CHAPTER – V

APPLICATION OF NON-VIOLENCE IN POLITICS AND ECONOMICS
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Sarvodaya

_Satyagraha_ and _Sarvodaya_ are the two key notions in Gandhian thought. These two ideas are very intimately connected. Moreover these ideas unfold the true significance of _ahimsa_ in the social and political spheres. While _satyagraha_ is a method of bringing about change in politics and society, _sarvodaya_ is the goal that one should strive to achieve. Gandhi proposed _sarvodaya_ as a moral ideal based on the principle of non-violence. Human beings are moral persons. A moral being is one who seeks not only one’s own happiness, but one who strives to promote the greater good. According to one dominant view of morality, the moral ideal consists in securing the greatest happiness of the greatest number. This view is known as utilitarianism. Gandhi was critical of this conception of morality for the following reasons. Firstly, in traditional version of utilitarianism ‘happiness’ is taken to mean material or economic prosperity. Secondly, the view allows that in the pursuit of the happiness of the greatest number, the interest of the minority can be sacrificed.

According to Gandhi, the exclusive quest for the physical and material happiness of the majority is not in consonance with the twin principles of truth and
non-violence. Gandhi was greatly influenced by the thoughts of John Ruskin on ethical and economic questions. Ruskin in his book *Unto the Last* has very effectively countered the utilitarian arguments. He argues that the well being of the people at large consists in conforming to the moral law. All religions presuppose the moral law. Further, our own true happiness consists in observing it.

Gandhi has given the importance of village industries. Gandhi was not opposed to mechanization as such. Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work to be accomplished. But it is evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as in the case of India.

The notary of *Swadeshi* will, as a first duty, dedicate himself to the services of his immediate neighbours. One must, as far as possible, purchase ones requirement locally and not buy things imported from foreign lands, which can easily be manufactured in the country.

He also emphasised on "Gram Swarajya". He said that there should be decentralization of the government so that the power is not in the hands of few people only. The villagers need to go to the State government for the developments of their own village. This is also one way of stopping corruption which our country is facing.

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1 Gandhi brought out a Gujarati translation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, wrote a preface to this book and gave the title *Sarvodaya* to it.
Given the Gandhian view of moral autonomy of man, one could very well think that Gandhi would ideally accept a state without any coercive power. Gandhi notes that if it is difficult to achieve the ideal state or society, then the state which governs the least, is the best. He says:

Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is, then, 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. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that Government is the best which governs the least.

To Gandhi, the state is neither natural nor necessary for the development of an individual or society. It is rather a positive hindrance to man's moral development. The Greeks regarded the state as the highest fulfillment of human life and as an end itself. Gandhi drew an excellent balance between individual liberty and social restraint. He says:

I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to the present to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the

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law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member.³

Gandhi made an essential distinction between the state and the society. He viewed the state with utmost suspicion and contempt on account of its essentially violent nature, which is destructive of moral freedom and voluntariness. On the other hand, he regarded the society as natural to man which opens out an infinite opportunity for voluntary co-operation for the sake of which man would cheerfully submit to social restraint. To Gandhi, the society is a natural and necessary institution just like a family, and the relation between the individual and the society is one of close interdependence. To quote MacIver:

The state is a structure not coeval and co-extensive with society, but built within it as a determinate order for the attainment of specific end.⁴

Prof. Barier remarks that the state exists for one great, but a single purpose; society exists for a number of purposes, some great and some small, but all, in their aggregate, deep as well as broad. According to Gandhi, the state is only one of the means to enable people to better their condition.⁵ According to Gandhi, spiritual

³ M.K. Gandhi, Harijan, 27.5.1939.
⁵ M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 2.9.1931.
freedom is bound to consummate also in external freedom from all imposed restraints. A man who acquires inner or spiritual freedom would not tolerate the social and economic exploitation of his neighbours.\textsuperscript{6} Gandhi says that self-government means continuous effort to be independent of governmental control, whether it is foreign government or whether it is national.\textsuperscript{7} He believed in the autonomy of man. He said, it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. It is contrary to the very nature of man. Just as man will not grow horns or tail, so he will not exist as a man if he has no mind of his own. Again he said:

Real *Swaraj* will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few
but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when
it is abused.\textsuperscript{8}

