CHAPTER - V

THE ECONOMIC IDEAL OF THE TWO THINKERS

5.1 Economics and morality

The economic ideals of the two thinkers like their all other ideas are rooted in spiritualism. They have suggested a new approach consistent with other aspects of human life of giving ethical and moral basis to the economic problems of man. Economics is the study of human behaviour pertaining to wealth. Classical economists like Adam Smith, Ricardo and Mill defined Economics as the science of wealth. Adam Smith's "pure economic motive" overshadowed ethical value in man turning him into what is called 'economic man'. From this point of view, economic laws are to be regarded as final. Man is supposed to be guided by 'Economic Reasoning' only or to be always moved by the motive of getting the maximum of wealth with minimum of effort and able and willing to transfer his labour or capital freely as actuated by this motive. In this scheme, 'wealth' is figured with greater prominence than 'man' and the latter is subservient to the former. Thus a concentrated current of materialistic craze is released and there is a race the world over for attainment and accumulation of wealth. It brought materialistic prosperity to a few for a time, neglecting not only a
balanced and even development of society but enslaving
the common man shunning all ethical and moral considerations
and heralding the economic man\(^2\).

5.2 Economic vs. moral progress

Gandhi and Tagore did not subscribe to the belief
of the western thinkers that mere multiplication of wealth
is an indication and yard-stick of real progress. They
insisted that the objective of human conduct should be
moral and spiritual development. Thus they had no faith
in an economics which is devoid of 'morality'. Gandhi
explained that the economics that disregards moral and
sentimental consideration is like "wax works", which being
life-like, lacks 'the life of the living flesh'\(^3\). According
to Gandhi, true economics never militates against the
highest ethical standard and an economics that inculcates
Mammon worship, and enables the strong to amass wealth
at the expense of the weak "is a false and dismal science"\(^4\).
Gandhi confessed that he did not draw a sharp or any
distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that
hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation
is immoral, and therefore, sinful\(^5\). He explained that
to him "growth is the movement of a whole towards a yet
fuller wholeness"\(^6\). He did not believe in 'any economic
growth' which had no moral support behind it. "In so far
as we have made the modern materialistic craze our goal, we are going downhill on the path of progress⁷.

Similarly, Rabindranath explained that by real progress he meant, "the progress of the permanent element in us", when material progress flourishes without the backing of the 'soul' it carries in itself the inherent danger of collision or the risk of 'a sudden breakdown of over strained'. When man is busy in creating profit, wealth and power and when his relationship with others becomes only a matter of 'business' he kills his soul and has 'sold his most previous possession which is human relationship'. This wealth producing system 'turns into a weapon of death for man, forges weapons to kill him and conspires to bring about his ruin'⁸. The poet insisted that since, man is man even in his business* he ought to have cultivated humanity* rather than the power of exploitation. "In working for his livelihood he ought to have earned not only his daily bread but also his eternal truth"⁹, wrote Rabindranath. It is this 'human element' on which the entire Gandhian economic thought is based as pointed out by D. G. Tendulkar in his famous study on Gandhi¹⁰. In the thinkers' economic thought 'man' figured with greater prominence than 'wealth'. As Gandhi observed,

*The underline has been given to emphasize the meaning of the words.
"The true veins of wealth are purple – not in rock but in flesh. The final consummation of all wealth is in producing as many as possible full-breathed bright-eyed and happy-hearted human beings."

5.3 Rabindranath, Gandhi and Marx

Both Rabindranath and Gandhi differed fundamentally from Marx in their approaches towards life and human history. According to Rabindranath and Gandhi the basic principle in determining the course of human history is 'soul' and not 'matter' which is Marx's main concern. Marx argued that the primary element was matter, and that mind was the by-product of matter. According to Marx's materialistic interpretation of history, all the phenomena of human society have their origin in material conditions of life. "It is not the consciousness of men" writes Marx, "that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness."

On the other hand, Rabindranath and Gandhi have given a spiritual interpretation of human history. Rabindranath emphatically points out that all the lower animals are 'parasites' in the sense that they are helplessly, 'carried along by their environment'. They live and die by natural selection. They progress or retrogress as the environment may dictate. The bees for example, for millions of years, have been unable to get beyond the prescribed
pattern of their hive. "But providence displayed a sudden accession of creative courage when it came to man" for his mind has never been helplessly attached to his environment. The poet observed that the history of man upholds the superiority of his 'inner faculties' over the world of matter. The true nature of man is his inner nature, "his greatest powers are within, and on these is his chief reliance", observed Rabindranath. Gandhi like Rabindranath, explained that the essential difference between man and the brute is that "the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the possessions that he owns in common with the brute." K. G. Mashruwala in his work entitled Gandhi and Marx very appropriately points out that Gandhi fundamentally differed from Marx in his interpretation of human history. To Gandhi, the spiritual and moral progress made by man during all these centuries must also be borne in mind in determining the future course of human destiny.

