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Gandhian vision on rural industrialization

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Introduction

M.K. Gandhi was not an economist, yet he has so much said on various aspects of economic Problems of India. Gandhiji's idea grew out of situation and this is why he framed his thought not on theoretical but on practical approach. He dreamed that India should develop but not on the pattern of western countries because there was no consideration of so was justice & wellbeing. Therefore, Gandhiji's idea planted on the surface of real problems under which pressure from India was moaning. The real problems of India were unemployment and poverty and hence he viewed a new system of Industrial Pattern to meet challenges in rural areas.

Gandhi's thinking on what we would consider Socia-secular issues (he himself saw little distinction between the sacred and its expression in the social world) was influenced by John Ruskin and the American writer Henry David Thoreau. Throughout his life, Gandhi sought to develop ways to fight India's extreme poverty, backwardness and socioeconomic challenges as a part of his wider involvement in the Indian independence movement. Gandhi's championing of Swadeshi and non-cooperation was centred on the principles of economic self-sufficiency. Gandhi sought to target European-made clothing and other products as not only a symbol of British colonialism but also the source of mass unemployment and poverty, as European industrial goods had left many millions of India's workers, craftsmen and women without a livelihood^[2]. By championing homespun *khadi* clothing and Indian-made goods, Gandhi sought to incorporate peaceful civil resistance as a means of promoting national self-sufficiency. Gandhi led farmers of Champaran and Kheda in a *satyagraha* (civil disobedience and tax resistance) against the mill owners and landlords supported by the British government in an effort to end oppressive taxation and other policies that forced the farmers and workers into poverty and defend their economic rights. A major part of this rebellion was a commitment from the farmers to end caste discrimination and oppressive social practices against women while launching a co-operative effort to promote education, health care and self-sufficiency by producing their own clothes and food.

Gandhi and his followers also founded numerous *ashrams* in India (Gandhi had pioneered the *ashram* settlement in South Africa). The concept of an ashram has been compared with the commune, where its inhabitants would seek to produce their own food, clothing and means of living, while promoting a lifestyle of self-sufficiency, personal and spiritual development and working for wider social development.

The first basic principle of Gandhi's economic thought is a special emphasis on 'plain living' which helps in cutting down your wants and being self-reliant. Accordingly, increasing consumer appetite is likened to animal appetite which goes the end of earth in search of their satisfaction. Thus a distinction is to be made between 'Standard of Living' and 'Standard of Life', where the former merely states the material and physical standard of food, cloth and housing. A higher standard of life, on the other hand could be attained only if, along with material advancement, there was a serious attempt to imbibe cultural and spiritual values and qualities. Gandhian economics places importance to means of achieving the aim of development and this means must be non-violent, ethical and truthful in all economic spheres. In order to achieve this means he advocated trusteeship, decentralization of economic activities, labour-intensive technology and priority to weaker sections. Gandhi claims that to be non-violent an Individual needs to have a rural mindedness. It also helps in thinking of our necessities of our household in terms of rural mindedness.

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Gandhian economics brings a socialist perspective of overall development and tries to redefine the outlook of socialism. Gandhi espoused the notion of “trusteeship” which centered on denying material pursuits and coveting of wealth, with practitioners acting as “trustees” of other individuals and the community in their management of economic resources and property. Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal greed. The path of socialism should only be through non-violence and democratic method and any recourse to class-war and mutual hatred would prove to be suicidal.

During India’s independence struggle as well as after India’s independence in 1947, Gandhi’s advocacy of homespun *khadi* clothing, the *khadi* attire (which included the Gandhi cap) developed into popular symbols of nationalism and patriotism. India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru totally differed with Gandhi, even before independence and partition of India. Gandhi did not participate in celebration of Indian independence; he was busy controlling the post partition communal violence.

Gandhian activists such as Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan were involved in the *Sarvodaya* movement, which sought to promote self-sufficiency amidst India’s rural population by encouraging land redistribution, socio-economic reforms and promoting cottage industries. The movement sought to combat the problems of class conflict, unemployment and poverty while attempting to preserve the lifestyle and values of rural Indians.