He conceived of a stateless society in which individual liberty of opinion and action is jealously guarded. He was opposed to the theory of absolute state sovereignty propounded by Hobbes, Austin, Hegel and others. He was for popular moral sovereignty. He said:

Real *Swaraj* will not come by the acquisition of authority by a few
..... *Swaraj* is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{7} M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 6.8.1925.
\textsuperscript{8} M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 18.5.1940.
Hence his ideal state of Swaraj would be a "sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority".\textsuperscript{10} In his opinion, man ceases to be man when he does not cease to obey the prescription of the state that conflict with his moral sense. He said:

It is contrary to our manhood if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience ... A man who has realized his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no one else. Man-made laws are not necessarily binding on him... We are sunk so low that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man will only realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. So long as the superstition that man should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist.\textsuperscript{11}

Gandhi agreed with the western anarchists and the Marxists as to its general outline. Complete non-violence will be the watchword of this society which would be based on voluntary co-operation, this cooperation arising out of their natural needs and inclinations. There will be no coercive authority and no class, caste or communal distinctions. There will be no police, no military, no law courts, heavy transport or centralized production. Willing submission to social restraint for common good will constitute the social bond. In this egalitarian society everyone will work according to his capacity and enjoy the fruits of his labour to the extent of his needs.

Anarchism is an extreme form of individualism. It means a state without a ruler. Anarchists are mainly of two types, philosophical anarchists are those who place the individual above society. Those who stress on the collective life more than the individual are the communist anarchists. Anarchism, as a political theory, aims at a stateless society which will be free from all types of coercions. For the purpose of fulfilling the various social needs, full and complete reliance is placed on the co-operative instinct in man. So anarchists are against state.

He agreed with the Western anarchists that exclusive ownership of property develops inequality which fosters vanity and depravity among the rich and a slave mentality and immorality among the poor.

Gandhi drew distinction between man and the system. He said:

It is quite proper to resist and attack a system. But to attack and resist the author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself.12

Discussing upon the freedom of the individual Gandhi says:

True democracy or Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the opponents. That does not make

for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under the regime of unadulterated *ahimsa*.\(^{13}\)

The Western anarchists were prepared to use violence as a method of organized resistance to authority, but they did not accept it as a means of co-operation and action in the anarchist social order, for freedom cannot be attained or retained under a regime of institutionalized violence.

Godwin's technique of social change based on his rationalism and intellectual environmentalism bears closest resemblance to that of Gandhi. He depended on reason and persuasion as the sole instrument for bringing in the new order. According to him, the only substantial method for the propagation of truth is discussion, so that the errors of one man may be detected by the acuteness and severe disquisition of his neighbours.

The Gandhian political philosophy bears close resemblance to that of the Western anarchist in two respects—decentralization and international federalism. The political ideal of *Sarvodaya* is enlightened anarchism. It aims at a coercion-free social order in which people are enlightened enough to rule themselves.

As a believer in absolute morality, he does not want to compromise on the question of good means, but agrees with the continuation of the government in the present circumstances. Taking into consideration the evils of government as a soulless machinery, he disagrees with the centralization of powers in the hands of the state. If the state cannot be done away with, its power can be decentralized.

\(^{13}\) M.K. Gandhi, *Harajan*, 27.5.1939.
Gandhi wants to decentralize power and wants to give more of it to the villages.

For Gandhi, democracy is an ideal. He defines:

Democracy must in essence mean the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all sections of the people in the service of common good of all.\(^{14}\)

It means Gandhi emphasizes democracy as the government for the people rather than by the people. At another place also he gives a similar view.