Because of their different interpretations of human history, both Rabindranath and Gandhi differed from Marx in his favourite theories on 'class war' or class struggle, elimination of 'private property' and capitalist class through 'revolution' or means of 'violence'. According to Marx, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle". To each stage of economic
production there corresponds according to Marx an appropriate political form and an appropriate class structure. In every age, the differing modes of acquiring means of subsistence are supposed to divide men into separate groups and create within each group a particular group consciousness. It gives rise to class struggles. The Industrial Revolution had brought into existence two distinct classes: a small privileged class, the owner of the means of production; and the large propertyless 'proletariat'. According to Marx, the privileged class or those "who have" control over the machinery of the state, make laws for the state to safeguard and enhance their interests. In fact, according to Marx, the whole machinery of the government functions to the advantage of the capitalists as a 'class' and they use it for the ruthless exploitation of the proletariat. To put an end to the condition, Marx suggested three means. (1) The abolition of the 'private property' and the propertied class. (II) The establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. (III) Ultimately the withering away of the state and the formation of a 'class-less society'. Thus, to Marx and his followers, the political and other institutions of the world are moulded mainly, if not wholly, by the economic conditions. Marx predicted that political power would ultimately pass into the hands of
the proletariat. Hence he considered it the duty of the
class to unite and help that transformation of power
even by violent means i.e. through revolution. Marx
expresses it, "Force is the mid-wife of every old society
pregnant with a new one". To achieve his goal of economic
equality, Marx disregarded morality and advocated violent
means. In this context, it is interesting to discuss and
analyse the views of Rabindranath and Gandhi on the
inevitability of 'class war' and 'revolution' as well as
on the establishment of a 'class-less' society through
the abolition of 'private property' and elimination of
propertied class as the followers of Marx interpreted it.
Rabindranath and Gandhi discussed these issues from India's
socio-cultural point of view and maintained that the
possibility of such a revolution taking place in India's
traditional 'samaj' ideals and genius was quite remote.

5.4 No class war in Indian ideal

Gandhi observed, "I do not believe in the existence
of class struggle and emphasized, "class war is foreign
to the essential genius of India". He emphasized that
Indians should not be obsessed with catch-words and
seductive slogans imported from the West. They should
have faith in their distinct "Eastern tradition". He
appealed to his countrymen to study their Eastern
institutions in a spirit of "scientific enquiry" and endeavor to find a solution "which promises an escape from the vicious circle of violence and exploitation". Gandhi fully opposed Marx's emphasis on what he calls, 'conflict'. From Marx's point of view each social and human phenomenon around us is the result of 'conflict' with its roots in economic reason. As against this, Gandhi emphasized 'class harmony' based on India's age-old samaj ideal of love, service and co-operation among different classes of people. He observed, "It is surely wrong to presume that the Western socialism and communism are the last word on the question of mass poverty".

Like Gandhi, Rabindranath in his innumerable articles written on India's samaj, has very emphatically pointed out that the so-called class-consciousness arising from the difference of 'wealth' was quite unknown and alien to India's traditional samaj ideals. He wrote, "The pride arising from the difference of wealth has come to our country from the West ... pride in wealth is the greatest sign of man's indignity; we must beware that this meanness does not reach our inmost social being".

5.5 Private property vs. trusteeship ideal

Both Gandhi and Rabindranath were against the theory
of abolition of private property by forceful means. Both of them visualised ownership of property on the basis of trusteeship.

Rabindranath regarded private property not merely as a means of earning one's livelihood, but as a mode of self expression. To him, the attachment to one's property is not a subject of argument; "it is in human nature". He emphasized, "For an ordinary mortal, personal property is the language of his individuality. The highest means of self-expression, for instance, intellect and talents cannot be taken away by force; Rabindranath explains, "One's property can be confiscated, but one's desire for it cannot be cheated." He maintained that "private property will remain; but the excessive individualism of its enjoyment will be circumscribed. What overflows these limits must be for the common good." In short, Rabindranath meant as he explained, "for oneself there must be something of one's own; everything else should be for others." He added that the man of the West puts too much faith in force, where force is really necessary, it goes well; elsewhere it causes mischief. Rabindranath explained that the Soviet Union in trying to solve the problems have taken the path of 'violence' or 'force'. "The greater the violence with which we try to reconcile the force of truth with brute force, the
greater is the subsequent division between them\(^{30}\), he added. The poet maintained that as a landlord or zamindar he did not believe in the indivisible right or the unquestionable authority of the zamindar over his land\(^{31}\). He should act as a trustee of his property on behalf of the peasants who till the land. In a letter written to his daughter-in-law Pratima Debi, the poet defined his stand in clear words:

"It has been my hope that our zamindari should belong to the peasants themselves. We should be their trustees. Some allowance for livelihood we can claim from them, but only as their partners"\(^{32}\).

