
Chapter-II

CHAPTER – II

Economic Inclination : Retrogressive or Progressive

Gandhi was no economist, nor did he study much economics on his own. But he shaped and honed his economic ideas by his own practical experiences and intensive reading the works of John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy as well as the religions literatures such as the Gita, the Bible etc. His outlook on economics and economic problems was totally different. In fact, it was based on spiritualism. He gave insistence on the moral and spiritual development of a human being. He used to say morality and economics should walk together. That economics is not true which disregards the moral values.¹ True economics always stands for social justice and promotes the good of all.² To him, true economics never goes against the highest ethical standard and if any economic concept inculcates mammon worship and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak then that concept “is a false and dismal science.”³ He said with a strong conviction, “I do not draw a sharp line or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurts the moral well-being of an individual or a nation is immoral, and therefore sinful.”⁴ Even he went one step further to say, “The economics that permits one country to prey upon another is immoral.”⁵ He considered true economics as indispensable in order to lead a decent life.⁶ Gandhi gave a spiritual touch to human history. He drew a line of demarcation between man and the brute. He said, man “can respond to the call of spirit in him, can rise superior to the possessions that he owns in common with the brute.”⁷ To him, human history is simply the political history but the predominant factor is the spiritual and moral progress made by man in course of time, and in

future, they will be the determining factor in shaping the human destiny. He out-rightly observed that he did not "believe in the existence of class-struggle,"⁸ and considered class-war as "foreign to the essential genius of India."⁹ He cautioned Indians not to be swayed by the catch-words and seductive slogans imported from the West, but rather to have implicit faith in eastern tradition, "Which promises an escape from the vicious circle of violence and exploitation."¹⁰ He could not make himself to accept the contemporary concept that the western socialism and communism were the last words on the question of mass poverty.¹¹

Let us try to understand further what Gandhi meant by "true economics". According to him, "true economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as well true ethics to be worth its name, must at the same time be also good economics."¹² After Gandhi, true economics stands for social justice promoting the good of all including the weakest. The strong plea for ethical values is the first brick on which the whole edifice of entire Gandhian economy rests.

To him, primacy of man, his well-being, growth and unfoldment has to be the primary object of the economy in all its aspects, the 'end' and 'means' and also the 'measure' of the productive efforts and results.

When India won independence, Gandhi called it complete independence. "So at one hand you have the political independence, at the other the economic."¹³ However, the same Gandhi, three days before his death, regretted, though the Congress won political freedom, it had yet to win economic freedom, social freedom, and the moral freedom. He was committed to economic freedom throughout his life. His economic thoughts were not based on any copy book maxims, but

displayed his own experiences gathered over the years. The remedies he suggested were based on ground realities. Spratt commented rightly, "His social and economic proposals have to be understood in relation to circumstances."¹⁴

Gandhi stood for an ideal of 'simple living and high thinking.' "Craze for multiplicity of goods is destructive of contentment, peace and tranquility."¹⁵ Satisfaction could not be achieved and welfare could not be maximized unless number of wants could be reduced to the minimum. Welfare has to be compromised and pain ensues, if wants grow in number, since all wants cannot be satisfied. However, he did not advocate, unnecessary reduction in wants. But he also did not desire wants should become an end in themselves. They are good so long as they cater to the human welfare, but they deserve to be discarded if they become a burden. "A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary, but above a certain level it becomes a hindrance instead of help. Therefore the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare. The satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must meet at a certain point a dead stop, before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness."¹⁶ He did not believe that "multiplication of wants and machinery contrived to supply them" took the world a single step nearer its goal.¹⁷ He concluded that the western nations, in fact, were groaning under heel of the monster, i.e., God of materialism. "Their moral growth has become stunted... ours will only be a truly spiritual nation when we shall show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self."¹⁸

Long before independence, Gandhi said that independent India could only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a

simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. "High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life based on high speed imposed on us by mammon worship."¹⁹ He prescribed, man would fall from the ideal of plain living and high thinking the moment he desired to multiply his daily wants.²⁰ To him, human body is only meant for service, never for any kind of indulgence. Renunciation is the secret of a happy life. If life stood for renunciation, then death for indulgence.²¹

To quote Gandhi's own elaboration, "We notice that the mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passion, the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition.... Observing all this, our ancestors dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures. We have managed with the same kind of plough as existed thousands of years ago. We have retained the same kind of cottages that we had in former times and our indigenous education remains the same as before. We have had no system of life-corroding competition.... It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibres. They, therefore, after due deliberation decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet."²²

Gandhi had given importance on physical labour for everybody. If everyone laboured physically for his bread, then the poet, doctors, lawyers and others should consider it their duty to use those talents gratis for the service of humanity. Only then will their output be all better and richer for their selfless devotion to duty.²³ He gave his verdict, "God created man to work for his food and said that those who ate without work were thieves."²⁴ Bread labour should be the prime

duty of every member of society,²⁵ and he who idles away a single minute without any labour simply becomes a burden upon his neighbours to that extent, and to do so deliberately is as good as “to commit a breach of the very first lesson of Ahimsa.”²⁶ He insisted that labour must be a productive one,²⁷ and everyone should perform some manual labour in order to earn his bread. Commitment to bread labour, he reckoned, would be capable of bringing about a steady and silent revolution in society.²⁸