Bhave and others promoted *Bhoodan* as a just and peaceful method of land redistribution in order to create economic equality, land ownership and opportunity without creating class-based conflicts. *Bhoodan* and *Sarvodaya* enjoyed notable successes in many parts of India, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

Approach to Rural Industrialization

Adam Smith in the British parliamentary debate had depicted the picture of a prosperous India prior to the colonial period saying that “East India offered a market for the manufacturers of Europe greater and more extensive than both Europe and America put together”. This India was destroyed by British industrialization and its backwash, disintegrating self-assured villages through progressive impoverishment of the peasants and destruction of the artisans.

Gandhi had grasped the history of India very well which he well reflected in his *Hind Swaraj* where he provided the main constituents of his strategy of India’s reconstruction. Gandhi made it clear that ‘modern civilization’, nourished by British rule, was the real cause of ‘economic distress’. Against that, Gandhi envisaged that the salvation of India was in the revival of its ancient civilization. Under the shadow of ancient civilization, Gandhi wanted to develop a New Social Order which was based on the foundation of non-violence and truth, where economic progress and moral progress go together and the focus is on the development of man. Life and human relations in society, village and nation in the new social order were envisaged not like pyramids with an apex sustained at the bottom but, as an oceanic circle.

To achieve this New Social Order Gandhi’s development model was evolved around “Village Development” and it is so much emphasized that it is truly coined “VILLAGISM”.

‘Rural Industrialization’ was never the term used by Gandhi. However, two basic components of Gandhian development, self-sufficient villages and decentralization of economic and political powers, gave a very important place to development of Khadi and Village Industries. According to a recent study the Khadi movement was not only a mass mobilization movement against anti-imperialist struggle, it was also a social movement of recognizing women’s capacity as economically and politically active beings without whose support the goal of freedom or *Swaraj* would be unattainable and meaningless. In fact, Gandhi’s well known concept of ‘Living Wage For Spinners’ originated in his realizing the danger of women being paid low wages even by constructive workers.

Gandhi’s clear rationale behind the choice of Khadi was led by his anxiety of “Work to all”. He believed that Khadi and Village Industries were the only alternative.

Gandhi had not perhaps conceptualized the Khadi and Village Industry except once when he stated that ‘Khadi of my conception’ is that hand spun material which takes the place entirely, in India, of mill cloth.....and indirectly explained what is Khadi. If men and women will not take to hand spinning as a sacred duty, that is, the same person will not do carding, slivering and spinning, there is little hope for Khadi. Similarly conceptualization of village industries was left to Kumarrappa who provided the conditions to consider the industry as a village industry.

The question of market, method of production by machine tool or technology and credit etc. which have occupied a major significance in the post-independent period of rural industrialization,

The question of a market for Khadi was not significant to Gandhi. In the sense, that Khadi was conceived with a much more ambitious object. e. to make our villages starvation-proof He believed that, “This is impossible unless the villages will wear Khadi themselves, sending only the surplus to the cities. The singular secret of Khadi lies in its salability in the place of its production and use to the manufacturers themselves”. However, finding problems for a market for Khadi, Gandhi in 1946, accepted “Commercial Khadi” as a “go-cart”.

Gandhi insisted on “Primitive methods” of production in the village industry and explained that, “I suggest the return because there is no other way of giving employment to the millions of villagers who live in idleness”. Mechanization he regarded as evil in view of more hands than required in work. However, in the later periods, Gandhi accepted the role of small equipments, machines, tools and technology, which should not replace labour but reduce the cost and drudgery of labour and increase efficiency of labour. Thus, Gandhian design of rural industrialization was developed in the passage of time.

Review of Ideology Based Approach Practiced in India:

There are three basic evidences of accepting Gandhian rural industrial approach in India. First, right from the industrial policy of 1948 till the New Small Enterprise Policy of 1991, we have placed Khadi and Village Industries as the prime instrument of promotion of rural employment and rural economy. There are specific studies which analyzed the role of village industries as expressed in all the industrial statements. These statements have become the guide lines of the plans relating to K.V.I. As early as 1953 we established an exclusive institution of Khadi and -Village Industries

Board and later established a Khadi and Village Industries Commission in 1957.