I hold it to be an utter delusion to believe, that a large number of delegates are in any way a help to the better conduct of business, or that they safeguard the principle of democracy. Fifteen delegates zealous of the interests of the people, would any day be a better safeguard for democracy than six hundred irresponsible men have a keen sense of independence, self-respect and their oneness, and should insist upon choosing as their representatives good and true.\(^{15}\)

He has no complaint against representative democracy. He appreciates Western democracy and writes: “it has gems in it, certainly of true type. But it can only come when all violence is eschewed and malpractice disappear.” \(^{16}\) He does not criticize democracy but its working. According to him, representatives are not elected on a moral basis. There are many sort of malpractice found in elections. The men who are elected are not moral persons. Thus the ideal which is behind

democracy goes away. He writes: “that Western democracies are as they function today, diluted Nazism or fascism.”\footnote{Ibid., 18.5.1920.}

Gandhi wants to decentralize state on spiritual basis. According to him, the centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force.\footnote{Ibid., 30.12.1939.}

He holds that wider organization leaves room for wider violence. In his own words:

There is no human institution without its dangers. The greater the institution, the greater the chances of abuses. Democracy is a great institution, and therefore, it is liable to be greatly abused. The remedy, therefore, is not avoidance of democracy but reduction of the possibility of abuse to a minimum.\footnote{Ibid., 7.5.1931.}

Therefore, to avoid the abuses of democracy, he suggests that power must be decentralized to the maximum. And it is his contention that “true democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the center. It has to be worked by the people of every village.”\footnote{Ibid., 18.1.1948.} He evolves a system of village democracy for the sake of the well-being of the whole village community. In Gandhian democracy, citizens are self-controlled, not authority-controlled and are endowed with initiative and highly developed sense of civic responsibility in place of those who
look to government for all things. Here Gandhi advocates a government not only for the people but by the people as well. When Gandhi advocates government only for the people, there is a difference between state and society. But in village Swaraj where every man rules himself than being ruled by others, the state and society lose their distinction.

In order to give the real authority to the individual the central government must give more and more authority to the villages. The village Panchayats will perform all the duties in accordance with the wishes of the people. The real power of the state will be vested in the individual with the help of which that individual will perform his duties with his fellow beings. Moreover, all the decisions of the village Panchayats will be carried with the consent of all the villagers. Gandhi agrees that democracy is a government of the people, but people are unable to exercise their authority and so the state must be decentralized. But this rule is not the rule of majority but the rule of all. Gandhi has pointed out that the greatest good of the greatest number is a heartless doctrine. It must be Sarvodaya—greatest good of all. The village government will not be a government by the consent of the majority but a government for the welfare of all the people. The decision of the village panchayat will be the decision for all. Every individual, having faith in God, will perform his duty sincerely. According to Gandhi, rights are not created by the state but by the individual himself. State and groups only recognize rights. Gandhi’s theory of rights implies that the rights of different individuals vary according to their moral capabilities. His theory lays emphasis on social service

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rather than on the self-regarding propensities of the individuals. As he says "People who obtain rights as a result of performance of duty, exercise them only for the society, never for themselves".  

The ideal society, according to Gandhi, is a non-violent state. By a non-violent state we mean the state that is predominantly non-violent. A completely non-violent state would no longer be a state. It would be a stateless society. This is an ideal that may not be completely realized.

The ideal political society will be one of free and equal individuals, free from all forms of coercion.

In such a society everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour.  

Every conceivable activity will be conducted through voluntarily formed associations. Gandhi argues that associations are meant for the service of people and the moment an association hinders the growth of personality of an individual, it is within the rights of the individual to disown the association.

The non-violent state which Gandhi envisages was in accordance with the principle of satyagraha. Gandhi felt that to determine in detail the institutional form of the future non-violent state was premature and unscientific. He observes:

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22 M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 26.3.1937.
23 Ibid., 2.7.1932.
I have purposefully refrained from dealing with what the nature of the government in a society based on non-violence, will be like.\textsuperscript{24}

In a non-violent society, non-violence will reconcile individual freedom with social restraint. Social cohesion will consist of internal and non-coercive external sanctions. The structure of a non-violent state should be such as to facilitate individual’s initiative and voluntary organization. The foremost requirement of such a society is decentralization of political life.

Gandhi says that centralization as a system is inconsistent with the non-violent structure of the society. Centralization leads to centralization of power in a few hands and its misuse. Gandhi believes that the ideal society will always remain an ideal, unrealized and unrealizable. Despite Gandhi’s distrust of the state machinery, he would, however, welcome state action, where it is likely to advance the welfare of the people. Both T.H. Green and Gandhi recognize the necessity of the use of force in practical politics and refer to it as inevitable because of human imperfection. The stateless society remains an ideal for him.