He said that bread labour must be spontaneous and there should not be any iota of ignorance or compulsion. To him, “Compulsory obedience to a master is a state of slavery, willing obedience to one’s father is the glory of the sonship.”²⁹ He maintained that if on the one hand the compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent, then on the other the same bread labour willingly done is capable of bringing contentment and health.³⁰

Although he emphasized on the need of physical labour and its compulsive necessity in everybody’s life, he did not negate the importance of intellectual work. But again, he pointed out, the quality of intellectual output could improve only with physical labour.³¹

Gandhi considered ‘man’ as the micro-unit of the socio-economic system and whose welfare is totally depended on morality and ethics. To him, primacy of man, his well-being, growth and unfoldment, has to be the primary objective of the economy in all its aspects, the ‘end’ and ‘means’, and the measure of the productive efforts and results. “Everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realized if the means of production of the elementary

necessaries of life remain in the control of the masses. Their monopolization by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust.”³² He applied this concept on the use of machinery. He said that machinery is for man, and not man for machinery, which is the cardinal principle of mechanical production. He opined that the industrialization instead of generating employment would displace the labour and take work and bread away from them.

He knew, the driving social urge behind industrialization is the craving for excessive consumption. Industrialization, which involves mass production, depends on centralization of initiatives, policy decision and power. For Gandhi, a time would come, when industrialization would prove to be a curse for mankind since it “depends entirely on the capacity to exploit others.”³³ He could not support mechanization of the West, since he could not see “a single good point in connection with machinery.”³⁴ He thought industrialization was not essential in Indian context, since her ideal of ‘high thinking’ was inconsistent with European ideal of complicated material life based on mammon worship. In fact, Gandhi was not against the use of machinery as such, but he was opposed to the craze for having devices which ultimately plunged millions of people into abyss of enforced idleness and unemployment. He said:

“I entertain no fads in this regard. All that I desire it that every able-bodied citizen of India should be provided with gainful employment. If electricity or even atomic energy could be used without displacing human labour and creating unemployment, I will not raise my little finger against it. I am, however, still to be convinced that this would be possible in a country like India, where capital is scarce and labour abundant.”³⁵

Gandhi condemned industrialization because he thought it as the root cause of materialism and moral corruption. To him industrialization and exploitation go hand in hand. However, he accepted that he had no quarrel with steamship and telegraph and, thus, they could stay but without the support of materialism it connoted.³⁶

But he knew social evils of industrialization were germane to the very fundamentals of the modern system of production, therefore, could not be removed once and for all. Hence he suggested to give up industrialization altogether, looking upon it 'as an evil.'³⁷ He advocated a complete change in moral values in order to change our perception of social needs and to put limit to social consumption.

Though he said that he prized 'every invention of science made for the benefit of all,'³⁸ at the same time he was categorical in his assertion that he would not tolerate such machines which might result in displacement of labour and the centralization of wealth.³⁹ Since Gandhi knew industrialization involved mass production therefore it has to depend on centralization of initiatives, policy decision and power. To him, concentration of authority in the economy as a whole is undesirable and thus has to be reduced to the minimum. Whenever the pace of industrialization quickens, the consumption pattern also seeps down to the villages and consequently a paradigm shift in the production model takes place there. This eventually leads to unemployment and poverty in the villages. Gandhi detested this paradigm shift which amounted to exploitation as a derivative of industrialization.

"Industrialization of a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition

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and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use."⁴⁰

The mere socialization of industries, as advocated by Nehru, Gandhi observed, would not, in any way, alter the process of exploitation. "Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them."⁴¹

Industrialization, in real sense of the term, increases the gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots', and which, in course of time, becomes unbridgeable and exploitation persists because of the increasing concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the 'haves'. Gandhi wanted to avoid this and insisted upon promotion and realization of decentralization. He conceived of a scheme for this purpose. In his scheme, decentralization process would gradually develop in agro-industrial economy consisting of small communities in which agriculture and small industries would develop in terms of real need and resources; where emphasis would be on the maximum utilization of labour force amounting to self-sufficiency. Here small producers would stand for economic and social democracy, reduction of inequalities and decentralized initiative.

Gandhi's economic doctrine concentrated upon investment in human capital. This conclusion could easily be arrived at from his voluminous writings and speeches on multifarious subjects, such as, health, education and training, technological progress, economic and social development etc.⁴²

"I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine, but I know that it is criminal to displace hand labour by the introduction

of power driven spindles unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupations in their houses.”⁴³

To Gandhi, all wars in future would be the result of economic exploitation. The only antidote to economic exploitation and violence is to pursue with all efforts the policy of decentralization through the organization of largely self-sufficient village communities. ‘Man is much self-dependent as interdependent; when dependence becomes necessary in order to keep society in good order, it is no longer dependence, but becomes cooperation where each is equal to the other.’ He repeatedly harped, ‘the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.’ The lawyer’s work has the same value as the barber’s. An individual personality could develop only when centralization exists for centralization leads to domination and idleness.

To him, when labour is not done only for oneself but for others then only could it become ‘yagna’ or sacrifice. The spirit behind this: is labour of love. He said, “..... men will, no doubt, do many things either through their body or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good.”⁴⁴ He advised, “If we cultivate this habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger and will make not only for our own happiness, but that of the world at large.”⁴⁵

About his own country India he writes, “I have indeed wept to see the stark poverty and unemployment in our country, but I confess our own negligence and ignorance are largely responsible for it, we do not know the dignity of labour as such.”⁴⁶ He preached ‘swadeshi’ (indigenously) for achieving independence and eliminating imperialism. In fact, in the case of modern imperialism morality and politics are subordinating factors vis-à-vis economic consideration.