The first plan had adopted a complete 'Gandhian' perspective in development of KVIC as it was decided to be developed with processing of local raw material for the local market with simple techniques (1951). As an appropriate method of protection a "Common Minimum Programme" was formulated, which was mainly related to reservation of production, restriction on capacity expansion and continuation of research. A multi-institutional approach was developed by establishing a separate institution like the KVIC Board, Hand-loom Board, Handicraft Board and Small Scale Industries Board for their development.

The Second Five Year Plan gave a very strategic place to village industries to generate marketable surplus as consumer goods to support heavy industry development without inflation and also gave a task to liquidate unemployment as quickly as possible. The basic approach for the KVIC was worked out by the panel of economists appropriate to the development of these sectors. The Kurvey Committee of 1955 led to the establishment of KVIC and it also suggested distribution of 2-5 million ambar charkhas—technologically improved hand spinning equipment. The Zaman Committee advocated the decentralization of Khadi work, recognition of large certified institutions and formation of co-operatives (1959). The Gyanchand Committee appointed to evaluate Khadi, pointed out the vicious cycle of low output, low wages and even falling wages as the central problem. It advocated that the yarn production through the additional charkha to provide relief to distressed persons should be separated from the economic problem for Khadi production as an employment generation activity. The Nathu Committee in 1962 recommended that the policy of production and sales should be reoriented to effect at least 40% of sales within the district and 80% within the state and export to other states should not exceed 20%. The Ashok Mehta Committee on KVIC in 1968 attempted to evolve a fresh approach to development based on the three basic components of producing salable articles, providing employment to people in backward areas, tribal and inaccessible areas, famine and drought stricken areas and also the backward and less privileged section of the population and to create self-reliance and community spirit among rural people.

Apart from suggesting specific target groups, it also recommended minimum wage for spinners at a level equal to off-season agricultural wages and a seven year programme for progressive improvement of techniques was recommended to achieve viability defined in terms of minimum earning of the artisan without any protection. It also recommended that the Khadi programme of the new model charkha should be developed on a commercial basis, keeping the element of grants and subsidies to the minimum. However, our efforts to implement the recommended approach in various Plans, are the feeble exercises initiated in the Second and Third Plans to integrate Khadi and Village Industries with larger programmes of rural development, came to an abrupt end with an abandonment of the Community Development Programmes and the dismantling of block machinery in most of the states.

In the policy packaged for KVIC in the Eighth Plan there was nothing notable except, (a) encouragement for modernization and technological up-gradation and (b) to set up a monitoring agency to ensure the genuine credit needs

of this sector and also insurance to review all the statutes, regulations and procedures to ensure that their operation does not militate the interest of the small and village industries. It also stated that it is possible to dovetail the programmes of Khadi and Village Industries.

Handlooms, Sericulture and Handicrafts to integrate local areas of development programmes for villages for poverty alleviation through increase in employment. However, no steps are suggested to implement this policy in practice.

We find that during the Second Plan period KVIC was given great significance which went on declining. Its approach changed and the direction of the change was pointing towards sacrificing the ideological character of KVIC envisaged by Gandhiji in the name of a pragmatic approach. One of the central points of Gandhian economic thought was the concept of Swadeshi. After independence, the Nehru group eschewed the Gandhian Path and accepted the Stalinist Path of Industrialisation in modified form and thus the concept of Swadeshi went completely into oblivion. In course of the world wide awareness as regards the necessity of attaching 'Human Face' to the process of industrialization, the concept of Swadeshi has once again come to the fore. In course of planning in India, stress was laid, especially since the Second Five Year Plan, on development of large scale basic and capital goods industries on the basis of Mahalanobis Strategy of industrialisation.

Swadeshi in terms of Gandhian View

"The broad definition of Swadeshi is the use of all home-made things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for protection of home-industry, more especially those industries without which India will become pauperized. In my opinion, therefore, Swadeshi which excludes the use of everything foreign, because it is foreign, no matter how beneficial it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it impoverishes nobody, is a narrow interpretation of Swadeshi".