Rabindranath in his letter to his son Rathindranath Tagore, also clearly wrote, that he regarded the zamindars as 'parasites' who depend on poor tenants in maintaining their food and comfort. He wrote, "I had long nourished a deep repugnance for that business of zamindari . . . . I feel sad that from my childhood I have been brought up as a parasite"\(^{33}\). He also added that his visit to Russia had helped him in strengthening this conviction. Or in other words, although he has criticized Soviet Russia for using 'violence' in solving the land problems, Rabindranath seemed to be satisfied and impressed by the overall settlement of distributing lands to the peasants on
co-operative basis. He appealed the upper classes of his country to help this change by accepting the verdict of time with good grace and with ease: "The time has come for a basic change in our livelihood; may we bring this about with good grace and with ease". The poet added that those people would suffer more who are more deeply entangled. "When distress comes, it is better to meet it half way than to be compelled to accept it . . . it is folly to hope for comfort by evading the crisis." Or in other words, Rabindranath advised the propertied class to change their mode of living according to the need of the time and the people. It only requires a change of mind: "It is not at all difficult to adjust ourselves to new habits if we are prepared within", he added.

Gandhi like Rabindranath, was against the abolition of private property by force or violent means. Gandhi defended the ownership of property of the landlords; "(I do not) mean that the zamindar should be wiped out. The man who supplies brain and metal is as much a tiller; as the one who labours with his hands." He visualized ownership of property on the basis of trusteeship. The rich can help the poor by using their riches not for selfish pleasure, but so as to subserve the interests of the poor. If they do so, there will not be that unbridgable gulf that today exists between the 'haves' and the 'havenots'
"Class division there will be, but they will then be horizontal, not vertical", Gandhi explained. He insisted that he did not favour forcible confiscation of private property as "such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow. Coming from above it is liable to prove a dead weight." Gandhi warned the landlords that their days were numbered. They could no longer continue as lords and masters. They had a bright future if they became the trustees of the poor kisans. Then they would find that no law would be able to touch them. The kisans would be their friends. Gandhi explained that he believed in liquidating class interests by conversion and not by coercion. The society would gain nothing by forcibly dispossessing the zamindars and talukdars of their thousands of bighas of lands: "They only need a change of their heart". They should be encouraged to surrender their gains for the service of the masses, observed Gandhi.

5.6.1 On Bolshevik revolution and economy

Both Rabindranath and Gandhi criticized Bolshevik revolution and economy which the two thinkers believed was based on 'violence' and 'force'. Although Rabindranath was much impressed by the improvement of educational system in post-revolutionary Russia, the poet did not hesitate to condemn and criticize the Bolshevik regime which relied fully on 'violence' and 'force' in achieving certain
social and economic gains. The poet wrote commenting on Bolshevik revolution, "Those who have not the patience to wait for human nature to come to terms in its own time believe in persecution; what they finally build up overnight by violence cannot be relied upon; it cannot support the burden of permanency." To Rabindranath, to resort to violence in order to solve some economic problems as the Soviet regime did believe and experimented with, "is like proclaiming the sea to be the only friend when the volcano is causing trouble on the shore." 

Commenting on Bolshevik rule in Russia, Gandhi like Rabindranath predicted, that it would not last long; "I have no hesitation in saying that Bolshevik regime in its present form cannot last for long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence." He explained that socialism and communism of the West were based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from us. One of such conceptions is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature which he could not subscribe. Gandhi insisted that human nature could be changed through conversion or persuasion and there is no need of using 'force' and 'coercion' for the purpose. Like Gandhi, Rabindranath believed in "wooing of human nature" to be more effective than the use of force or violence.
5.6.2 On 'economic equality' or 'classless society'

Both Gandhi and Tagore did have no faith in total 'economic equality' or 'classless society' on communist ideal. Commenting on the dead 'economic equality' which the Bolshevik regime sought to establish, Rabindranath wrote, "to propose to create only one huge body in the world by binding all men hand and foot with a rope is only worthy of a boastful economist of a Tsar. To try to excel the law of providence shows more stupidity than courage." Rabindranath explains that in Indian traditional society, the difference between the rich and poor was practically non-existent. In Indian society, "wealth acquired its status in society not by huge accumulation, but by fulfilment of its noble responsibility; otherwise it was ashamed of itself. That is to say not wealth but virtue was honoured" wrote Rabindranath. In other words, it implied, as the poet pointed out, "not merely the external success of law, but personal improvement as well. The latter element, indeed, is the lasting living refuge of human welfare." Indian society never encourages elimination of differences by 'force' or 'coercion' as we see in the West. India's ideal always has been to seek harmony among differences, to bring unity in diversity. Rabindranath

*The underline has been given to emphasize the meaning of the words.*
emphasized that man would never tolerate for all time the unreality of 'individual-less collectivity' - the Soviet regime wanted to establish.\(^5\)

Similarly, Gandhi insisted that total economic equality was neither possible nor desirable to establish. Commenting on Soviet ideal, Gandhi observed, "As a class the rich will remain and the poor also in spite of dictatorships labelled benevolent."\(^5\) He added that, "even in the most perfect world, we shall fail to avoid inequalities."\(^5\) He explained that inequalities in intelligence and even opportunity would last till the end of time. "A man living on the banks of a river has any day more opportunity of growing crops than one living in an arid desert."\(^5\) But the privileged one should be encouraged to look upon, himself as a servant of society. He earns for its sake and "spends for its benefit."\(^5\) Like Rabindranath, Gandhi appealed to his countrymen to renew their faith in their ancient 'samaj' ideal based on co-operation, love and service to others. Gandhi observed, "Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: 'All land belongs to Gopal'." Gandhi added that 'Gopal' in modern language means the people.\(^5\) In this society, class difference will remain but they will only be horizontal not vertical.\(^5\)
5.7 The role of society in economic life of India