Therefore, his concept of 'economic freedom was composite one: partly economic, partly moral and spiritual.'⁴⁷

To Gandhi, history simply records the march of man from 'violence' to 'non-violence', from cannibalism to the present stage. To quote him, "If we believe that mankind has steadily progressed towards 'Ahimsa' (non-violence), it followed that it has to progress towards it still further."⁴⁸ Indeed Gandhi had a deep understanding of the currents of history. His economic views were structured on the concept of non-violence. Therefore, he insisted on purity of means for attainment of any goal, be it economic, political or anything. To him, end did not justify means, but on the contrary means justified end.

Further, his economic ideals were also based on the concept of equality. He wanted everybody should have enough to take care of his or her needs. He abhorred economic inequality of any kind, be it in wages or opportunities. Even he went on to the extent of propounding a scheme, according to which, 'all the doctors, lawyers, teachers and others would get the same wages for all honest day's work.'⁴⁹ He further contends, "Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, because the former needed more, will be idle sophistry and travesty of my argument."⁵⁰

Here let Gandhi should not be misunderstood that he was against wealth. He was never against wealth, but against inequality and mal-distribution. "My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see it is not to be realized. I, therefore, work for equal distribution." (Gandhi).⁵¹

It is true, Gandhi argued, every human being has a right to live, to feed, to cloth himself etc., but not by dispossessing those who have

possessions, it is to be done by pursuing the ideal of non-possession or 'aparigraha' (in Sanskrit). He expected voluntary relinquishment and retaining only that much what is actually needed to fulfill one's requirement. So here 'non-possession' has wider import in Gandhi's parlance. He put forward a very easy solution for eradicating poverty from the world, "If only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more there would be no pauperism in the world"⁵² Gandhi's insistence upon not overlooking human values, amidst material progress and emphasizing on limiting one's wants 'deserve deeper understanding and appreciation'.⁵³

Gandhi favoured rural economy for India.⁵⁴ He wanted village to be the basic unit of economic system, which is to be self-contained and self-sufficing. He defined the concept of self-contained thus: "The self-contained unit will constitute an area covered by a radius of about five miles. Each unit shall have a definite pattern of consumption and a well-integrated system of production. The consumption pattern will depend upon the geographical situation of the locality, the temperament of the people, the traditional regulation, and economic pattern and upon the educational and cultural attainment of the people."⁵⁵

Gandhi wanted his self-sufficient village should be capable to produce all that is necessary for the consumption of its own people. Contrary to the concept that the village is being used as a dumping ground for the manufactured goods of the cities, he wanted the cities should serve as emporia for village products.⁵⁶ He emphasized on the constitution of several independent village units or vaguely called republics capable of managing their own affairs with the least governmental help and outside interference. To quote his own words, "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a

republic of panchayat having full powers.... Whose centre will be the individual.”⁵⁷

Gandhi was always worried about man-days lost due to mechanization. “Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India.... The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year.... spinning and weaving mills have deprived the villagers of a substantial means of livelihood. It is no answer in reply to say that they turn out cheaper, better cloth, if they do so at all. For, if they have displaced thousands of workers, the cheapest mill cloth is dearer than the dearest Khadi woven in the villages.”⁵⁸

In the Indian context, Gandhi saw infeasibility of heavy industrialization because of an abundance of underemployed labour and agro-based economy. In one place he confessed, “I have no partiality for return to the primitive methods of grinding and husking for the sake of them. I suggest the return, because there is no other way of giving employment to the millions of villagers who are living in idleness”.⁵⁹

Here comes out Gandhi in open support for Khadi with a view to making every village self-supporting for its food and clothing. He projected Khadi as a universal industry,⁶⁰ and said only through Khadi could the proper utilization of human labour be ensured.⁶¹ Khadi is the true economic proposition in terms of the millions of villagers⁶² since in them hope would be raised instead of despair.⁶³ However, he did not design Khadi as an elixir for every time to come, but he said, until such times ‘when a better system of supplying work and adequate system of

wages for every able-bodied person is found for his field, cottage or even factory in everyone of the villages of India'⁶⁴ Even he went to the extent of projecting Khadi's capability in transforming the vices inherent in human nature into public virtues. Let us see below how does he elaborate.

"I am always reminded of one thing which the well-known British economist Adam Smith has said in his famous treatise 'The Wealth of Nations'. In it he has described some economic laws as universal and absolute. Then he described certain situations which may be an obstacle to the operation of these laws. These disturbing factors are the human nature, the human temperament or altruism inherent in it. Now the economics of Khadi is just the opposite of it. Benevolence which is inherent in nature is ^{the} very foundation of the economics of Khadi. What Adam Smith has described as pure economic activity based merely on the calculations of profit and loss is a selfish attitude and it is an obstacle to the development of Khadi; and it is the function of a champion of Khadi to counteract this tendency."⁶⁵

In Gandhi's khadi industry there is no room for surplus or the profit, rent or interest. Being in the hands of spinners, it will be very much sustainable with the increasing population. Khadi is capable of binding rich and the poor, capital and labour, the prince and the pauper.⁶⁶ He wanted khadi spinning an objective of compulsion for every able-bodied man, for it symbolized economic freedom and equality because of its capability to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple, inexpensive and business like manners. Commenting in 'Gandhi Marg' on khadi, Philip Zealey held, "Of all the nonviolent weapons forged by Gandhi, Khadi was the nearest moral equivalent of the infantryman's rifle. It was conducive to national solidarity."⁶⁷

