (CWMG 25:405). Further, Gandhi viewed divinity in it, “The charkha is also the prop for my intellect but it does not stray into wrong paths ... I discover Daridranarayana through the Charkha and have the vision of God.” (CWMG 65:126). The last and most important motive for plying the charkha was to provide employment to the idle masses as this was the most appropriate choice of technique for a developing nation with vast pool of surplus labour. It would be of interest to explore the contribution of agriculture and spinning activities to employment, provided sufficient data is available for the pre-independence period. Today charkha may have lost its significance, but there are other areas where there is need for all to work together such as waste management.

Decentralisation of power is essential to attain equality, national solidarity and democratic functioning. Implied in Gandhi’s writings is a deep concern for decentralization, “supposing India becomes a free country tomorrow, all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees. But such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below, when the people understand the implications of the trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves, beginning with gram panchayats, will begin to introduce such statutes.” (CWMG 83:26). As a result, during the 1950s India adopted the village panchayats to involve people at local levels in the decision making and development programs (Chandra, 2008: 680)..

In addition, decentralized approach checks corruption and due to this reason, Gandhi believed that “democracy in India could not function effectively while Congress remained the only powerful all-India political organization, Gandhi urged the Congress to dissolve and to reflower into a Lok Sevak Sangh. The Sangh, peopled by former Congressmen and Women, would guide India’s development from outside of government and work to bring about Swaraj on the crucial economic and social planes through implementation of the Constructive Programme.” (Murphy, 1991:48-49). While the decentralization is more commonly used in political context. But Gandhi also points to the need for promoting decentralization in production that will give a boost to employment of local resources. In this regard, Kumarappa (1951) considered large scale production to be immoral. That is, the closer the society moves towards decentralization the higher it is on humanistic, moral, spiritual and cultural plane.

³ “Today biotechnological revolution, popularity of organic fertilizer, and awareness against harmfulness of chemicals used in agriculture prove the worth of Gandhi’s thinking.” (Prasad, 2010:175).

Environment and sustainable development literature has increasingly utilized Gandhian approach to demonstrate the functionality of path of permanence. 'Small is Beautiful', true to its name is an effective attempt by E.F. Schumacher to highlight Gandhi's concern for environment by propagating adoption of small, simple and sustainable methods. In Gandhi's words, "After all we, a handful of educated Indians, are shouldering a serious responsibility in gambling with the fortunes of the dumb millions whose trustees we claim to be ..." (CWMG 41:222). In other words, humans, especially the privileged ones, need to act as trustees of environment to prevent the alarming apocalypse in Hardin's Tragedy of Commons to come true. Similar sounding words can be heard from the development economist, Jean Dreze, in his book *Sense and Solidarity*, "If our situation (privileged situation of rich) is more a matter of chance than personal merit, then surely the privileged have a responsibility towards those who are left behind. We cannot prove that the privileged owe something to the rest, any more than we can prove that theft is wrong. But both can be thought of as sensible principles of society." (Dreze 2017:2).

Is the urgency of loss in biodiversity and environmental damage recognized enough by the stakeholders? Are there sufficient studies to assess the impact of environmental damage? The answer to these is affirmative. A number of studies have also investigated the association between resource allocation and response of the stakeholders. For instance, Bhalla (2007) in a study based on districts of Haryana found that farmers are recognizing and responding, by reducing the cultivation of water intensive crops (such as rice and sugarcane), to declining depths of water. More of such studies are required to assess how the producers and consumers are changing the production and consumption decisions in response to the changing factor endowments.

Factor Endowments and the issue of adoption of appropriate technology is critical for developing economies facing resource constraints. In emphasizing labour intensive techniques such as charkha, Gandhi had voiced the argument that a labour abundant country should adopt a labour abundant technique. Gandhi's emphasis on promotion of hand-based production in small scale industries and use of spinning wheel depict his concern for employment in a labour abundant country. This concept also known as 'intermediate technology' was initially criticized but later adopted by UN and consequently led to an increase in number of studies on Gandhian economics (Weber, 1999). In this context, Dasgupta (1996) states that, "Gandhi was ahead of economists of his time" (1996:80)..