Both Gandhi and Tagore have pointed out that in the traditional Indian economic ideal, the society is placed before the state. Rabindranath emphatically pointed out that in the West the state has taken upon itself the discharging of the responsibility of making all welfare efforts. "The source of strength in Europe is the state". In Europe, the state distributes alms, imparts education, looks to the preservation of religion. Therefore the best way open to European civilization is to protect the state from internal erosion and attack from without, is to "strengthen, activise and energise state rule". On the other hand, in India, "society is the source of our welfare". It pervades our life under the cloak of 'religion'. So, according to Rabindranath, India should consider the preservation of her society and her religion as the only way of self protection. Like Gandhi, Rabindranath regarded 'state' as a necessary evil and symbol of 'violence'. Both of them regarded the individual as the supreme architect of his own government and preferred minimum state or governmental interference in his private and public life. In this case, they regarded India's age-old 'samaj organization' to be the highest manifestation of the ideal of decentralized political and economic power based on 'pure morality'. Gandhi's ideal of 'Ram Rajya' was
based on this ideal. As he observed that by Ramrajya he meant the establishment of "sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority". Gandhi explained that he would personally prefer "not a centralization of power in the hands of the state but an extension of the sense of trusteeship". Or in other words, as he put it differently, "The violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the state". He added that he looked upon an increase in the power of the state with greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress. Or in other words, like Rabindranath, Gandhi always put voluntary organization like 'society' before the 'state'. They believed that 'government is the best which governs the least'. It denotes, as Gandhi explained, a 'state of enlightened anarchy'. In such a state, every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. Rabindranath described it as the 'spirit of religion' that governs Hindu society. Or in other words, both Gandhi and Tagore wanted to revive and re-establish India's old 'samaj' ideal based on morality or guided by the spirit of her 'religion'. Both of them criticized the Soviet ideal of 'dictatorship' as an ideal and as it was practised.
Rabindranath observed, "Personally, I am not enamoured of dictatorships in any sphere ... I admit that dictatorship is a great nuisance". He explained that in its name many persecution took place in Russia. "It's negative aspect is compulsion, which is sin". Like Tagore, Gandhi was against the dictatorship of any kind whether it was benevolent or not, as to him, it meant concentration of 'power' or 'authority' in the hands of a few. Gandhi observed, "I cannot accept benevolent or any other dictatorship".

Both of them were against the circumscribing the function of society in India. Hindu society under the protective wing of the state will lose its vitality and the power of growth emphasized Rabindranath. Both of them repeatedly and emphatically pointed out that India could save herself from ruin and stagnation only by reconstructing and revitalizing her village and society. Rabindranath wrote, "Society shall have to be awakened, it shall have to accept all responsibilities for the sake of our self-protection".

5.8 On industrialization of India

Unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, both Gandhi and Tagore were against rapid industrialization of India. In fact both Gandhi and Tagore had a great distrust for anything
mechanical or artificial. The thinkers' anti-state and anti-governmental feeling originated from this conviction. As Gandhi observed that he regarded the state as a 'soulless machine'. He explained that individual has a soul, the state being a soulless machine only 'represents violence in a concentrated and organized form'. Or in other words, he regarded 'machine' only as a symbol of 'power' and 'exploitation'. Gandhi explained that he believed that industrialization would prove to be a curse for mankind, as it depends entirely on the capacity to exploit others. He observed, "My fundamental objection to machinery rests on the fact that it is machinery that has enabled these nations (of the West) to exploit others." Rabindranath, like Gandhi, had a fundamental objection to 'machinery' which he believed had enabled the Western nations to exploit the worker countries of Asia and Africa. He wrote that the West came to Asia, not with the imagination and sympathy that unite and create, but with a shock of passion - passion for power and wealth. "The West has not sent out its humanity to meet the man in the East, but only its machine." Rabindranath, like Gandhi, regarded 'machine' only as an instrument of power and exploitation. The poet's anti-machinery or anti-industrialization attitude is reflected vividly in his famous novel "Red Oleanders" and
in his play, "Mukta-Dhara"\textsuperscript{70}. Both Gandhi and Tagore condemned bitterly the machine civilization of the West. Gandhi observed, "Machinery is like a snake-hole which may contain from one to a hundred snakes". He added that where there is machinery there are large cities, where there are large cities there are increasing complexities of life, problem of health, sanitation and labour. He concluded, "I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery"\textsuperscript{71}. He emphasized that industrialization was not necessary for India as her ideal of 'high thinking' was inconsistent with European ideal of complicated material life based on Mammon worship\textsuperscript{72}. Like Gandhi, Rabindranath in interpreting India's social history, pointed out that in Indian society the ideal of multiplication of wealth and wants was never regarded as the supreme goal of life\textsuperscript{73}. He explained that India knew machine only through the imperialist Britain whose main concern was increase of profit. He explained that with the advent of the 'Age of Machinery' the sufferings of China, Africa and other weak countries went on increasing\textsuperscript{74}. Or in other words, like Gandhi, Rabindranath identified industrialism in the West to be the root cause of imperialism. Like Gandhi, he also maintained that India being primarily an agricultural country and having an age-old rural economy would not be benefitted by industrialization\textsuperscript{75}. 
5.9 **Limited use of machinery**