Gandhi identified khadi as a technique, which could bridge the gap between the elites and the illiterates, by prompting them to give up, westernized dress and opening before their eyes the dignity of labour. About Gandhi's khadi, G.D.N. Cole, a well-known British economist commented that it "was not mere a fad of a romantic eager to revive the past, but a practical attempt to relieve poverty and uplift the standard of Indian village."⁶⁸

Besides, khadi provides sustenance to some village industries, such as, hand-grinding, tanning, hand-pounding, soap-making, oil-pressing etc. Without khadi, they could never have their independent existence. Therefore, Gandhi said 'Khadi must hold the field for any length of time that we can think of'.⁶⁹

Though he insisted upon the practical necessity of khadi in India, at the same time he wanted to put forward his moral base before the masses about his such insistence.

"If I could do it, I would most assuredly destroy or radically change much that goes under the name of moral civilization. But that is an old story of life. The attempt is undoubtedly there. Its success depends upon God. But the attempt to revive and encourage the remunerative village industries is not part of such an attempt, except in so far as every one of my activities, including the propagation of non-violence, can be described as such an attempt."⁷⁰

He went on further to say that our duty is to investigate the possibilities of keeping in existence the village wheel, the village crusher and the village pounder and by advertising their products, discovering their qualities, ascertaining the condition of the workers and the number displaced by the power-driven machinery and

discovering the methods of improving them, while retaining their village character to enable them to stand the competition of the mills.⁷¹

Gandhi perceived that poverty, especially in India, was primarily due to negligence in rural economy and enforced unemployment. This visible unemployment, in Indian context, was not associated with a deficiency of aggregate demand as in industrialized countries, however it was structural in nature and thus needed to be dealt with by the restructuring of the economy. To him, "... the participation of this vast force (of uncompleted) in economic development calls for a new approach and exploration outside the bounds of Western or Soviet models...."⁷²

In fact, the Gandhian concept of economic development related to man as a whole and not just to the 'economic man', since it sought to avoid distortions in the relationship between man and his environment, between man and machine, between labour and capital, and between village and town.⁷³

Khadi or hand-spun or hand woven cloth was for Gandhi a measure of economic relief for the poverty-stricken masses of India. He knew from the beginning spinning could not enter into any competition with any industry, it could merely provide a substitute occupation for India's peasantry during their six months of unemployment. Therefore, the remuneration earned through spinning could not be compared with the wages earned through regular alternative employment, since spinning he meant could be a supplementary industry. Gandhi said, "The sole claim on its behalf is that it alone offers an immediate, practicable, and permanent solution of problems which confront India – namely, the enforced idleness for nearly six months in the year of an overwhelming majority of India's population, owing to lack of a suitable

occupation supplementary to agriculture, and the chronic starvation of the masses that result thereby. There would be no place for the spinning wheel in the national life of India, comparatively small as the remuneration that can be derived from it, if, these two factors were not there.”

Though Gandhi was no economist, he was a realist par excellence. He knew, next to food, there is always a need for cloth, and hence yarn for clothing must always command a good market and that spinning was also not restricted by local weather conditions while solving the problem of partial employment. No special intelligence is required to run a ‘charkha’ (spinning wheel), while raw materials are easily available and it would bring work to the doorstep of the peasantry. Thus through Khadi Gandhi evolved a practical philosophy. Gandhi’s movement for introduction of Khadi in Indian soil gathered momentum and popularity since the time when in the nineteen twenties he introduced spinning to the inmates of Sabarmati Ashram. To some extent Khadi is the index of his power and popularity with the Indian masses. Effectively Gandhi proved the usefulness of the ‘charkha’ as a measure of famine relief in securing immediate employment for those in need, and more than ever it was found invaluable in the task of rehabilitating the destitute of Bengal after the 1943 famine. As written above Gandhi was not against machinery except it ousted and impoverished the handicraftsman. He knew that there is always a place and need for heavy industry in India, but as long as famine and unemployment exist it is necessary to safeguard cottage industries to supplement the agriculturist’s earnings. The “Buy Swadeshi” movement instituted by Gandhi though gave the necessary encouragement to mills, Khadi safeguarded exploitation and profiteering by the mills, since no longer was the emphasis on mill-made cloth but had shifted to

hand spinning. But on the question of what to do with the mill-cloth and also to avoid mill-cloth from coming into competition with Khadi, Gandhi had a ready made answer, "Our mills may export their manufactures".⁷⁴

To conclude, Gandhi never nurtured a myopic view vis-à-vis the economic health of the nation. He knew a nation could not keep itself aloof and isolated from changes that were taking place in the world in the field of economic approach. Though he tried to adapt his thoughts accordingly, he always advocated a return to simplicity and plainness of nature. In *Young India* he wrote, "Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. It is because these factors are getting less and less everyday for England that its number of unemployed is mounting up daily. The Indian boycott was but a flea-bite. And if that is the state of England, a vast country like India cannot expect to benefit by industrialization. In fact, India, when it begins to exploit other nations – as it must if it becomes industrialized – will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrializing India to exploit other nations? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation viz., that we can find work for our 300 millions un-employed, but England can find none for its three millions and is faced with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England. The future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, Japan, France, Germany If the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for Indian?"⁷⁵

This was the view of Gandhi on industrialism sometime in the early thirties of the 20th century. Later on, we find, the same Gandhi, appreciating the realities, proposed a reconciliation of large and small-

scale industries. Even he went to the extent of advocating nationalization of key-industries in order to safeguard the greater interests of the Indian villages.⁷⁶ To quote him,

“At the same time I believe that some key-industries are necessary. I do not believe in arm-chair or armed socialism. I believe in action according to my belief, without waiting for whole-sale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate key-industries, I would have state ownership, where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the state. But as I can conceive such a state only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to state ownership. There are no pariahs of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers.”⁷⁷

On the whole, though Gandhi's economic principles were rural based, he was not a complete ruralist in actuality because he did not advocate an unqualified return to village Arcadianism.