Gita Bodh, had an important influence in Gandhi's life. This book may not be of direct significance to an economist, but the knowledge of Bhagvad Gita, the holy book of Hindus, forms the genesis of the Gandhi's economic concepts such as Trusteeship that is based on truth, selflessness and anasakti (non-attachment), and will be discussed later on. It was Gandhi's routine to read and discuss Bhagvad Gita post during his morning prayers at Satyagraha Ashram, Ahmedabad (Gandhi, 1998). During a talk with Manu Gandhi, in 1947, Gandhi states, "Lord Krishna preaches the same doctrine (socialism) in the Gita. One need have in one's possession only what one requires. It means that all men are created by God and therefore entitled to an equal share of food, clothing and housing ... Wealthy people should act as trustees of their wealth." (CWMG 87:284). The wisdom from this book has now been increasingly adopted in motivation, stress management, leadership, business management, meditation and even scientific sessions and studies (Boora and Singh, 2019; Muralikrishna, 2019).

Handicrafts and skill-based education was an essential component in Gandhi's education model, *Nayi Talim*. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lays emphasis on promoting Indian crafts and skills. The idea behind encouraging these skills was to generate a stream of supplementary income (as a backup occupation) given that agriculture was not capable to provide employment to all for 12 months of the year. Presently, in the rural areas, particularly post COVID 19, non-farm incomes and associated employment has been increasing. As per a NABARD survey "only 23% of rural income is from agriculture (cultivation and livestock) ... Around 44% of income is from wage labour, 24% from government/private service and 8% from other enterprises" (Mahendra Dev and Sengupta, 2020:18). Today, the handicraft industry contributes to the economy by generating employment especially to females and earns substantial foreign exchange. During 2021-22, the exports of handicrafts was to the tune of US\$4.5 billion⁴. It would be useful exercise to conduct regional studies and inspect the role of hand-based production on employment, diversification of income, export earnings, poverty reduction and social welfare in particular region.

⁴ <https://www.indiantradeportal.in/vs.jsp?lang=0&id=0,31,24100,24111>

On Industrialization and modernization, Gandhi's views (in Hind Swaraj) have attracted more attention than any other. Dasgupta (1996) calls the backlash against Gandhi's view of Industrialization as "rhetoric and exaggerated". He also argues that Gandhi's opposition to machinery was not absolute. There were exceptions that gained Gandhi's fondness such as the Singer sewing machine. Gandhi believed that humans should not depend too much on machines as to become slave to them.

Similar issues has once again come to prominence as newest models of Artificial Intelligence are released proving its unrestricted spread. The cause of alarm has been the dangers associated with AI such as massive loss of jobs, malicious spread of information, security risks, ethical issues related to machine enslavement and even catastrophic consequences such as robot uprising (Dihal, 2020). Artificial intelligence is likely to also affect consumption, production, investment and many other aspects of economy. Accordingly, it would be critical to research on how it affects these key economic variables. It would also be of interest to investigate on successful regulatory and oversight strategies undertaken by governments of developed nations. All these are leading and urgent areas of research.

The loss of employment and concentration of power were the key reasons why Gandhi was against industrialization. Accordingly, Gandhi lay emphasis on village industries while other economists such as Ranade and politicians like Nehru promoted industrialization as the latter believed that village economy paves way to stagnation. However, a balance of two is important as both contribute significantly towards GDP.

J.C. Kumarappa, the Gandhian who is believed to have coined the term 'Gandhian Economics', certainly deserves a place in the A-Z of Gandhian thoughts. In fact, he is the only economist to have figured in the A-Z list of economic ideas. Kumarappa, a celebrated Gandhian who worked on transforming Gandhi's words into action focuses on economics of love and compassion, in his concept of 'Mother Economy'. Clearly, the pith of Kumarappa's economic exposition is conduct of economic activities with purely humanitarian motives rather than materialistic one.

In his analysis, he categorizes activities into 5 types⁵: Parasitic, Predatory, Enterprising, Gregarious and Mother economy. The last stands highest on the moral scale, "mother's work is based on the self-sufficient economy" (Kumarappa, 1951: 22). Love, compassion sacrifice and equality are also the motivations behind Gandhi's promotion of khadi, which cannot be missed in discussion on Gandhi.

