

## GANDHIAN ECONOMICS

Mahatma Gandhi who was a great freedom fighter and a celebrated National leader had certain positive ideas based on non-violence and truth which had considerably moulded economic thinking and economic policies in our country. His economic ideas and those of which followers came to be known as the Gandhian Economic Thought.

There is ample literature on Gandhian Economic Thought. Some of the pamphlets and articles were written by Gandhi himself, for example Cent Percent Swadeshi, Constructive Programmes - Its Meaning and Place, Economics of Khadi, and Food Shortage and Agriculture.

Three Phases of Gandhi's Economic Thought:

All the economic ideas of Mahatma Gandhi did not develop at one time. It is very necessary to mention the influence that shaped them. He derived from

The philosophy of Tolstoy the concepts of equalitarianism, simplicity and asceticism which later become the foundation of the structure of his economic ideas.

He same way he benefitted from the writings of Thoreau also.

### Three Phases of Gandhi's Economic Thought:

Gandhi economic ideas developed in three phases — upto 1919, between 1919 and 1934, and between 1934 to 1948. The first phase he rejected Western civilisation, method of production, use of machinery etc, and developed altogether an anti-materialistic approach to different problems, which is evident from his book *Hind Swaraj* (1909). It was, in a sense, a negative phase. The second phase witnessed the evolution of his economic ideas based on Swadeshi Movement — the development of a positive counter theory to Western civilisation. The third phase was a practical one in which



He evolved the idea 'Sarvodaya' and prepared a programme for the generation of the village economy.

ECONOMIC IDEAS OF GANDHI :

WELFARE ECONOMY : In the Gandhian Economic Thought, man figures more prominently than wealth. To Gandhi human beings themselves were wealth, not gold and silver. He believed that country was the richest which nourished the greatest number of happy individuals.

Mahatma Gandhi held that economic motives and activities should be governed by ethical considerations. To him, economic and ethics were inseparable. Rejecting Western materialism which has no ethical basis, Gandhi praised the work of John Ruskin who held the view that people can be happy only if they obeyed the moral laws. To Gandhi economics was a practical science

which suggested practicable measures for the maximisation of human welfare.

NON VIOLENT ECONOMY: To Mahatma Gandhi there was no industry no human activity without a certain amount of violence, but what he wanted was to make efforts to minimize it. Mahatma Gandhi defined a non violent occupation as one "which is fundamentally free from violence, which involves no exploitation or envy of others".

He hoped that economics would help in eliminating poverty, reducing the inequality of income and wealth, and at the same time lay the foundation of a harmonious society. According to him the main purpose of true economic stands for social justice and moral values.

DECENTRALISATION: Mahatma Gandhi advocated a decentralised economy, i.e. production at a large number of places on a small scale. To quote



Mahatma Gandhi, "If you multiply individual productions to a number of times, would it not give you mass production on a tremendous scale?"

Mahatma Gandhi hated privilege and monopoly, and stated that whatever could not be shared with the masses was a taboo to him. As the concentration of production in particular places created difficulties of distribution he suggested the decentralisation of production. Decentralisation was also essential for a non-violent state of his conception. He wanted decentralisation from the initial stage of the industry. However, Mahatma Gandhi did not object to the centralisation of the heavy industries provided they did not hamper of the cottage industries.