II

Gandhi and Nehru both thought deeply on the possibilities of removing the poverty of the masses and each of them looked on the problem from his own standpoint. Gandhi wanted the villages to be self-sufficient with the sincere effort of the villagers themselves. Every man according to his need was his slogan. Whereas as Jawaharlal Nehru thought the use of modern science and technology in the development process indispensable. In his view the evil effects of modern industrialism was removable only through implementing a socialist pattern of distribution. This concept of Nehru was the beginning of the planning process in India as early as in the nineteen thirties. Indeed it was Nehru's initial contribution to the process of economic development of the country.

Nehru's effort to draw up a plan for India's development amidst his preoccupations prior to independence highlights his absolute devotion to the concept of planning. India is greatly indebted to Nehru for his commitment to planning and for taking an all out initiative to initially start the process.

It seems Nehru was impressed by the Soviet Russia's concept of Five Year Plan. His initial impression by the Five Year Plan hypothesis of the Soviet Union can be described thus in his own words,

"The Five Year Plan of Soviet Russia was a colossal undertaking. It was really a number of big revolutions tacked on together, especially an agricultural revolution which substituted large-scale collective and mechanized farming for the old fashioned small-scale methods, and an industrial revolution which industrialized Russia at a tremendous pace. But the most interesting feature of the Plan was the spirit that lay behind it, for this was a new spirit in politics and

industry. This spirit was the spirit of science, an attempt to apply a thought-out scientific method to the building up of society. No such thing had been done before in any country, even the most advanced ones, and it is this application of the methods of science to human and social affairs that is the outstanding feature of Soviet planning. It is because of this that all the world is talking of planning now.....”⁷⁸

Once started planning is still continues to be revered as a concept essential to development with justice, though it had to overcome many pitfalls from time to time. Despite these many hurdles and pitfalls, the concept of Five Year Plan is still going strong in India.

Nehru writes, “Towards the end of 1938. National Planning Committee was constituted at the instance of the Congress. It consisted of fifteen members plus representatives of provincial governments and such Indian states as chose to collaborate with us. Among the members were well-known industrialists, financiers, economists, professors, scientists, as well as representatives of the Trade Union Congress and the Village Industries Association... It was a strange assortment of different types and it was not clear how such an odd mixture would work. I accepted the chairmanship of the committee not without hesitation and misgiving; and the work was after my own heart and I could not keep out of it.”⁷⁹

But Nehru had a misconception about the success of this motley group, and also from the side of the government hardly was there any help. Thus it became obvious to Nehru that the success of any comprehensive planning could take place only “under a free national government, strong enough and popular enough to be in a position to introduce fundamental changes in the social and economic structure.”⁸⁰

Gandhi was a visionary, but Nehru's outlook and thought were always pragmatic. Thus planning in India was Nehru's brainchild. Long before India's independence Nehru had formed a clear-cut idea of what a national plan should constitute and aim at. Nehru writes that the original idea behind the constitution of the Planning Committee then had been to further industrialization. He concluded that the problems of poverty and un-employment, of defence and of economic regeneration could not be solved without industrialization.

To quote him, "As a step towards such industrialization, a comprehensive scheme of national planning should be formulated. This scheme should provide for the development of heavy key industries, medium scale industries, and cottage industries.... But no plan could possibly ignore agriculture, which was the mainstay of the people; equally important were the social services. So one thing led to another and it was impossible to isolate anything or to progress in one direction without corresponding progress in another."⁸¹

Nehru knew India possessed vast natural resources and substantial manpower potentials – which are the basic ingredients in order to create a strong industrial base. He had a clear-cut idea that India's economic development could not be achieved without resorting to the process of industrialization. But simultaneously he insisted upon the development of agriculture and small-scale industries as well. By emphasising on the development of small-scale industries Nehru displayed his true Gandhian spirit. However, Nehru could think more than anybody could by underscoring that man is the key figure of the Plan. He could say this with his keen perception, "of course other resources are necessary. But the trained human being is the basic thing in a country. We see countries, which have been devastated in war, being built up in a short time, because of this trained human being

and hard work put by those groups of human beings. And training is a thing which takes time - especially the training of the specific individuals who have to perform trained works. Looking at it from that point of view, the most important thing becomes education at all grades and at all stages.”⁸²

Yet in the beginning of plan efforts not such emphasis was given on the necessity to improve man's understanding and make the plan understandable to him. He continued to press home, “that requires a certain background in the country, preparation of the people to do it, and resources and all that. In the final analysis, I believe, in any country the only basic resource is the trained human being. Almost everything follows from that.”⁸³

Why could not we get along? Why could not we achieve what we expected in the early stages of the planning period? What impeded the success? Surely the remedy provided by Nehru to all these ills was : Train the people. The planners had not been able to build up thinking on the basis of his standpoint is obvious from Nehru's speech. This was the self-defeating draw back of the Plan. However, the situation has changed now. Of late the planners have realized that man has to be trained. The establishment of Human Resource Development Ministry is a step ahead in that direction, “Better late than never”

Introduction of Panchayati Raj system in the country is another step towards teaching the village people in self-governance village-level planning.