Khadi can almost we used to symbolize Gandhi. In a speech at public meeting in 1927 Gandhi addressed to spinners at a khadi centre with some spinners who were septagenarian or older, "And I know nothing so powerful as Khadi in order to simplify our lives. In every rich home where khadi has penetrated, it has revolutionized their lives Hence, I have called Khadi a bridge between the rich and the poor." (CWMG 35:79-80). Today, the government is promoting the sector by making several efforts to attract capital and entrepreneurship and to strengthen infrastructure, marketing and business in this segment using schemes such as credit linked subsidy scheme and interest subsidy. The efforts are in the right direction. More studies in the area are required to find ways to make the production cost effective and at the same time to improve product quality and global demand.

Labour's dignity and issue of self-respect assumes great significance for Gandhi, especially those in the bottom rung such as one's undertaking menial jobs such as manual scavenging. Gandhi vehemently expressed his thoughts on the hierarchical division of the Hindu society into 4 Varnas: Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, "According to Gandhi, the Varna system was established on differential abilities of individuals and not on superiority or inferiority of anyone. It was just a system of division of labour. However, in the course of development, it degenerated into the exploitative caste system." (Pradhan, 2011).

⁵ Parasitic, in which consumption takes place without production e.g. as done by thieves and robbers; Predatory in which a wrong act is performed, e.g. pick pockets trying to steal without letting the loser or others know (is conscious of his wrong doing); Enterprising, in which both production and consumption takes place, for e.g. cultivators and agriculturalists; Gregarious, in which production can exceeds consumption, for instance, Hindu Joint Family System (sense of oneness and working for family) and last which is regarded foremost, a service given by a Mother, a service without any expectation of reward (Kumarappa, 1951).

Besides limited income and opportunities, the lower castes such as the sudras and the untouchables faced social ostracism and were denied access to schools, temples, public wells, and multiple other common areas (Dasgupta, 1996). The concept of bread labour (discussed earlier) which calls for all to perform manual labour acts as a checking mechanism to such division. Similar thought is echoed in the following words, “The division of labour, which is one of the prime concerns of modern political economy, was regarded by Tolstoy as a clever and wicked device to prevent the working of divine law that everyone must produce his own food. Bread labour is the sole antidote to rampant exploitation.” (Narain, 1991:8)

Gandhi made best efforts to improve the lot of untouchables who were at the bottom rung of the society⁶. The motive for abolition of untouchability was to not just discourage a wrong practice but also to improve the productive potential of economy by freeing the labour to move across different occupations. Consequently, not only the supply of physical labour could increase but so would the quality of services, inventions and innovations. After independence, practise of untouchability stands barred, however, they are few sporadic episodes of discrimination and violence taking place against the lower castes. For instance, Dreze (2017) in his surveys point to the existence of such instances of social inequality, particularly in cooking of mid-day school meals (which was ironically expected to reduce caste prejudice) in number of states. In addition to caste-based discrimination, industrial labour conflicts and labour’s relation with capitalists were other issues that concerned Gandhi. Currently issues such as labour laws, regulations, migration, wage disparities are all widely researched in labour economics.

Morality and ethics form the essence of Gandhian ideology. Corrupt, unjust and immoral activity made his blood boil. He acquired morality from his deep spiritual family beliefs, particularly from his devoted mother, reading of sacred scriptures such as Bhagavad Gita, involvement in Vegetarianism movement in London and from his Jain friends.

Today, the fading of moral values is commonly lamented. Corruption is rampant to the extent that people have started accepting it as a way of life. Capitalism as a system has failed to stand to expected moral standards, “capitalism’s moral decline may have to do with its economic decline, the struggle for the last remaining profit opportunities becoming uglier by the day ... Nobody believes any more in the moral revival of capitalism.” (Streeck, 2017:71). The rising instances of frauds, scams and moral hazard behavior point to these falling values. As a result, research on the declining moral standards in public sector, private corporate sector, banks and unregulated shadow banks has become extremely relevant particularly in the wake of recurrent financial crisis.

