Chapter IV

IMPACT OF RELIGION ON GANDHI'S ECONOMIC THOUGHT

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Gandhiji was not an economist, nor did he claim to be well acquainted with modern theories of economics. However his approach to the economic problems and their solutions have been quite unique. In fact his economic thoughts were largely shaped by his own practical experience. Religion which formed the pivot of Gandhi's life also influenced his economic ideas. The Gita, the Bible, the writings of Tolstoy, Ruskin, Marx and so on moulded his economic thoughts. Like other fields of human activities, he felt that economics too could not be divorced from morals and religion. Thus he viewed economic problems also from the standpoint of religion.

The real force behind Gandhiji's economic reorganisation can be traced back to India's spiritual tradition. God lives in every living being and one's spirit is strengthened if one loves equally all living beings. Love for all mankind finds expression in truth and non violence and this truth and non violence obviously forms the basis of Gandhian economics.

The love for his fellow beings as children of the same Father prompted Gandhiji to dedicate his life to uplift the economic condition of the poor and downtrodden, whom he consid-
dered to be 'daridramnarayana'. As Louis Fisher observes
"Gandhiji's paramount compulsion was to help the underemployed
and since he and his God were partners, he enlisted the Almighty
in his tasks. "To a people famishing and idle the only acceptable
form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food
as wages! If we do not waste our wealth and energy, the cli-
mate and natural resources of our country are such that we can
become the happiest people in the World." Poverty leads to
moral degradation. Gandhi therefore strove to uplift India's
economy. He dreamt of an India which is happy economically as
well as spiritually.

But it should be remembered that spiritual happiness is
impossible without the minimum economic self sufficiency. Gandhiji
was well aware of the fact that man is a spiritual being who
seeks his spiritual end but material fulfilment in co-opera-
tion with others is important. It is impossible for a starving
man to concentrate himself on religion or spiritual matters.
Gandhiji himself said, "It is impossible to soothe the suffer-
ing and hungry humanity with a song from Kabir. The only poem
the hungry millions ask for is invigorating food."

Vivekananda expressed a similar view in the parliament of
world Religions in Chicago. In his concern for the hunger stricken
expressed
peasant of India he expressed Gandhi's feelings "It is an insult
to the starving people to offer them religion; it is an insult
to the starving men to teach him metaphysics." Vivekananda saw
that food and not religion was the crying need of India. But to Gandhi the two terms were closely related.

"In his book 'Only one Way Left' Dr. G.F. Macleod has presented the way for religion entering life in a more practical way. The world's greatest problem according to him was how to share bread. Gandhiji saw the meaning of this in India where there were uneven distribution of wealth and income. Both Gandhi and Dr. Macleod saw that it was a mistaken notion of religion to confine it to the non material realm. It is right to pray to God for help but the prayer should not be merely verbal. Thus for example if we pray for the preservation of good health of the community, we must make necessary steps to provide nutritious food, cleanliness and proper sanitation. The community must co-operate with God and make its religion practical. The providing of the basic necessities of human life to the poor and hungry millions was hence the first concern of Gandhiji's economic thinking.

"In his approach to economic development Gandhiji believed that for the upliftment of the starving dumb millions, economic well being must go hand in hand with spiritual well being. I want freedom. But I want all those for the soul ............... It is the evolution of the soul, to which the intellect and all other faculties have to be devoted." With regard to the question "Does economic progress clash with real progress?"
Gandhi clarified that economic progress should not be at the cost of real progress. Material progress should be achieved by preserving the essentials of humanity and religion.

Both Gandhi and the socialists believe in constructing a social order in which human personality will be able to find its fullest expression. But while the other socialists use the expression in the physical or material sense, Gandhiji used it in the metaphysical or religious sense. As Gandhi wrote, "Men's ultimate aim is the realisation of God, and all his activities, social, political and religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God."  

Gandhi believed in the age old Hindu tradition that dharma (religion), artha (economy), kama (desire) are only the means to the supreme goal of moksha (salvation). Thus artha is essential no doubt but it cannot be an end in itself. The hoarding of immense wealth is not the end of human life. This also has influenced Gandhi's concept of 'minimisation of human wants'. Artha helps in sustaining the individual in his path towards spiritualism or moksha, which alone is the summu bonum, the ultimate goal of all human endeavour.

Gandhiji's economic ideas also owes a great deal to the ancient Hindu and Jaina teaching of 'Aparigraha' or non-possession. Aparigraha usually means abstinence from all attachment and it is considered to be one of the most important of the five great vows towards emancipation. As attachment to the world of objects means bondage to the world and the force of this causes
re-birth. Liberation is impossible without the withdrawal of attachment. Gandhiji too believed that the desire for worldly things, more than what is required is a hindrance in the way of realisation of perfection and spirituality. Renunciation of earthly possession is always a prize favoured by the ancient religions. And Mahatma Gandhi who was deeply religious could not escape this tremendous influence. His economic ideas were largely shaped by such influence.