Gandhiji suggests that there are still innumerable rural industries, which are capable of catering to the needs of the masses and at the same time creating significant employment opportunities. These industries are at present unable to play their roles properly because of the lack of assistance in terms of organization, training, supply of quality raw materials, technology up-gradation, etc. and above all, competition from the large industries and imported foreign goods boosted up by the pro-rich policy of the government. To quote: "In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such Swadeshi, if reduced to practice, will lead to the millennium.

Gandhiji already realized that agriculture was under much pressure and considering the number of peasants vis-à-vis total available innumerable land, agriculture alone could hardly provide substance to the innumerable poor peasants. Here cottage industries are likely to play the role of subsidiary occupation to the small cultivators.

"Without a cottage industry, the India peasant is doomed. He cannot maintain himself from the produce of the land. He needs a supplementary industry. Spinning is the easiest, the cheapest and the best".

“Swadeshi, therefore is a question of finding a subsidiary industry for our farmers.” Swadeshi in the form of revival of the cottage and rural industries also has an indirect beneficial effect, besides employment and income generation and supply of mass consumption goods.

Further age-old suffering and deprivation, rural masses are languishing in the darkness of resignation and fatalism. So it is the duty of the educated and cultured people to instill the spirit of confidence among the masses by themselves directly participating in the practice of Swadeshi.

Gandhiji opines that the spirit of neither nationalism nor internationalism could be inculcated unless ‘charity begins at home’, i.e. unless one begins from concern and fellow feeling for the immediate neighbours.

“Therefore, one who serves his neighbor services all the world”. To start with Gandhiji’s Swadeshi had its central point Khadi, i.e. cotton textiles of the craft industries. The reason is very simple. The industry which had the widest coverage, in terms of both demand and supply, was Khadi. So Gandhiji attached highest priority to this age-old industry. At the same time he did not fail to emphasize that beside Khadi, other traditional rural industries should also be revived.

“We must promote every useful industry that was existent a short while ago and the extinction of which has now resulted in unemployment”.

“Therefore, real planning consists in the best utilization of the whole man-power of India, and the distribution of the raw products of India in her numerous villages instead of sending them outside and rebuying finished articles at fabulous prices.”

Swadeshi and Large Scale Industries

Gandhiji goes into the pros and cons of the operation of the large scale industries and dispels the false belief that use of cloth produced by mills owned by Indians is also Swadeshi. Mills, whatever is the ownership, use mainly imported raw materials and thereby assist employment and income generation in exporter countries, not in India.

“Even on handlooms for very fine cloth only foreign yarn is used. The use of such cloth does not amount to an observance of Swadeshi. To say so, is simple self-deception”.

According to Gandhiji, mills are solely guided by profit motive and not the interest of the well-being of the masses. On the contrary they won’t hesitate to exploit the masses if earning of profit warrants so.

Large scale industries are based on mechanization and indiscriminate development of such industries would have harmful effect on the Indian economy with a vast body of unemployed. Gandhiji explains how mills generate fewer jobs than they are likely to displace and thereby aggravate the unemployment situation.

Swadeshi and Foreign Trade

It is commonly held wrong impression that the concept of Swadeshi is against all foreign goods, capital and technology. This is highly erroneous. Gandhiji was well aware that for an industrially backward country like India, foreign trade, foreign capital and foreign technology may be essential in certain fields. But it is to be seen that they are not resorted to indiscriminately to cater to the needs of foreign business and luxury consumption of the rich minority at the cost of the majority and environment. For a

poor country like India, unrestricted free trade would only serve the interests of England and other developed nations, and the luxury requirements of the native rich. The same is the case for foreign capital and technology if permitted without any restriction and consideration of the well-being of the masses. Gandhiji here makes clear that imports of foreign goods, capital and technology should be strictly restricted to areas where they are essential and where they are likely to serve the interests of the majority and future economic prospects of the country.

They should never to permitted to destroy local industries and employment opportunities. Gandhiji point out that free trade was the root cause of economic bondage of India.