Non-violence forms the core of Gandhian ideology. Allen (2019:6) extols Gandhi’s idea of non-violence in the following words, “he broadens and deepens our understanding of violence and nonviolence.”. Violence, in simplest terms, refers to physical harm, injury, murder or verbal abuse. There is evidence that post COVID-19 there is a rise in violence, particularly domestic (Chalakkal, 2020). Accordingly, the concept has found relevance in dispute settlement, conflict resolution and peace restoration. But, more recently, the concept of non-violence has been extended to a much wider terrain to incorporate social exploitation, economic exploitation such as poverty and inequality and environment damage. Nixon (2011) refers to the last type of violence as slow violence in his book *Slow violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*.

Ordinary, simple, minimalist, peaceful and austere way of life was Gandhi’s mode of living. In his words, “Possession of riches should never be so loudly shown in our lives. Possession of riches is a trust to be discharged in the name of God and for the sake of all poor people.” (CWMG Vol. 35:79). This path is completely different from the way the modern world prefers to live, soaked in riches and ostentation. The material desires (income, profits, growth or expansion) stem from non-material desires (avarice, greed, envy, opulent life style). Both are not sustainable forever and “carry within themselves the seeds of their destruction”. (Schumacher, 1973:18). “Ruskin’s book *Unto this last* and also his book *the Kingdom of God is within you* as well as Raychand Bhai, a Jain monk all influenced Gandhi’s life deeply, freeing self

⁶ Dasgupta (1996) likens these efforts to Rawlsian maximin criterion of inequality, in which maximum emphasis is placed on those with minimum resources.

from materialism” (Pradhan, 2011). Gandhi believed that consumption of luxuries must come only after the basic needs of poor are met. The fast pace of life in urban areas has been the cause of rising anxiety and neurological disorders and is expected to have boosted demand for Wellness tourism and Ayurveda, meditation and rejuvenation centres, more so in the post COVID period (Choudhary and Qadir, 2022).

Poverty, according to Gandhi must be embraced. “For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost communist although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment’s notice, if the interests of the masses demand it.” (CWMG 83:28, 1946). Gandhi’s desire was to work for the poorest, the Daridranarayan who lived in despair, despondency and dismay. If Gandhi is a book then poverty is the cover page. The issue of poverty and inequality is one of the most researched areas in developing economies. But, unfortunately Gandhi’s concept of voluntary poverty remains missing from this wide and increasing literature on poverty.

‘Quality of Life’ is an important concept that can be used to assess living standards. In fact, out of all economic and non-economic issues relevant to humans, ‘quality of life’ is of utmost importance, and more of a concern for developing economies as they still struggle to provide even the basic amenities to many of its citizens. The term ‘quality of life’ may include different aspects such as the maximization of utility, availability of public goods, health and education facilities, access to electricity, internet and other amenities⁷. Certain non-economic factors such as relationships, compassion, empathy, dignity of labour, job satisfaction also affect the quality of life. Yet, many of these remain non-measurable and hence are not included in most economic measures.

Currently, different indicators are in used for measurement of quality of life. Some of the commonly computed measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capita GDP, Gross Happiness Index also serve as important indicators. UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI) is another important index. In addition, a number of other education (include enrolment rates, student-teacher ratio, government expenditure on education) and health parameters (life expectancy, immunization, mortality and fertility levels, etc.) are frequently assessed. Apart from the actual content that should determine the ‘quality of life’, there is far greater disagreement (due to different schools of thoughts⁸) on who should work towards ensuring the quality of life, state or the private forces? Due to non-excludability and non-rival nature of the public goods, the efficient allocation is ensured if these are provided by the state. In end, quality of life is, thus, a concept that gravitates towards the Gandhian philosophy. Even with simplicity and austerity, Gandhi believed in ensuring a good quality of life for all.

Rural economy is another important constituent of Gandhian economics. The model villages populated with educated and informed people living in well ventilated homes, sanitized, clean and encouraging environment, and an inclusive and decentralized development framework was centric to Gandhi’s recommendations. All these are positive externalities and therefore need to be encouraged. Regarding the (A.I.S.A.) workers duty Gandhi writes, “He should have a thorough knowledge of village sanitation and efficient compost-making” (CWMG 78:163). This is another promising area in which substantial research is undertaken. The need to provide secure livelihood through development of agriculture and adoption of suitable technology has also been already emphasized above.