A government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent, because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a pre-dominantly non-violent society and I am working for it.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} M.K. Gandhi, Harijan, 11.2.1939.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 9.3.1949.
The ideal non-violent society only represents for the actual state, the direction, not the consummation. The higher the individuals rise in the moral order, the less the necessity of the use of force in the state. Gandhi wanted the subordination of political and social considerations to moral considerations.

The political ideal of Gandhi is mildly anarchist. It regards the emergence of the state as a form of social organization, an improvement over the earlier condition of violent anarchy. It marks a stage in the evolution of society from the condition of violence to that of non-violence.

But it is no more than an intermediary stage, and the social fulfillment lies in rising to the higher conditions when man would need no coercive authority at all to regulate the conduct.26

The village is considered to be the natural unit of collective life in Sarvodaya. The ideal society will comprise numerous autonomous and self-sufficient villages. Each village will be a complete republic. Each village will be governed by a ‘Panchayat’ consisting of five elders. The panchayat will be the executive, legislature and judiciary. The existence of such a panchayat will not be inconsistent with “each being his own ruler” since non-violence, with its technique of peaceful conversion, will be the only sanction know to the village community. Each village will be a ‘family wirt large’ and the values that hold true in the case of the family will hold for the village society also: (a) absence of private ownership, (b) settlement of affairs by mutual persuasion, (c) unanimity of decisions – no

26 Vinoba, From Bhoodan to Gramdan, p.22.
voting, and (d) and ideal of social justice according to which each gets in proportion to his needs and gives in proportion to his capacity. The unanimous decisions of the village panchayats will not be felt as external restraints by the individuals concerned, but will instead be the expressions of their own self and will. The rulers and the ruled will be merged into one.

The ideal society will be free from taxes, crime, law courts and punishments. Whenever need arises, society will appeal for donations, and gifts in kind will replace taxes. In the ideal polity there will be no money. Individuals will repay their obligations to society in the form of labour. There will be very little or no crime for the people practicing the doctrine of 'aparigraha'. Conflicts arise because of mutual jealousy, greed or avarice and the inability to control one's temper. But the law of non-violence and love gradually eliminates these roots of discord. In case of wrong-doer, the Gram-Shaba tries to win him to the right path. If persuasion fails, the village head will tell him- "until you behave better, I will undertake a fast". To this, the culprit will change his mind. What is needed then is not punishment, but appeal to the culprit's reason and goodness. In the ideal society, armed forces are ruled out as unnecessary. It does not anticipate for attacks from without. The ideal state will be "a decentralized state" made up of nearly self-sufficient and self-contained villages adopting simple methods of production etc., it will not be faced with the problem of getting markets or dumping goods abroad. The ideal state follows the principle of simple living, so there will be no place in it

for the greed of other nations. Since the ideal state believing in simple living etc.,
will have no reason for committing aggression nor is it likely to tempt aggression,
Gandhi believes that the non-violent nation will, by its non-violent conduct,
command universal respect and arouse the conscience and goodwill of its
neighbours. In other words "for its defence it will rely on the goodwill of the whole
world";\textsuperscript{28} it will be "protected by the invincible armour of universal sympathy".\textsuperscript{29}
If, in spite of this, a country persists and commits aggression, then the non-violent
society has two ways open to it.\textsuperscript{30} The first is to yield rather than forcibly resist, but
at the same time refuse to cooperate with the aggressor. The second way is non-
violet way. The advantages of such non-violent resistance are:

Practically speaking there will be no greater loss in man if forcible
resistance is offered: there will be no expenditure on armaments and
fortifications. Finally the non-violent training received by the
people will add inconceivably to their moral height.\textsuperscript{31}

Gandhi-Raj is an ideal condition and in that condition all the five negatives;
no army and navy, no laws, no railways, no hospital and no machines will
represent a true picture, but under Swaraj nobody ever dreams. He did not
anticipate the complete absence of disputes and disappearance of centralized
production and the means of heavy transport, thus rendering the laws and law-
courts, hospitals, police, and military, machinery and railways absolutely useless.