Rabindranath explained that people should keep their faith in life that creates and not machine that constructs - in the power that hides its force and blossoms in beauty and not in the power, "that bares its arms and chuckles at its capacity to make itself obnoxious". He added that "Machine is good when it helps but not so when it exploits life, that science is great when it destroys evil, but not when the two enter into an unholy alliance". Similarly, Gandhi explained that his opposition to machinery was often misunderstood by the people. He opposed only that machinery which exploits or displaces necessary human labour or when it seeks to dominate over man. He would welcome that machinery which saves individual labour and lightens the burden of the millions of cottages. Gandhi explained that, whilst the modern machine-age aimed at converting men into machines, he was "aiming at reinstating man turned machine to his original estate".

In replying to a question put by an American correspondent, Gandhi explained that Pandit Nehru wanted industrialization because he thought that if it was socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. But, he personally believed that the evils were inherent in industrialism and no amount of socialization could
eradicate them. Like Gandhi, as pointed out by Krishna Kripalani, in his study on Rabindranath (Oxford University Press, 1962, p.9), the poet believed that the real crisis of civilization was due, not to the conflict between one class and another, between one group of states and another, between this ideology and that or between the East and the West, but between man and the machine, between personality and organization. Man needs both machine and organization for his welfare, but they must be mastered and humanized by him instead of his being mechanized and dehumanized by them. Like Gandhi, Rabindranath dreaded every form of organized power, whether social, political or industrial, which ignored human values and tended to stifle the personality of man.

Both Gandhi and Tagore realized it fully, that the future course of India's progress depended not on rapid industrialization or mechanization of industries and on the growth of big cities as in Europe, but in organizing and rebuilding her millions of little villages with the spirit of self-help and co-operation. Like Gandhi, Rabindranath believed that the pivot of Indian life and civilization was not the political state but the autonomous social unit called 'samaj'. 
5.10.1 Spirit of self-help and constructive work in Indian villages

It is interesting to note that long before Gandhi, Rabindranath realized, wrote and started work for village reorganization and improvement which he thought was the vital need of the time. In his many writings, essays and addresses of the time the poet repeatedly advised the educated and gentle classes of his time, not to drift away from the people of villages but to unite them, to educate them with the lesson of self-help and constructive work. He not only wrote and spoke for the cause, even started work in the fields. Before he was in his thirties and forties (roughly from 1892 to about 1910) he started village reorganization and improvement work in his estates in eastern and northern Bengal. The poet himself wrote that: "Once upon a time I moored my boat to the sand banks of the Padma to devote myself to literature. I had thought that I would dig the mine of ideas with my pen; this was my vocation; I was incompetent to do anything else. But when I failed to persuade peoples that our field for self-government was in the peasant villages and that the exercise must begin at once, I had to lay aside my pen and say: very well, let me undertake this task myself."*83.

*The underline has been given to emphasize the words.
Rabindranath started his 'Shantiniketan' in 1901-5, and immediately started work for village regeneration at 'Surul' a couple of miles away from Shantiniketan. As we know from the writings of Krishna Kripalani (who spent many years with Rabindranath and even married his grand-daughter Mandita), the earliest experiment in what is today known as 'community development' were conducted by Tagore, first among the peasants of his own estates, later in the institute which he founded for this purpose and named 'Srimikutam' (the name Surul later changed to 'Srimikutam'). "His writings on rural developments are still the finest manual for all workers in the field", pointed out Krishna Kripalani.

Like Gandhi, Rabindranath stood for a self-sufficient, balanced and self-contained rural economy based on the ideal of decentralization of power and authority and guided by the absolutist principle, "greatest good to all".

5.10.2 The peasantry

Gandhi observed, "The kisan or the peasant is the salt of the earth, which rightly belongs or should belong to him". Like Gandhi, Rabindranath believed as he wrote, "that the right to the land does not morally belong to the landlord, but to the peasants". He added that his object had always been to strengthen the peasants in
self-reliance. During his tour in Russia, when he was asked to comment on his writings on Indian peasantry, Rabindranath replied, "Not only do I write, I work for them. To the utmost limit of my own power, I do educational work among them and help them to improve their villages."

5.10.3 City vs. village

Gandhi wanted that the village should produce all that is necessary for the consumption of its own people. Cities should serve as emporia for village products instead of village being used as a dumping ground for the manufactured goods of the cities. Rabindranath maintained an identical opinion as he wrote: "I want our villages to enjoy full human dignity and wealth instead of being content with the leaving and surplus of the towns.