Gandhi clarifies why free trade which is beneficial for developed countries like England is not so far a poor country like India.

To quote: “The economics of a nation are determined by its climate, geological and temperamental conditions. The Indian conditions are different from the English in all these essentials”.

“A country remains poor in wealth, both material and intellectual, if it does not develop its handicrafts and its industries and lives a lazy parasitic life by importing all the manufactured articles from outside”.

“The process is now reversed and we are dependent upon the outside world for most manufactured goods”. Gandhiji cites examples how free trade was responsible for destruction of indigenous industries and aggravation of the employment situation in India.

“Swadeshi admits of and welcomes the introduction of all foreign goods that cannot or need not be manufactured in India and that would benefit her people. Thus Swadeshi admits all foreign books containing pure literature, all foreign watches, foreign needles, foreign sewing machines, and foreign pins”.

To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money to promote manufactures in one’s country for which it is not suited, would be criminal folly and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit.

Modern Relevance

Globalisation in India has at present manifested in the form of blind craze for establishment of large scale industries based on imported and unaltered foreign technology and capital at any cost. The matter has taken a horrible turn in West Bengal revealing all the demonic features of globalization. There are lengthy processions and street meetings organized by the ruling party and with party toughs clamouring nerve rending slogans: “Industrialisation is a must and anyone opposing it would be crushed ruthlessly”. The Nandigram and Singur episodes of successful mass resistance against displacement of poor cultivators by party goons under police coverage has once again brought to the fore the question of assigning human face to the process of globalization and need to devise methods of industrialization not to serve the interest of foreign MNCs and luxury needs of native well-to-do minority, but the interest of the nation and well-being of the majority of its population, and preservation of environment and ecology. In this regard the Gandhian concept of Swadeshi as defined above comes to the fore. Establishment of large scale industries with unaltered foreign technology would serve the interest of the foreign MNCs and their domestic counterpart.

Dominant Issues and Major Policy Suggestions

Our failure to achieve an impressive dent in our problem of poverty and unemployment alleviation through an ideology based on Gandhian rural industrialization approach we may address these problems and solutions as follows:

1. After almost five decades, we have not been able to resolve the age old problem of adequate earnings for those who choose to work on Khadi. Our attempts to introduce new technology in spinning failed to generate adequate and attractive earnings.
2. The major problem faced by the KVIC is that of a market for their goods.
3. All the evidence of performance like that of output, productivity, employment, technology transfer, investment allocation and utilization, preference for workers for alternate occupation, consumer's presence and even government etc. show the fact that Khadi is declining, while village industries have a better scope and potential.
4. Institutional development to promote marketing and production via 'Co-operatives' has failed. Co-operatives provided an opportunity to establish a non-exploitative, self-employed and self-reliant rural community. Hardly 5% of the production of Khadi was accounted for by the co-operatives.
5. 70% of KVIC time and energy was being spent on routine administration, leaving little time for its main function.
6. Finally, KVIC is expected to alleviate poverty in those areas that are really backward. It is expected to play a greater role in such areas.

There are a large number of Review Committee Reports and even some research studies to provide policy guidance. It is unfortunate that Plan documents have not taken note of such documents. Some broad policy suggestions are

1. We must accept that village industries have a better scope for development. KVIC should concentrate only on the most potential industries as pointed out in the Eighth Plan. Though there are 96 industries presently within the preview of KVIC.
2. The marketing of the Khadi product is a crucial issue. If there is a strong intervention of devoted voluntary agencies Khadi production could be sold in the local market.

In Gujarat state, there are institutions which have sold 90% of Khadi amongst tribals who have themselves produced it. According to Gandhiji maximum effort should be made by the villager to make them self sufficient in regard to their owner and needs. He did not like to see surplus labour in the villages.

Swadeshi Movement

According to Gandhiji, Indian economy refers primarily to a village economy dominated by agriculture where production is carried out basically for subsistence. The development of rural economy is basically an ideological alternative to formulate a strategy of rural development in the context of the socio-cultural heritage of village life. The future of rural economies lies in the following aspects:

- Creating a self propelling and self sustaining process of production in the village.