\textsuperscript{28} M.K. Gandhi, \textit{Harijan}, 10.2.1940.
\textsuperscript{29} Vinoba, \textit{Swaraj Shastr}, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{30} M.K. Gandhi, \textit{Democracy: Real and Deceptive}, Navjeevan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959,
p. 15.
\textsuperscript{31} M.K. Gandhi, \textit{Harijan}, 13.4.1940.
He would retain all these things in his 'predominantly' non-violent state. But they would be retained only to the extent they would serve and rather than enslave his in any way. For example, laws and law courts will be there, “but they will be custodians of the people’s liberty, not as they now are instruments in the hands of bureaucracy …” “It is wrong to consider” he wrote, “that courts are established for the benefit of the people. Those who want to perpetuate their power do so through the courts”.32 He was prepared to concede the necessity of police in his immediate goal or Sarvodaya society. He said, “I have not the courage to declare that we can carry on without a police force … of course I can and do envisage a state where the police will not be necessary: but whether, we shall succeed in realizing it, the future alone will show”33. This police force would be entirely different from the present one. Its ranks will be servants, not masters of the people. The people will render them every help, and through mutual cooperation, they will easily deal with the ever decreasing disturbances. In fact the policemen of Gandhi’s Sarvodaya society will be reformers.

About the jails of Gandhi’s conception, new social order will also be of a different type. In his opinion, crime is “a disease like any other malady and is a product of the prevalent social system”.34 He emphasized the reformation rather than the punishment of the criminal. He said:

The wardens of such jail reformatories should cease to be terrors of the prisoners .... the outlook of the jail staff should be that of

32 M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, p. 56.
33 M.K. Gandhi, Harijan, 1.9.1940.
34 Ibid., 5.5.1946.
physicians and nurses in a hospital… They were there to help them regain their mental health and not to harass them in any way.\textsuperscript{35}

In the ultimate ideal of the Sarvodaya society, there would be no necessity for arms at all. It would retain an army, which will act, unlike armed men, as well as in times of peace as of disturbances and war. Gandhi said,

They would be constantly engaged in constructive activities that make riots impossible. Theirs will be the duty of seeking occasions for bringing warring communities together, carrying on peace propaganda, engaging in activities that would bring and keep them in touch with every single person, male and female, adult and child …. Such an army should be ready to cope with any emergency and in order to still the frenzy of mobs should risk their lives in numbers sufficient for the purpose.\textsuperscript{36}

Gandhi rejected all the existing forms of government including parliamentary democracy. He found political and economic centralization to be the greatest causes of the anti-democratic content within the democratic form. Regarding decentralized democracy, Gandhi says:

Politically translated, it is perfect democracy in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour, race, creed or sex vanish. In it, land and state belong to the people. Justice is prompt,

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\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 2.11.1947.\\
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 26.3.1933.
\end{flushleft}
perfect and cheap and, therefore, there is freedom of worship and of speech and of the press—all this because of the reign of self-imposed law of moral restraint. Such a state must be based on truth and non-violence and must consist of prosperous, happy and self-contained villages and village communities.\footnote{M.K. Gandhi, \textit{The Hindu}, 22.6.1945.}

According to Gandhi, conflict is death because if conflict were the law of life, all creation would have been extinct long ago. Society cannot survive if we do not stick to the principle of “live and let live”.

Social change is the significant alternation of social structures including consequences and manifestation of such structures embodied in norms, values and cultural products. Social structure implies patterns of social action and interaction.

Marxism tried to show how social change came about by laying great stress on the interaction of technology with social organization. Marx believed that one stage of social organization succeeded another through the operation of forces that were as impersonal as they were inevitable. Marx, however, took fairly full account of the purposive character of social action: he did not rely solely on his theory of revolutionary change. Though he underplayed the independent role of ideas and values, his theory was a dynamic one. Marx had argued that the real task of social philosophers was to change the world, rather than to interpret it. But he had to explain his theory of social change on an interpretation of historical and social evolution in terms of dialectical materialism. Like Marx, Gandhi is also
interested primarily in the problem of social change but he does not make any attempt to analyse the causes and processes of social change as it actually takes place.