5.10.4 Village self-government

Both Gandhi and Tagore insisted that village should be reorganized not on temporary but on permanent basis. In fact Tagore's ideal of 'Swadeshi Samaj' and Gandhi's ideal of 'Hind-Swaraj' are the two sides of the same coin. The thinkers' ideal was the establishment of several independent village units or republics which could manage their own affairs with least governmental help and outside interferences. The 'village mandalies', as Rabindranath
put it as Gandhi put it, would maintain law and order, enhance justice, settle the disputes and organize village welfare works and education. Gandhi observed, "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers . . . . in the structure life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual" 93.

5.10.5 Agriculture

Agriculture would be carried on co-operative basis. Rabindranath pointed out that the peasants should learn to work on co-operative basis. The poet wrote, "Agriculture will never improve unless land can be cultivated by co-operative methods. The attempt to raise crops on strips of land, separated by ridges, by means of time-honoured ploughs is as good as trying to fill a bottomless pit"94. Gandhi like Rabindranath advocated co-operative and collective agricultural farmings 95.

In short, the ideal society, according to Gandhi and Rabindranath, would be a state of enlightened anarchy, where the social life being guided by the spirit of religion has become so perfect, as to be self-regulated. In that society both zamindars and peasants would stay and live
without being a threat to each other. The spirit of service, love and co-operation would rule the life of common people leaving little scope for conflict of divergent interests.

5.11 The difference in the views of Gandhi and Rabindranath

Both Gandhi and Rabindranath agreed that since India was primarily an agrarian country and culturally different from the West, her economic system should be evolved according to the tradition and genius of her people and society. India should not imitate the economic pattern followed in the West, instead she should reaffirm her faith in her age-old 'samaj ideal' based on the principle of self-imposed limitation of want, plain living and high thinking, love and self-less service to others.

But Gandhi and Rabindranath differed sharply from each other on the issue of using the "Spinning Wheel" or "Charka" as a means of eradicating mass unemployment and poverty in Indian villages. While Gandhi accepted and upheld the 'Charka' to be the only ready means of solving the mass unemployment problem in rural India, Rabindranath accepted the 'Charka' as one of the many measures to be taken for that purpose. Rabindranath in an article entitled, "The cult of Charka", contributed to The Modern Review, September 1925, publicly criticized Gandhi for
his overenthusiastic support to the so-called 'Charka Cult'.

The main points of the arguments on the part of Rabindranath were:

(i) It demanded a blind obedience on the part of people to an unreasoned creed.

(ii) Hand-spinning for all would lead to a dead monotony and a feeling of frustration among people.

(iii) The 'Charka' alone would not 'bring Swaraj' or remove 'the whole of our poverty'.

It is interesting to note that Gandhi answered Tagore's criticism in his famous article, "The poet and the Charka" (Young India 5-11-1925), with his characteristic wit and patience. He explained that the 'Charka' would produce a sense of 'unity of purpose' among the people. He claimed that in hand-spinning was hidden the protection of women's virtue, the insurance against famine and the cheapening of prices. In it was hidden the secret of 'Swaraj'. He argued that round the Charka, people would learn the value of various welfare works like anti-Malarise campaign, improved sanitation, settlement of village disputes, conservation and breeding of cattle and hundreds of other beneficial activities. Gandhi concluded his articles thus:
"It is not my purpose to traverse all the poet's arguments in detail. Where the differences between us are not fundamental - there is nothing in the poet's argument which I cannot endorse and still maintain my position regarding the Charka".

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that although Rabindranath did not write elaborately or specifically on the issues relating to modern industrial relationship i.e. the problems of labour, capital, strikes, wages, etc., his famous poem on "Women Labour" (মহিলার কর্ম) expressed his deep sympathy for the exploited industrial workers in India.
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44. Ibid., p.121.
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46. Selections from Gandhi, p.92.
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51. Ibid., pp.114-121.
52. The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, p.255.
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66. Selections from Gandhi, p.41.
67. Ibid., p.63.
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69. Creative Unity, pp.98-104.


72. Ibid., p.243.


74. Letters from Russia, pp.119-120.

75. Rabindra Rachanavali, III, p.539, Rabindra Rachanavali Vol. X.

76. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, pp.163-64.

77. The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, p.236.

78. Ibid., p.237.


80. Harijan, Sept. 29, 1940.

81. Rabindranath's writings, essays and addresses on the issue have been compiled under the title 'self-help' in Rabindra Rachanavali Vol. III pp.320-625. Letters from Russia, Appendix III, and Appendix IV, pp.137-155.

82. Mihararanjan Roy, Artist in Life, pp.405-416.

83. Letters from Russia, p.20.


85. Ibid.

86. M. K. Gandhi, Socialism of my conception, p.263.

87. Letters from Russia, p.21.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid., p.31.
91. *Letters from Russia*, p. 123.
Rabindranath: Material versus moral growth.

"Growth there must be in life. But growth does not mean an enlargement through additions . . . the man whose sole concern is the acquisition of power or material, deals with a task which is cursed with eternal incompleteness".

Lectures and Addresses, p.65.

"Material possessions create the worst division in human society when they are disproportionately big and naturally unmindful of moral responsibility".

Ibid., p.129.

Gandhi: Material vs. moral growth.

"That economics is untrue which ignores or disregard moral values".

M. K. Gandhi, All men are Brothers, p.166.

"I must confess I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics".

The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, p.263.

