

# Corporate Sector and Value Orientation

Editor  
Dr. Jugal Kishor Dadhich



**Jain Vishva Bharati Institute**

(Deemed University)

Ladnun - 341 306 (Rajasthan) Ph. : 01581-226110

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## Acknowledgement

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high...  
Where the mind is led forward by thee  
Into ever-widening thought and action  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake”  
(Where the mind is without fear)

When *Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore* wrote his award winning poem, he was drenched in a vision to lead India as well as the world too, in broader sense, towards a ‘Heaven’ where everybody is imagined without any fear, where the thoughts, dreams and actions are inspired and motivated by values. The values, which have a deep impact on our culture, which have magical capabilities of transformation, which have always encouraged and fuelled our souls with everlasting respect, care, cordial feelings of mutual growth and prosperous emotions, for each other, for nature, for society, for country and for world.

Our present world is a new era of commercialization. It is leading all aspects of life, society, culture etc. towards money making activities. This is a traditional continuation in which all our economists along with our educationist seem to urge for money making practices and it seems that the cultural values, moral practices and social aspects are being ignored. Corporate Sector is getting all its definition in ‘Financial terms’. This is leading every body towards ‘Individualism, where ‘I’ and ‘Me’ is being emphasized up on at the cost of our values of individual and global welfare.

This Corporate based ‘Individualism’ has, no doubt, increased the living standard but it has also given rise to many serious challenges and problems in front of us. Some of them are now

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## Relevance of Economic Ideas of Gandhi in 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Dr Jugal Kishor Dadhich

There are two kinds of economies existing in this world. One is mercantile economy and other is political economy. Mercantile economy is the private economy or the economy in the hand of a particular individual. It is simply termed as the capitalistic economy. On the other hand Political economy is public economy in the hands of the state and government. The second kind of economy is the socialistic or the state controlled economy. Both these kinds of economies have their centers at the most developed part of any state. Gandhiji, the father of Indian nation, gave his own concept of economy and developed an independent school of economic thought, partially different from both the existing economic school of thoughts.

Gandhian economics is based on the socio-economic principles. It is largely characterized by its affinity to the principles and objectives of non-violent humanistic socialism, but with a rejection of violent class war and promotion of socio-economic harmony. Thus he negates the Marxist view of the dictatorship of proletariat. Gandhi's economic ideas also aim to promote spiritual development and harmony with a rejection of materialism. Gandhiji's Economic thinking was influenced by Ruskin's work, 'Unto This Last' to which he translated into 'Sarvodaya'<sup>1</sup>. Throughout his life, Gandhi sought to develop ways to fight India's extreme poverty, backwardness and socio-economic challenges as a part of his wider involvement in the Indian Independence

Movement. Gandhi's championing of 'Swadeshi' and non-cooperation was centered on the principles of economic self-sufficiency. During his Non-cooperation movement he targeted the British Clothes which was the symbol of the British colonialism and imperialism and had given the concept of 'khadhi'<sup>2</sup> a symbol of India's freedom struggle. 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 'Khera' in a 'satyagraha' 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 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. For the promotion of this he gave the concept of *Ashrams*, 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. Gandhi also 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. He wrote,

*"I cannot picture myself a time when no man shall be richer than another. But I do picture to myself a time when the rich will spurn to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor and the poor will cease to envy the rich. Even in a most perfect world, we shall fail to avoid inequalities, but we can and must avoid strife and bitterness"*<sup>3</sup>

Contrary to many Indian socialists and communists, Gandhi was averse to all notions of class warfare and concepts of class-

based revolution, which he saw as causes of social violence and disharmony. Gandhi's concept of egalitarianism was centered on the preservation of human dignity rather than material development.

In fact, the first basic principle of Gandhi's economic thought is a special emphasis on 'simple living' which helps in cutting down wants and being self-reliant. He preferred for Swadeshi for the attainment of his 'Sarvodya Society'. He wrote,

*"Revival of the cottage industry and not cottage industries, will remove the growing poverty. When once we have revived the one industry, all the industries will follow.....I would make the spinning wheel the foundation on which to build a sound village life. I would make the wheel the centre round which all other activities revolve".*<sup>4</sup>

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. In essence, supreme consideration is to be given to man than to money.