Nehru knew agriculture is a vital part of Indian economy, and therefore its development vis-à-vis the development of industry could not be minimized. Rather he concluded that the success of industry depended on the surplus of agricultural production. He said, “I am for

all industry, I am all for steel plants, heavy industries and all that, but I do say agriculture is far more important than industry, because, it is out of the success of agriculture that industry comes. If you fail in agriculture, you have a little to stand upon. Where do you get the wherewithal to have industry? It is out of the surplus from agricultural production that you build your industries and therefore it has become of the utmost importance that agriculture should flourish and should produce the goods and surplus needed for industrial growth.”⁸⁴

On the pursuance of aims and objectives while formulating a national plan Nehru writes, “The idea of planning and a planned society is accepted now in varying degrees by almost everyone. But planning by itself has little meaning and need not necessarily lead to good results. Everything depends on the objectives of the planned on the controlling authority, as well as, of course, the government behind it. Does the plan aim definitely at the well – being and advancement of the people as a whole, at the opening out of opportunity to all and the growth of freedom and methods of co-operative organization and action? Increase of production is essential, but obviously by itself it does not take us far and may even add to the complexity of our problems. An attempt to preserve old-established privileges and vested interests cut at the very root of planning. Real planning must recognize that no such special interests can be allowed to come in the way of any scheme designed to further the well-being of the community as a whole.”⁸⁵

The objectives of the First Plan (1951–56) were based on the economic situation existing then. Population was fast increasing. There had been a very little change in the occupational pattern in spite of the development of industries since 1925. There was sown area person on decline. Industries provided employment hardly to more than 2.4

million. Pressure on land was steadily increasing. Despite the rising incomes in terms of money, the economic condition of the people were probably worse off than in the pre-war years.

The immediate need, thus, was to find enough of food, clothing and housing for the people and accordingly priorities were fixed. Therefore in the First Plan we do not find any condition, which aimed at the rapid industrialization of the country. The First Plan accorded the highest priority to agriculture. The First Plan mentioned, "we are convinced that without a substantial increase in the production of food and raw materials needed for industry it would be impossible to sustain a higher tempo of industrial developmnt."^{85A} The Plan made an allocation of Rs. 861crores, i.e., 44 per cent of the total outlay for this purpose. The purpose of the plan was to improve yield in agriculture with a view to generating an agricultural surplus fundamental to economic development. Any way it was a need based plan introduced as a tentative measure, as a sort of a new experiment, by the Nehru Government.

Nehru could look at every-thing from practical stand point and amend his views and policies accordingly. It was his contention that the development of other sectors of the Indian economy were directly associated with the development of modern heavy industries and application of science and technology. He was not in favour of the development of employment-oriented small sector vis-à-vis the large-scale industries in the private as well as public sector, though he laid emphasis on food, clothing and housing. To Nehru, the demand of the spirit of the age was industrialization and 'without it, not only would the basic economic problems of poverty remain unsolved, but even the political foundations of independent nationhood would be threatened.'⁸⁶

Nehru says that Gandhi's attitude to the use of machinery underwent a gradual change. The latter objected to 'the craze for machinery, not machinery as such.' "He even came to accept the necessity of many kinds of heavy industries and large-scale key industries and public utilities, provided they were state-owned."⁸⁷ 'Economic equality' was the key slogan of Gandhi.⁸⁸

With these arguments Nehru wanted to testify that though Gandhi was an advocate of cottage and small-scale industries, he recognized the necessity and inevitability of big-scale industry.⁸⁹

But to Nehru the argument related to define the relative merits of small-scale and large-scale industry is irrelevant in the present day situation because "when the world, and the dominating facts of the situation that confront it, have decided in favour of the latter."⁹⁰ However, Nehru admitted that industrialization was an expensive job to begin with since in the beginning it swallowed up money without any return for sometime. Though it might result in poverty and distress till such time industry began to work and make money, plenty of money had to be made available either by loan or otherwise through other sources. But to England arrangement for money was not at all a problem because it "was extra-ordinarily fortunate in getting these vast sums of money from India just when she wanted them most for her developing industries and factories. In spite of these contradictions, however, the capitalist from of civilization taught many a useful lesson. It taught organization for the big industries and large-scale industry require a great deal of organizations before they can function. It taught cooperation in large undertakings. It taught efficiency and punctuality. It is not possible to run big factories or a railway system unless these qualities are present."⁹¹

But in no way was Nehru averse to the development of private sector in Indian economy, for he knew that the organized part of the private industry turned out an average of 80 per cent of the gross total of industrial consumer goods. Therefore, he proposed the simultaneous development of both public and private sector and advocated a positive role especially for the latter within the framework of the rules prescribed in the Industrial Policy Resolution. He said, "I do not see any harm at all – in fact I see a lot of good in the private sector functioning."⁹² He expected that the India's Plan would take an unexpected turn for the better if functioning of the private sector is regulated by means of departmental control. He explained his point of view, "The private sector is a coordinated part of the plans in India, and it is to be controlled at strategic points. It has to be related to and brought into the pattern of the national plan. It may be encouraged but it should always function within the pattern."⁹³