Swadeshi, is a form of protectionism policy adopted by nations in which local products are preferred and promoted. This was an important principle underlying the freedom movement in India. Today, the principle lies at the core of ‘Make in India’ program. Across the world, COVID-19 made Swadeshi relevant as nations were involved in promoting the locally made vaccine promotion. In terms of outcome, protection through Swadeshi is akin to protection through barriers such as tariffs and non-tariffs. However, there are essential differences between the two: Protection through former is voluntary, and benefits

⁷ For instance, Amartya Sen introduced the capability approach to measure development of a nation.

⁸ The classical and the new liberalist school of thought believes that the state should play an active role while Keynesians believe otherwise.

mostly the skilled craftsmen, while protection through latter is not voluntary, involves time lag as it is a policy decision and runs against the global rules of free trade.

Trusteeship, referred to as “the perfect midway between capitalism and Marxism” (Narain, 1991) is a simple but poignant paradigm for development based on the principles of non-possessiveness, altruism, morality, honesty, non-violence, complete faith and trust of the weaker party (worker, tenant or one who is less privileged) on the stronger (capitalist, landlord or one who is more privileged) in order to promote harmonious, fruitful and socially beneficial outcome. Gandhi utilized the concept in the above-mentioned context, although over time there have emerged wider connotations and it may be extended to the relationship between leader and citizens, teacher and students, doctor and patient, humans and ecology etc. It is essentially voluntary and mutually advantageous with the end of achieving greater equality and lower poverty.

The economic benefits emanate from preservation of the productive potential (entrepreneurship ability) as well as lower episodes of destruction to material and machinery by a more satisfied workforce. But is the concept all illusory and chimerical? Yes, it can be said so as the concept failed to see the light of the day. But it has been a success in indirect ways such as leading to more responsible corporate social structure. Gandhi was aware about the skepticism associated with concept, “You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on Earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present.”(CWMG 59:318) and was confident that “... the co-ordination of capital and labour is perfectly possible.” (CWMG 48:241-8).

With regard to the principle of Trusteeship, Gandhi was consistent in his views over the years. He firmly believed that everything that an individual has belonged to God. And therefore, there was little need for saving and financial planning for there was little need to accumulate, “God who was all-powerful had no need to store. He created from day to day. Hence men also should in theory live from day to day and not stock things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution.” (CWMG 86:420).

Utilitarianism principle given by Bentham means “the greatest good of the greatest number”. But, did Gandhi believe in this principle that ignores the issue of welfare distribution and considers welfare of the majority to be of greater importance? It is commonly known that Gandhi had been working all his life for upliftment of minorities. The answer to the above questions is contained in the following statement issued by Gandhi himself, “I do not believe in the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number. It means in its nakedness that in order to achieve the supposed good of 51 per cent the interest of 49 per cent may be, or rather, should be sacrificed. It is a heartless doctrine and has done harm to humanity. The only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all, and this can only be achieved by uttermost self-sacrifice.” (CWMG 50:14). According to Dasgupta⁹ (1996), Gandhi believed that “one should be concerned with the good of all rather than just with those of a majority” and “one should not be exclusively concerned with material prosperity but also with the moral aspects of actions” (Dasgupta, 1996:9).

Village centered self-sufficient economy lies at the core of Gandhian Economics. The issue of sanitation, hygiene, improvement of living conditions of poor, vulnerable and deprived villagers, the problem of waste and freeing the villagers from the grip of private exploitative moneylenders or even cooperatives¹⁰ are the issues mentioned in Gandhi’s vision of village development. Gandhi’s famous quote sums up the importance he places on villages as units of civilization, “the salvation of India is impossible without the salvation of villages” (CWMG 72:380). The development of villages enables balanced regional development.

Women, have been predominantly receiving unfair treatment in our patriarchal, male dominated society. A number of studies have emphasized on the elevated participation of women in Gandhi’s movements

⁹Dasgupta does not regard Gandhi as utilitarianism but considers him a deontologist with a “Kantian flavour”.

¹⁰ “the money lender who is inevitable today will gradually eliminate himself. Nor are the co-operative banks needed, because when I taught Harijan the arts I want to teach them they will not need much ready money.” (CWMG 64:72).

and struggles and consequent impact it had on the acceptability of society to this new role of women (Pradhan, 2011). Gandhi repeatedly expressed concern and worked for the cause of education, employment and status of women as expressed at various times, "... Today, the sole occupation of woman amongst us was supposed to be to bear children, cook for her husband and otherwise drudge for the household. This was a shame. Not only was woman condemned to domestic slavery, but when she went out as a labourer to earn wages, though she worked harder than the man, she was paid less ..." (CWMG 79:125). Currently, all these issues are widely investigated in feminism and gender-based research circles.