Gandhi's Sarvodya Society is based on the concept of equality among all the earning classes. He wrote,

*"A lawyer's work has the same value as a barber's in as much as all have the same right of earnings their livelihood from their work".*

Gandhi always tried to give special privileges to the marginalized sections of the Indian society which include Harizans, Tribals, Women, and Children. Gandhi has often quoted that if mankind was to progress and to realize the ideals of equality and brotherhood, it must act on the principle of paying the highest attention to the prime needs of the weakest sections of the population. 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. The revival of the economy is made possible only when it is free from exploitation, so according to Gandhi industrialization on a mass-scale will lead to passive or active exploitation of the people as the problem of competition and marketing comes in. Gandhi believes that for an economy to be self-contained, it should manufacture mainly for its use even if that necessitates the use of modern machines and tools, provided it is not used as a means of exploitation of others.

During India's freedom struggle as well as after India's independence in 1947, Gandhi's advocacy of homespun *khadi* clothing, the *khadi* attire developed into popular symbols of nationalism and patriotism. India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru was a socialist as well as a close supporter of Gandhi. While Nehru was influenced by Gandhi's aversion to the brand of socialism practiced in the Soviet Union, he was also an exponent of industrialization and critical of Gandhi's focus on rural economics.

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, which were eroding with industrialization and modernization. *Sarvodaya* also included *Bhoodan*, or the gifting of land and agricultural resources by the landlords (*zamindars*) to their tenant farmers in a bid to end the medieval system of *zamindari*<sup>5</sup> and for the promotion of agriculture. 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. Bhave would become a major exponent of discipline and productivity amongst India's farmers, labourers and working classes, which was a major reason for his support of the controversial Indian Emergency (1975–1977)<sup>6</sup>. Jayaprakash Narayan also sought to use Gandhian methods to combat organised crime, alcoholism and other social problems.

The proximity of Gandhian economic thought to socialism has also evoked criticism from the advocates of free-market economics. To many, Gandhian economics represent an alternative to mainstream economic ideologies as a way to promote economic productivity without an emphasis on material pursuits or compromising human development. Gandhi's emphasis on peace, "trusteeship" and co-operation has been touted as an alternative to competition as well as conflict between different economic and income classes in societies. Gandhian focus on human development is also seen as an effective emphasis on the eradication of poverty, social conflict and backwardness in developing nations. The Gandhian economic ideas as we discussed above can be seen as the solution to present day mass scale poverty and unemployment. That is the reason why Gandhian socio-economic ideas have gained the interest and attention of an increasing number of people across the world

### Conclusion

Gandhi's views on economics were simple and straight forward at the outset. They have even been criticized at various levels from being utopian to regressive. But it had deep political connotations. He understood economic motives to be the basic principle of imperialism and colonialism. And he therefore understood that the only way to attack and weaken the colonial forces would be to attack the basic economic profits that the British

gained from the colonies. This coupled with his actual understanding of the Indian condition led to the development of a unique brand of economic re-orientation of the Indian society that he propagated throughout his life. However, it will be wrong to consider his economic model to be merely a political tool but has spiritual touch. His concern for the predicament of the Indian villagers was genuine, as was his concern for a heartless mechanization of the world economy sans ethical considerations. In his time, the influence of his economic model was immense and has been dutifully followed in various parts of the world as well as in India, with varied degrees of success. Thus he was a great economic reformer of his time who develop a spiritual model of economics based on the holistic lines rather than the materialistic line as the modern liberal economies under this era of globalization.

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6. Trikha, Rajeshwar, (2009), *Gandhi, Gandhism and the Gandhians*, ABD Publishers, Jaipur.

### Footnote :

1. Means Sarva Udaya in Hindi and the rising of all in English.
2. Khadi is Indian hand spun and hand-woven cloth termed as Indian Cotton and a symbol of Indian Freedom Struggle.
3. Prabhu, R. K., Rao, U. R., (2010), *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, pp257.
4. Prabhu, R. K., Rao, U. R., (2010), *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, pp403-4.

5. *A land owner who controls the major means of production including land in the villages before land reforms in India.*
6. National Emergency imposed during the regime of Indira Gandhi Government.

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**Associate Professor**

*Dept. of Nonviolence and Peace*

*Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, Ladnun (Raj.)*