- Decentralization of production system.
- Decentralized of Ago-based industries
- Emphasis on village and cottage industries, and
- Formation of Trusteeship for social ends.

Gandhiji Launched Swadeshi movement just to encourage self sufficiency and to put a social ban on foreign goods.

So he started swadeshi movement. In this context Gandhiji wanted villages to be self sufficient, self administered so that villages should meet by day to day needs of their inhabitants. And thus, Swadeshi movement if for the use of all home made things to the extension of foreign things in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of the home industries.

Khadi Economics and Cottage Industries

Khadi economics was first introduced by Gandhiji under Foreign domination. In fact, Khadi economics was social experiment and social venture on which khadi was to be a national industry in the ineptest of the masses. The movement of khadi was based upon no preconceive ideas but on the study of objective facts as they existed and manifested the missives in 7,00,000 villages throughout India.

Khadi economics means the production, distribution exchange and consumption of hand spun yarn and hand woven cloth. Khadi economics is important in Indian economy from the following point of view.

- a. The diminishing of unemployment
- b. Increase in national production
- c. Increase in purchasing power of the poor
- d. Collective wealth of the nation. The charkha and Khadi are sound for a colonial economy. The whole economics of Khadi is based upon the idea that it is the best supplementary cottage industry for the agriculture. His stress on khadi was on removal of the poverty and unemployment prevailing among the villagers.

Gandhiji laid exclusive emphasis on the development of cottage industries, particularly on spinning of yarn with the aid of charkha. They came to realize that the development of cottage industries was necessary means for the absorption of the sweeper labour of the village to diminish their poverty. He wanted to village make themselves self sufficient in regard to their own needs through cottage industries.

Thus, emphasis on village and cottage industries is based on the hypothesis of employment creation in rural areas. This implies that "small scale of peasant production" should have market for these goods producing by such industries.

In this way, the pattern of industrialization in India, according to Gandhiji must follow the establishment of cottage and small scale industries as it's the best way to cure the poverty and unemployment.

Industrialization and Choice of Technique

Gandhian ideals of economic programmes are based on decent realization in strand of industrialization. Economics of decentralization according to him would spares from the evils of excessive mechanization. It was wrong to think, that Gandhiji was totally hostile to industrialization and all types of machinery. He objected any indiscriminate Multiplication of machinery. He was opposed to machines which mean mass production and industrialization leading to exploitation. He said; "Industrialization is no remedy to

pauperism". Thus Gandhiji favoured the expansion of village oriented industries not only the decentralization of wealth and power but also providing employment opportunities to Million of Indian who are poor and without work.

Gandhiji also thought the capital intensive industries were necessary for the construction of railways, road and bridge etc.

Gandhiji was out and out against capital intensive technique not only because in the short run many labourers are replaced by machinery but also because machinery represents modern materialistic civilization.

Thus, Gandhian views on industrialization and technology permitted India to adopt the system like cottage and small scale industries because it's the only to cure poverty and unemployment. Gandhian views stood for relatively simple process of production, specially those which observed a great deal of labour permit of capital.

Conclusion

Gandhiji's approach to rural industrialization was evolved over a period of time. Our success in its implementation was less than desirable. However, it should not lead us to believe that we must get rid of this as a burden of 'Gandhian Legacy'. We should keep in mind the following words of Pandit Nehru in his famous Gandhigram Speech, "I begin to think more and more of Mahatma Gandhi's approach. It is odd that I am mentioning his name in this connection: that is to say, I am entirely an admirer of the modern machine and want the best machinery and the best technique. But taking things as they are in India, however rapidly we advance in the machine age—and we will do so—the fact remains that large numbers of our people are not touched and will not be touched by it for a considerable time. Some other methods will have to be evolved by us for a considerable time. Some of the methods have to be evolved so that they become partners in production even though the production apparatus of theirs may not be efficient as compared to modern techniques, but we must use that; otherwise, it is wasted". This statement is self-explanatory and in favour of more sincere and sustained efforts to develop rural industries on Gandhian lines.

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