Gandhian philosophy of *sarvodaya* is an inarticulate and mostly unwritten philosophy but nevertheless it presents a definite pattern of beliefs and attitudes towards the problems of life and the world capable of creating every active force towards social change or social revolution. The essence of society lies in change. Culture is our social heritage. It is the medium for both the societal and personality structure. As culture, society and personality are interrelated, their functional relationship reflect the social change. Society is becoming, not a being: a process, not a product.\(^38\)

**Non-violence in Economics**

Gandhi’s emphasis on the non-violent economic order is based on spiritualism. For Gandhi, spiritualism is not abstract, other-worldly but it expresses through ordinary activities of our life.

So it is interesting to note that Gandhi applied the weapon of non-violence in the international arena of economics.

The extension of the law of non-violence in the domain of economics means nothing less than the introduction of moral values as a factor to be considered in regulating international commerce.\(^39\)

\(^{39}\) Ibid.
The important role of moral values in economics distinguishes Gandhian economic philosophy from that of Marx, Marshall or Keynes. Whereas Marx emphasizes on class-struggle, Gandhi gives importance on class-coordination. Gandhi categorically points out:

The economics that disregards moral and sentimental considerations are like wax-works that being life-like still lack the life of the living flesh. At every moment these new fanged economic laws have broken down in practice. And nations and individuals who accept them as guiding maxims must perish.  

According to Gandhi, material well-being should not be the motivating force for a society but society should follow a norm of life. True economics stands for social justice, it promotes good of all and is necessary for decent life. Gandhi rejected the positivistic approach of modern economics and gave a normative approach in understanding economy and technology. Gandhi accepted the ethical orientation to economics. He points out:

True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must be at the same time be also good economic ... True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest and is indispensable for decent life.

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40 Ibid.
Gandhi wanted to establish such an economic order of society where there is no exploitation of man by man. Every individual must have access to all the necessities of life. But no man has any right to the economic resources of a society if he does not work.

As a moral-social scientist Gandhi pleaded for swadeshi. For Gandhi, swadeshi does not mean narrow nationalism\(^42\) or merely boycotting the foreign goods, it means a high degree of self-reliance at the individual, social and political levels. Swadeshi is a revolution which aims at revival of the village communities. The production for use aspect of swadeshi was designed against the domination of villages by cities. Gandhi was aware of the fact that the gap between villages and cities has increased which has become a hindrance for both agricultural and industrial development.

Gandhian economics gives importance on explaining what ought to be the right distribution of income and is not concerned with the theoretical discussion of how wages are actually determined. Economic equality is the master-key to non-violent independence, Gandhi says:

> Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour .... A non-violent system of government is an impossibility as long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists.\(^43\)

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\(^{42}\) J.D. Sethi, *Gandhi To-day*, Vikash Publishing House Limited, Delhi, p. 38.

Gandhi firmly believes that inequality fosters killing, cut-throat competition. Equality is the product of co-operation. Similar ideas are found in Ruskin’s distinction between political economy which “consists simply in the production, preservation and distribution at the fittest time and place of useful or pleasurable things”; and mercantile economy, “the economy of ‘mercers’ or of pay (which) signifies the accumulation in the hands of individuals, of legal or moral power, upon or over the labour of others”.

Being influenced by Ruskin Gandhi advocated the doctrine of absolute equality. For him no profession is superior or inferior to any other, so all labour must be paid equally whether he is a lawyer or a scavenger, he should receive equal payment because all works are necessary for the maintenance of society. Later, Gandhi changed the definition of absolute equality and laid stress upon the principle “to each according to his needs”. Gandhi wanted that a certain minimum be provided to workers which he called ‘the living wage’.

Living wage to my mind is the most accurate description for the irreducible wage ... They touch the very existence of labour. Its efficiency depends very largely upon the right kind of living. And the greater the efficiency, the greater is the possibility of enhanced profits.44

This does not mean one will justify the glaring inequalities between a prince and a pauper. Sarvodaya advocates proportionate equality. One has to judge

44 Ibid.
one's needs by himself. But they should vary within limited margins like the
statuses of man. Small differences, therefore, do not matter but great disparities
have to be removed.\textsuperscript{45}