On the whole, from Nehru's stand-point in the socio-economic field, we understand that the state was proposed seriously to take on heavy responsibilities as the principal agency speaking for and acting on behalf of the community as a whole. "No modern nation, however, can retain its freedom without the help of large-scale industries which should be state-owned and state-control led."⁹⁴

It was assumed, public undertakings would secure more far-sighted long-term benefits, because they would be keyed up to that end. Whereas private enterprise possibly confines itself to short-term ventures as it would not appreciate long-term projects where the limited resources might freeze or take long time to bear rewards. However, in terms of all development works the need of long term investment was believed to be of paramount importance. It was concluded that until now private enterprise came only as a matter of a necessity but from

now on it would have to come as a matter of choice or judgement, not dominated by the speculations of profit. Enough of knowledge of its modus operandum was considered meaningful. Semi-public and semi-private corporations were being developed to project them as guides to the new lines on which the future enterprise should work with an objective that the share of profits of any undertaking in the community should be equally distributed between the private enterprise and the public. This was the ideal of welfare economy as contemplated by Nehru where marginal net profit would be at par with the marginal public net product.

The then finance minister in the Nehru's cabinet V.T. Krishnamachari declared, "All government-owned industries in India would have to be converted into joint-stock companies and on a commercial basis in order to infuse a sense of efficiency and incentive in the management."⁹⁵ This relates to the gradual realization of the functional value of profit by the Planning Commission.

For Nehru, as we know, 'the development of heavy industries was synonymous with industrialization'. In one place he stated, that the development of a number of textile mills in Ahmedabad or Bombay or Kanpur could not be called industrialization, it was merely a playing with it. He said, "I do not object to textile-mills – we need them – but our idea of industrialization will be limited, cribbed, cabined and confined by thinking of these ordinary textile mills and calling industrialization. Industrialization produces steel it produces power, they are the base. Once you have got the base, it is easy to build".⁹⁶

The strategy, he emphasized, governing planning in India is to industrialize giving the first place to basic industries. To Nehru, industrialization in India implied development of heavy industries, which

could build machines.⁹⁷ He was critical of those who preferred the development of light industries instead of the heavy ones. "There are some who argue that we must not go in for heavy industry but for lighter ones. Of course, we have to have light industries also but it is not possible to industrialize the nation rapidly without concentrating on the basic industries which produce industrial machines which are utilized in industrial development".⁹⁸

Long before India became independent Nehru had already outlined some fundamental requirements, if India had to develop industrially.

"The three fundamental requirements of India, if she is to develop industrially and otherwise, are a heavy engineering and machine – making industry, scientific research institutes, and electric power. These must be the foundations of all the planning ..."⁹⁹

The First Plan (1951-56) was no plan, though in it were incorporated a few projects which were already in operation or were about to be taken in hand. Similarly there was no strategy of development as such in it, yet development of agriculture and transportation and communication were given a higher priority. It was only with the Second Plan could we come across a clear enunciation of the strategy of development by Indian planners. The Second Plan was based on the Russian experience and inducted a precise strategy of development. This time Nehru was extremely candid in pointing out that industrialization meant development of heavy industries. The Plan frame of the Second Plan reiterated Nehru's stance in unmistakable terms. It states:

"In the long run, the rate of industrialization and the growth of the national economy would depend upon the increasing production of

coal, electricity, iron and steel, heavy machinery, heavy chemicals and heavy industries generally – which would increase the capacity for capital formation. One important aim is to make India independent as quickly as possible of foreign imports of producer goods so that the accumulation of capital would not be hampered by difficulties in securing supplies of essential producer goods from other countries. The heavy industry must, therefore, be expanded with all possible speed”.¹⁰⁰

Once brought in motion the subsequent three plans, i.e., up to the Fifth Plan, also aimed at rapid industrialization through heavy investment on heavy, basic and machine – building industries.

But it does not mean consumer sector was lost sight of, rather in the Nehru – Mahalanobis model, there was an active encouragement on development of cottage industries producing consumer goods. In the Second Five-Year Plan framework it was categorically stated: “The greater the marketable surplus of consumer goods in the household or hand industries, the greater will be the possibilities of investments in heavy industries without any fear of inflation”.¹⁰¹

Nehru gave due importance to small-scale industries and agriculture because he knew they were the sources of consumer goods. He states, “The test of a country’s advance in industrialization is heavy industry – not the small industries that may be put up. That does not mean that small industries should be ignored. They are highly important in themselves for production and for employment.”¹⁰²

The framework of the Second Five-Year Plan reiterates the Nehru’s statement:

“The strategy requires all-out efforts for the maximum utilization of capacity in existing industries and for the development of additional production in the capital light or small sector of industries.”¹⁰³

In fact, for keeping balance in the economy, self-sufficiency has to be promoted and for that and also simultaneously for the provision of work and employment, village and cottage industries are of paramount importance.¹⁰⁴ But it is also a fact, small industries could never vie with large industries in terms of country's progress but they do help in accelerating production and creating employment opportunities. In order to realize his goal of a democratic socialist society in India, Nehru considered essential to activate the base of the Indian social structure comprised of millions and millions of villagers, millions of workers and small earners, unemployed people and people on land.¹⁰⁵