X, Find X? The mathematical problem of finding X continues to haunt and is left for the readers to find an interesting aspect of Gandhian Economics.

Yajna, the true form of sacrifice was Gandhi's ultimate goal in life. And this sacrifice, is purely a variable that changes from Gandhian times to present times. It would have been burning of wood and clearing forests to make habitable areas in primitive times, spinning and Charkha during the time of independence and preservation of forests, generation of solar energy, promotion of micro finance or philanthropic activities today. And because Gandhi embraced sacrifice in true spirit, the rural people regarded Gandhi as Mahatma, a saint "In their real imagination the real Gandhi and his programme of non-violent non-cooperation were often lost. The imagined Gandhi was endowed with extraordinary occult power: peasants believed him to be a saint who could heal diseases ...". (Bandyopadhyay, 2009:309).

Zamindari system followed under the British rule has been observed to be a system of exploitation under which it was in zamindars self-interest to keep the farmers in the state of abject poverty. A number of studies have modelled arrested development in such a system. For instance, Bhaduri's phenomenal work (1973) demonstrates simultaneous operation of the two modes of exploitation (traditional property right on land as well as usury) that work as barriers in the introduction of improved technology into agriculture. Based on the villages of West Bengal, predominated by share tenancy, perpetual indebtedness of the farmer, landowner as the sole lender of consumption loans and farmer's lack of access to modern capital market, Bhaduri demonstrates that the landlord had political and economic motives to keep tenant in the state of perpetual debt. The landlords had enjoyed special benefits, privilege and power as revenue collectors but failed to add any value to the production system (Dasgupta, 1996).

In contrast to this, Gandhi desired a harmonious and congenial relation between zamindars and landless labourers. In 1934 Gandhi answered to zamindars, "... I would tell you that the ownership of your land belongs as much to the roots as to you and you may not squander your gains in the luxurious or extravagant living, but must use them for the well-being of the roots. Once you make your ryots experience a sense of kinship with you and a sense of security that your interests as members of the family will never suffer at your hands, you may be sure that there cannot be a class war between you and them." (CWMG 58:247)

Thus, Gandhi applied his Trusteeship theory to zamindari system, wherein he did not want to eliminate the zamindar but just wanted him to contribute his profits for the improvement of villages. Herein his ideas were different with Jawaharlal Nehru, who wanted to abolish the zamindari System altogether. "I expect to convert the zamindars and other capitalists by the non-violent method, and therefore there is nothing like the inevitability of class conflict ... The moment the cultivators of the soil realise their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilised ... In reality, the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power." (CWMG 64:73).

Epilogue

Gandhian thoughts have once again resurfaced and are gaining prominence in the wake of chaos and confusion caused by the global and geopolitical events such as the global financial crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing war and the continued threat of climate change. The younger mind need awareness of the Gandhian thoughts which were so relevant in his times but have gained greater urgency now with all the dangers looming large on modern civilization.

A number of pertinent issues were raised such as unemployment, corruption, environment damage,

adoption of suitable technology, challenges faced by small scale units and falling ethics. The aspects chosen here are highly relevant and recognized in the literature and the knowledge of these is expected to motivate further research on these lines among scholars and researchers. Existing literature is cited and number of research questions are raised that can serve as a valuable starting point for further research. The study made an attempt to explore the essence of Gandhian ideology from a socio-economic perspective. It can serve as a useful reference and a quick guide for students of history, economics, political science and many other branches such as environment studies.

The study has limitations. The issues raised here are of high relevance and are widely discussed. But, not sufficient time is devoted to each. At times it might seem that the author jumps from one issue to another without establishing a connect. Unfortunately, this is what one can expect from a study that attempts to paint a wide canvas. Through the canvas of A to Z approach the study is able to instigate the Gandhian economic ideas to the reader, link these with the present conditions to suggest avenues for future research and establish that Gandhian ideas have stood the test of time.

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