Rabindranath: Faith in Man.

"As I look around I see the crumbling ruins of a
proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility. At yet, I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history after the cataclysm (second world war) is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice... A day will come when unvanquished Man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage. 

Rabindranath Tagore, Crisis in Civilization, p.21.

Gandhi: Faith in Man

"I believe that the sum total of the energy of mankind is not to bring us down but to lift us up, and that is the result of the definite, if unconscious, working of the law of love."

Selections from Gandhi, p.21.

"I refuse to suspect human nature. It will, is bound to respond to any noble and friendly action."


"Human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality."

Ibid., 122.
Rabindranath: No class war in India's samaj ideal

"The position of the merchant community whose main business is the earning of profit by investment was low in our society . . . the great difference between the rich and the poor was then non-existent. Wealth acquired its status in (Indian) society not by huge accumulation, but by fulfilling its noble responsibility, otherwise it was ashamed of itself. That is to say, not wealth but virtue was honoured (in Indian society)".

Letters from Russia, p.119.

"The pride arising from the difference of wealth has come to our country from the West . . . Pride in wealth is the greatest sign of man's indignity; we must beware that this meanness does not reach our immost social being".

Ibid., p.8.

Gandhi: No class war in India's samaj ideal

"Class war is foreign to the essential genius of India".

Selections from Gandhi, p.91.

"The view of class war does not appeal to me. In
India a class war is, not only not inevitable, but it is avoidable if we have understood the message of non-violence.

M. K. Gandhi, *All men are brothers*, p.176.

Rabindramath: *Revolution for economic improvement*.

"It (revolution) is like proclaiming the sea to be the only friend when the volcano is causing trouble on the shore. It is only when the real nature of this shoreless sea is known that one becomes impatient to get back to the shore".

*Letters from Russia*, p.121.

"Any teaching concerning man must have human nature for its chief element . . . . When individualism turns into downright selfishness and runs foul of society, the lopping off of "self" at one stroke from self-interest is the proposed remedy for all troubles. Trouble may thereby be lessened, but it is not improbable that society will cease to move altogether. A horse without reins is apt to drag the carriage into the ditch, but the carriage is not likely to behave merely because the horse is shot down, it is necessary to think of the reins".

Gandhi: Revolution and economic improvement.

"I do not believe in short violent cuts to success . . . However much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself".


"Socialism and communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it, for I know . . . . (man) can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute".

The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, p. 254.

Rabindranath: Total class-less society is not possible.

"To propose to create one huge body in the world by binding all men hand and foot with a rope is only worthy of a boastful economist of a Tsar. To try to excel the law of providence shows more stupidity than courage".

Letters from Russia, p. 118.
Gandhi: **Total class-less society is not possible.**

"We do not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish".

*The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, p.194.

Habindranath: **Personal property vs. the spirit of trusteeship.**

"For an ordinary mortal, personal property is the language of his individuality; he is struck dumb, as it were, if he loses it. Had it been merely a means of earning one's livelihood and not of self-expression it would have been easier to convince him by argument that one improves one's livelihood by parting with it. The highest means of self-expression, for instance, intellect and talents cannot be taken away by force; one's property can be confiscated but one's desire for it cannot be cheated . . . private property will remain, but excessive individualism of its enjoyment will be circumscribed. What overflows these limits must be for the common good. . . . . In short, for oneself there must be something of one's own; everything else should be for others."

*Letters from Russia*, pp.34-35.
"It has been my (Rabindranath's) hope that our zamindari should belong to the peasants themselves, we should be their trustees, some allowance for livelihood we can claim from them, but only as their partners".

Letters from Russia, p.156.

Rabindranath: Personal property vs. the spirit of trusteeship

"(In Indian society) there was harmony between personal and communal property. Public opinion was so strong that the rich man was ashamed of enjoying his wealth alone. He felt honoured when society accepted favours from him, in short, in this relationship there was nothing of what is called charity in English. The wealthy look his place by the side of the destitute .... Here (in Indian society) individual and communal will could co-operate. It was spiritually creative because its basis was voluntary and not a political agency; it implied not merely the external success of law but personal improvement as well. The latter element, indeed, is the lasting living refuge of human welfare.".

Letters from Russia, pp.118-19.

Gandhi: Personal property vs. the spirit of trusteeship.

"Real socialism has been handed down to us by our

*The underline has been given to emphasize the words.
ancestors who taught: 'All land belongs to Gopal'.
Gopal literally means shepherd, it also means God. In modern language it means the State i.e. the people.

Selections from Gandhi, p.98.

"I shall be no party to dispossessing propertied classes of their private property without just cause. My objective is to reach your (propertied class) heart and convert you so that you may hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare".

Ibid., p.91.

"Let us not be obsessed with catch-words and seductive slogans imported from the West. Have we not our distinct Eastern tradition? Are we not capable of finding our own solution to the question of capital and labour? . . . . All that comes from the West on this subject is tarred with the brush of violence. I object to it because I have seen the wreckage that lies at the end of this road".

Ibid., p.95.