The problem of economic equality is intimately connected with the issue of private property. Gandhi distinguishes between private property and personal property. It would permit possession of things of personal use, but not of such means of production as might be instrumental in the exploitation of others. Gandhi inculcated the revolutionary doctrine of equality of wages for the doctor, the engineer, the teacher and the scavenger as the panacea for socio-economic events. Gandhi does not want the intervention of state-action for the actualization of this economic equality. He was more interested in personal voluntary action. He says:

\begin{quote}
Under my plan the state will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not quit till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straight away make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or
\end{quote}

even of ten bighas of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor.46

The most important principle of Gandhian economy is decentralization. For Gandhi, non-violence and centralisation are inconsistent. Centralisation of industry and agriculture is bound to give rise to exploitation. The concept of decentralization aims:

To ensure the benefits of science and technology, enable us to preserve the essence of democracy even while avoiding drudgery and maximizing production and employment.47

Decentralisation in this sense means making the basic units truly basic. These become the center of the entire life of the community. It means changing the whole scheme of things and making stateless economy the goal of social change. Economic decentralization means that as far as practicable all enterprises should be in the hands of the individuals. The unit for which they produce should be strictly limited. Village should be a self-sufficient unit for needs like food and clothing. Thus industrialization, according to Gandhism, is based on decentralization which in its social application is not a cheap production.

Gandhi says that non-violence implies bread-labour. While formulating the principle of bread-labour, Gandhi was greatly influenced by Ruskin, Tolstoy, the Gita and the Bible. Bread-labour is the most important condition for leading a

non-violent life. Non-exploitation is the essence of bread-labour. As everyone earns his minimum requirements through bread-labour and contributes the rest of his labour to society, there is an end to exploitations and disparities of wealth. Gandhi clearly says that a person who takes his food without performing manual labour is a thief. Explaining the relation between bread-labour and non-violence, Gandhi says:

Service is not possible unless it is rooted in love or ahimsa… This service is again impossible without bread-labour, otherwise described in the Gita as Yajna. It is only when a man or a women has done body labour for the sake of service that he or she has a right to life.48

The Doctrine of Trusteeship

The concept of non-violence led Gandhi to the concept of trusteeship which was inherent in the ideology of non-violence. For Gandhi no other theory is compatible with non-violence. A society that accepts non-violence has to be non-acquisitive society. A votary of non-violence cannot acquire more than others without exploiting the labours of others in some manner.

Exploitation is a form of violence. He cannot hold more possessions than what he requires to meet his essential necessities and if he does that he deprives someone else of what he needs creating violence. A non-violent society is a non-

48 M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 20.09.1928.
exploitative society. It can be non-violent only when it assumes economic equality. Equal distribution is the ideal.

To bring this ideal into being, the entire social order has to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal.\(^{49}\)

It is not possible to end disparities and achieve economic equality while the present pattern of ownership prevails. Instruments of production as well as the produce should belong to those who work. This change is only possible in the conception of ownership. Gandhi says that the day of the labourers has come. It will be done either through violent dispossession or non-violent abdication of socially injurious attributes of ownership.

It is for the capitalists to choose. They can court destruction or opt for trusteeship which will permit them to retain the stewardship of their property.\(^{50}\)

One who believes in non-violence cannot, therefore believe in the inevitability of class war. The reason is, he believes in the power of satyagraha to influence the mind of the exploiter and secondly, because he believes in the power of non-violent non-cooperation to enable the workers to prevent exploitation and paralyze the exploiter.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 25.08.1940.
\(^{50}\) M.K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*, p. 18.
One who believes in non-violence cannot believe that the problem of exploitation can be solved by eliminating the exploiter. The individual exploiter can be educated and persuaded to desist from exploitation. Violent elimination of the exploiter cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Nor can the elimination of individuals guarantee the elimination of the system. The satyagrahi believes that the essence of change lies in eliminating the evil, not he evil doer. Gandhi’s view is that all forms of exploitation depend on the cooperation of the exploited.

All exploitation is based on cooperation, willing or forced, of the exploited. However much we may detest admitting it, the fact remains that there would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiter.