On the question of giving a boost to agriculture production, Nehru opines,

“We shall find that this industrial progress be achieved without agricultural advance and progress... Everyone knows that unless we are self-sufficient in agriculture we cannot have the wherewithal to advance in industries. If we have to import food, then we are doomed so far as progress is concerned. We cannot import both food and machinery”.¹⁰⁶

Self-sufficiency in agricultural production was targeted in every plan coupled with the objective to develop heavy industries simultaneously. But the calculation went wrong when with the success in the First Five-Year Plan it was thought that India had achieved self-sufficiency in agriculture. Therefore, with the Second Plan onward we find a marked shift in strategy. Emphasis had now been placed on industries compared to agriculture. From 1965-66 the country began to

feel inadequacy in the supply of food grains. But Nehru cannot be squarely blamed for this insufficiency in food grains it was the planners who could not foresee that population pressure could mount and one-time self-sufficiency could prove inadequate also in successive plan period. Nehru was always categorical with regard to agriculture. He writes, "We shall find that this industrial progress cannot be achieved without agricultural advance and progress. The fact is that the two cannot be separated. They are intimately connected because agricultural progress is not possible without industry, without tools, without new methods and techniques."¹⁰⁷ Nehru knew that failure to develop agriculture would act as a constraint on 'industrial progress'.

As a matter of fact, Nehru was no economist. He could simply ventilate his ideas, but it was up to his planners that how far they could exert themselves to materialize these ideas into practice.

Nehru model of growth based on heavy industries exhibited many shortfalls with the passage of time. In spite of five decades of planning it failed to achieve a national minimum level of living. There has not been much improvement in the level of poverty. Unemployment and under-employment figure is constantly on the rise. Inequalities of wealth and income have further worsened. Economic power is still concentrated in the hands of a few. Land reform measures are yet to be rigorously implemented. Dissatisfaction is mounting in rural areas despite introduction of one or the other poverty alleviation schemes. The country's economy is still in an inflationary spiral of wage and price increases. There is always a shortage of one or the other item in the country. Since independence never has there been self-sufficiency at any level.

Keeping in view this economic imbroglio, some people advocate the implementation of the so-called 'Gandhian model of economic growth'.

Though Gandhi was also no economist, he did develop certain policies in connection with the development of agriculture, industries etc. 'Gandhian Plan' was brought out by Acharya S.N. Agarwala sometime in 1944, and reaffirmed it in 1948. These publications are the basis of 'Gandhian model of growth'.

The Gandhian plan aimed at raising the material as well as the cultural level of Indian masses to a minimum standard of life within a period of ten years, concentrating primarily on improving the economic conditions of the five lakh plus villages of India by giving a focus on the scientific development of agriculture and cottage industries.

Nehru gave prime importance to heavy industries. During 1950s and 1960s, Nehru's model of development was the only suitable model. Through the development of heavy industries Nehru wanted to build a strong foundation so that the economy could do away with the dependence on foreign aid as well as develop a strong defence. In fact, without strong defence, the question of economic development of a country becomes irrelevant. It was due to Nehru's strategy of development, India became the tenth most industrialized nation in the world. The draft Sixth Plan reviews the over-all achievements of planning vis-à-vis the first five plans, "It is a course of national pride that over this period, a stagnant and dependent economy has been modernized and made more self-reliant."¹⁰⁸

Having achieved a strong economic foundation for self-sustained growth, emphasis now could easily be shifted from heavy industries to capital-light consumer goods industries of the small-scale

and cottage industries category. With a strong economic base, implementation of the Gandhian model of growth becomes no difficult. Although small-scale and cottage industries have a very significant role to play in India in view of production and employment, it would not be very prudent if the development of heavy industry is neglected. Rather it would be suicidal for the country if investment in heavy industry is neglected or curtailed. As written above, Gandhi was also not against the development of certain types of large-scale industries, such as, power, iron and steel, machinery and machine tools, heavy engineering and heavy chemicals. Gandhi knew their importance in terms of the country's economy, but he stood by the principle always that machinery could be good till it operated in the interests of all; it became evil when it served the interests of the few. The Gandhian Plan aimed at the development of agriculture and industries side by side, however, for increasing production and creating employment the development of handicrafts and cottage industries were emphasized.

Nobody thought of the Gandhian Plan when India became independent. Instead, the Russian experience was adopted as a model to introduce the planning system in India. The Nehru-Mahalanobis model simply neglected the small-scale and cottage industries. However, the economic crisis between 1973 and 1975 acted as an eye-opener and the Gandhian Plan was thought as possible alternative. The Industrial Policy Statement of 1977 clearly demonstrated this standpoint :

"The emphasis of industrial policy so far has been mainly on large industries, neglecting the cottage industries completely relegating small industries to a minor role The main thrust of the new industrial policy will be on effective promotion of cottage and small industries widely dispersed in rural areas and small towns. It is the policy of the

Government that whatever can be produced by small and cottage industries must only be so produced."¹⁰⁹

In fact, India cannot afford to neglect one or the other model of development, that is, neither the Gandhian model nor the Nehruvian model. Ignoring the development of heavy industry and putting all the emphasis on agriculture and the small-scale sector will prove counter-productive to India's economic health. Similarly the country also could not afford to neglect the agriculture and the small-scale sector keeping in view the mounting poverty and unemployment. In actuality, the possible course open for India is to adopt the best of both, i.e., the Gandhian and the Nehruvian models of economic development.

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