"I do not want to destroy the zamindar, but neither I feel that the zamindar is inevitable. I expect to convert the zamindars and other capitalists by the
"Upon the loss of sense of religion, the reign of the machine and of method has been firmly established. It is the simplification of man by jettisoning a great part of his treasure; spiritually speaking he has made a homeless tramp, getting a freedom which is negative because superficial."

Lectures and Addresses, p. 73.

"The machine alone is of little use unless the mechanist himself becomes a man."

Letters from Russia, p. 41.

"In all other European countries the national endeavour is for individual gain and enjoyment. Its stir is tremendous; indeed like the churning of the ocean in the Puranas; it brings to the top both poison and nectar. But nectar falls to the share of a few only: the majority have the poison - there is endless unrest on this account."

Letters from Russia, p. 54.
Gandhi: *Man versus machine.*

"Industrialization is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind . . . (it) depends entirely on your capacity to exploit."


"The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man".


Habimdranath: *All-round village service and constructive programmes.*

"Let us never have the poverty of spirit to say that for the village people the very little is enough. Let us not show our disrespect to them by throwing them crumbs. Give reverently: let there be no want of reverence in the offering of our self-dedication to the village".

*Letters from Russia*, pp.154-155.

".... the distance between that very small part of the country, the five per cent, who have intelligence, education, wealth and honour, and the remaining ninety-five per cent of the population is wider even than the ocean. We live in the same country and yet we do not belong to the..."
same country*.

Ibid., p.151.

"Not only have I (Rabindranath) written about peasants but I am working among them*.

Ibid., p.179.

"I want our villages to enjoy full human dignity and wealth instead of being content with the leavings and surplus of the towns*. It is my firm belief that by co-operative methods alone the villages will find it possible to salvage their sinking strength*.

Letters from Russia, p.123.

"It was my (Rabindranath's) conviction that what India most needed was constructive work coming from within. In this work we must take all risks and go on doing the duties which by right ours*. . . . . It would be mischievous if the gifts we wish for were granted to us at once, and I have told my countrymen, time and again, to combine for the work of creating opportunities to give vent to our spirit of self-sacrifice and not for the purpose of begging*.

Tagore's Lectures and Addresses, p.109.

*The underline has been given to emphasize the words.
Gandhi: **Back to village - all round village service and constructive programmes**

"I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its few cities but in its 7,00,000 villages".

*The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, p.361.

"Hitherto the villagers have died in their thousands so that we might live. We might have to die so that they may live".


"My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity".

*Selections from Gandhi*, p.73.

"(In an ideal village Swaraj) As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis . . . the individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government".

Rabindranath: The spirit of modernity

"In this connection (co-operative principle in village regeneration) I must stress one point, when I wish our villages to revive, I never wish for the return to rusticity . . . the scope of modern knowledge and mind is universal, although the sympathies of the modern heart are not as wide. Villages must be infused with life which is neither trivial nor narrow; which neither dwarfs human nature nor keeps in darkness".

Letters from Russia, p.122.

Rabindranath: On the need of social relationship

"From the very outset European civilization has to consolidate itself in the city. In the city man's opportunities grow while his social relations become narrow. The city is big, men live dispersed; individualism is extreme and the whirl of competition intense. Its prosperity accentuates the gulf between the rich and the poor and what little is done to bring them together by charity is devoid of comfort and respect. There the possessors are related to each other by material ties; their social relations are either disrupted or non-existent.

Letters from Russia, p.119.

*The natural law of human nature is sociability.*
In fellowship man finds his true refuge in society. I do not speak of the advantage of mutual help. When man is related with his neighbours in all respects, when his relationship pervades the home and the world beyond, its greatness itself brings him joy. We find our deepest satisfaction where it is not merely a practical relation, nor a relation of convenience, nor of business, but a relationship of friendliness transcending self-interest. There man may be deprived of everything, but he has an abundant satisfaction in the human soul".

Rabindranath, *Letters from Russia*, p.139.

"Cities like New York or London have assumed a giant form by sucking up the vitality of countless villages and hamlets. But one must remember that man cannot be intimately related to one another in a city".


"The heart of our country beat in the village, because there the social bond between man and man could be true. Hence the social man found his refuge in the village . . . . as far as I know he (Mahatma Gandhi) recognizes the greatness of human relationships".

Gandhi: The spirit of modernity.

"The use of machinery is lawful which subserves the interest of all".

"I would favour the use of most elaborate machinery if thereby India's pauperism and resulting idleness be avoided".

"Machinery has its place; it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour".

Selections from Gandhi, p.65.

"I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine".

Ibid.

"I have no quarrel with steamships and telegraphs. They may stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all its connotes".

Ibid., p.64.

Gandhi: The need of social interrelationship.

"The present distress is undoubtedly insufferable pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy*. The

*The underline has been given to emphasize the words.
evil does not lie in the use of bullock-carts. It lies in our selfishness and want of consideration for our neighbours".

*Selections from Gandhi*, p.64.

"You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages . . . . Rural economy as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have, therefore, to be rural minded before you can be non-violent".

*Selections from Gandhi*, p.72.

"The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. I use the adjective moral as synonymous with spiritual. This end can be achieved under decentralization. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with non-violent structure of society".