Violence is the outcome of our reluctance to admit our own culpability and our lack of confidence in our ability to face the consequences of refusing to cooperate with the exploiter. The moment the cooperation of the exploited is denied to the exploiter, his hands are paralysed. He is disarmed and his economic power is sterilized. “My non-cooperation with him will open his eyes to the wrong he may be doing.” Gandhi termed this withdrawal of cooperation as non-violent non-cooperation. “No one is bound to cooperate in one’s own undoing or

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52 Ibid., 20.04.1940.
53 M.K. Gandhi, Amrita Bazar Patrika, 03.08.1934.
54 M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 26.03.1931.
55 Ibid.
slavery.\textsuperscript{56} Non-cooperation thus becomes a right, a duty and a non-violent weapon which is truly infallible. Hence Gandhi insisted that:

\begin{quotation}
Non-violent non-cooperation can secure what violence never can and this by ultimate conversion of the wrong doers.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quotation}

Gandhi is against using organised force to implement the redistribution of the wealth. Gandhi always believed in the power of universal persuasion. It is only hatred and suspicion which divide the rich from the poor. So, his mission is to remove these by non-violent revolution. It is here that he differs from Marx. While Marx agrees that our ideologies, ethical standards and values were altogether a product of our material environment, Gandhi believes that there is an absolute basis for these outside the matter. Further, while Marx is a materialist, Gandhi is a spiritualist. To Marx, material environment is the hallmark of human progress. But to Gandhi, it is the spiritual environment that makes men perfect and divine. That is why, unlike Marx, Gandhi preferred non-violent method to suppress coercion.

\textit{Swadeshi}

\textit{Swadeshi} is a fundamental concept in Gandhian thought. It is in consonance with the goal of \textit{sarvodaya}. Explaining the spirit of \textit{swadeshi}, Gandhi says:

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} M.K. Gandhi, \textit{Harijan}, 20.04.1940.
\item \textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.}, 31.03.1946.
\end{itemize}
Swadeshi is that spirit which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the remote.  

According to Gandhi, it is sheer absurdity to think that one can serve the nation by neglecting his own family. Only by serving our families we can serve our nation and mankind. Swadeshi doctrine implies law of love and humility. But to fulfill the unlawful demands of the family through the earnings made by causing injury to others is against the doctrine of swadeshi.

Gandhi was aware of the fact that poverty of Indians was due to their departure from the swadeshi principle in economic sphere. Swadeshi does not mean serving distant people at the cost of the nearest. He is not against buying anything from any part of the world if it is not injurious to the growth of millions of Indians. It is equally wrong for any body if he does not buy the cloth spun and woven by Indian weavers.

A true votary of swadeshi should dedicate himself to the service of his immediate co-dweller. It is not a selfish activity to serve one’s own neighbour as one cannot conceive of serving the whole of mankind. Swadeshi does not mean one will love his neighbour and hate foreigners. Apprehending this Gandhi says:

A true votary of Swadeshi will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner, he will not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody

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Swadeshism is not a cult of hatred. It is doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest ahimsa.\textsuperscript{59}

Gandhi aims at welfare of all and economic welfare of all lies in practising the principles of swadeshi. It does not harbour any ill-will towards any individual or country. It is a plea for protecting village industries which enjoys abundant manpower. It has been appropriately said:

Gandhi’s swadeshi principle exhorted people to remain contented with the local conditions and with the things that God provided for man’s own sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into earning and there is ahimsa in his venture. Moreover, if a man’s mind turns towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.\textsuperscript{60}

Gandhian economy is a theory of need-based production, equitable distribution and social justice. In modern economic theory, the objectives of social justice and reasonable distribution are not part of the structure of the theory and are added to it from the outside or from other disciplines. Therefore, the objectives of social justice and better distribution are usually in conflict with the theory of production. In Gandhian economy production and distribution are integrated in a ways that they give us a scheme of social justice and eliminate all kinds of exploitation and violence. Gandhian economy is evolutionary, dynamic and dialectic. Therefore, it is a mistake to think that the doctrine of trusteeship will

\textsuperscript{59} V.G. Desai (Tr.), \textit{Yeravada Mandir}, N.P.H., Ahmedabad, 1957, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{60} M.K. Gandhi, \textit{Harijan}, 25.08.1940.
work as a sudden replacement of corporate structure. The other principles that supplement Gandhian economy are the participation of the workers, social accountability and maintaining of ecological balance. Gandhian doctrine of Trusteeship evolved as integral part of the theory and dynamics of a non-violent revolution in the field of economic relations.