The spirit of renunciation and sacrifice which is manifested in the economic policy of Mahatma Gandhi is explicit in the very first verse of the Isaupanishad. It is stated "By the Lord pervaded must this all be, whatever moving things there is in the moving world." This is the foundation of Upanishadic ethics and religion. We are therefore required to base our life and conduct on this basic truth. Such a life will be one of renunciation leading to the highest enjoyment of Ananda in its infinite manifestations. In it there is no room for greed, delusion or conflict.

"Asāvasya midam sarvam yat kincha jagatyām jagat. Tena tyaktena bhunjitah ma grandhah kasyaicit dhanam" (Isa. 1) "with that renounced that may you enjoy. Covet not the wealth of any one at all."

The reference to wealth here is significant because usually man hankers after wealth in an unlimited way. The
Kathā Upanishad states "A man is never to be satisfied by wealth." The Brhadāranyaka is more emphatic on this point when it says "Of immortality however there is no hope through wealth." (Yathaivo upakarano jīvitam tathaiva jīvita yadamṛtasya tu nasasti vitāṃ iti.) These thoughts of the ancient Hindu tradition are implicit in the economic thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi was also greatly influenced by Ruskin's book 'Unto the last' and he has devoted a full chapter in his autobiography under the heading "The Magic spell of book". In Gandhiji's own words, "The book was impossible to lay aside, one I had begun it. It gripped me ................. I could not get any sleep that night." He summed up the principles of Unto this Last in three principles: 1. that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all 2. that a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work and 3. that the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

Donald Bishop once asked Gandhi: "What is the purpose of social and economic system?", Gandhi answered "its purpose is to create an environment in which people can live in harmony and can develop their talents and energies for well being of their own and of all."10
Gandhi with a strong fellow feeling for his countrymen could vividly see the "living pictures of despair. You could count every rib. You can see every artery. There was no muscle, no flesh . . . . . . . Their is an eternal compulsory fast." Again he said, "Hanuman tore open his heart and showed that there was nothing there but Ramanama. I have none of the power of Hanuman to tear open my heart, but if any of you feel inclined to do it, I assure you, you will find nothing here but Rama whom I see face to face in the starving millions of India." But Gandhi did not believe in helping them out of this poverty by giving them relief. "They cannot be given it. They must earn it and they can only earn by the sweat of their brow." This forms the basis of Gandhiji's theory of Bread labour.

4.2. Bread labour

Gandhiji wanted that the poor people whom he considered 'daridramarayana', should stand on their own feet. So he was guided by the theory of bread labour which means that everyone should contribute towards earning his or her bread. According to Gandhiji one has no right to consume anything without sharing the labour required to produce it. Gandhiji has tried to get support for this theory from the Gita. In the third chapter of the Gita which is Karma yoga. Lord Krishna describes the cosmic cycle of karma which should be followed by each and every individual. Again it is stated in the Gita that those who eat without any sacrifice eats stolen food and they are thieves.
Even the Manusmyti says: "He eats but sin who cooks for himself; a meal of what remains after sacrifice has been offered is ordained to be the food of the good." The Bible also says: "Eat thy bread by the sweat of thy brow." All these signify that to eat without performing some sacrifice is selfishness. In other words, one has no right to eat without any labour in any form. Gandhi himself admits that he has taken the idea of bread labour from the Gita. As Gandhi said: "God created man to work for his food and said those who ate without work were thieves."

The ideal of varnāshrama-dharma teaches that one should earn their own livelihood by performing the tasks and duties that are allocated to one by his caste or varna. Every form of labour is essential in a society. In the Rudrādhyāya of the vedas people belonging to different classes were entrusted with various works of the society. They were identified with the Supreme God Rudra. It goes on saluting men of different professions thus:

"Garvārabhyo namah, rathakarabhya namoh, mrgajabhyo namoh, asvapatabhyo namoh," and so on.

Karmāra (blacksmith), rathakāra (the maker of carriages), mrgajabhyo (hunters), asvapatabhyo (persons who breed horses) are all saluted as Rudra (God.). This shows that everyone should earn his own bread by these different
means. It also supplies the need of the society.

According to Gandhi even scavenging was respectable as an occupation. The only thing is that everyone ought to perform sufficient body labour to entitle him to means of livelihood. The rich who multiply their wants without offering manual labour, exploit the poor, using them as a means for the gratification of their wants. Bread labour does not however include intellectual labour in the strict sense. The needs of the body, if possible, must be supplied by the body. Bread labour should be voluntary and if people are convinced of its value and necessity then there would be enough for all. "Compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontentment. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. And it is health which is real wealth, not pieces of silver or gold." 19

So Gandhiji takes personal effort (sarira srama) as the primary need for the economic growth of the individual as well as of the nation. Moreover bread labour and the idea of 'sarva srama samanatva' can help to a great extent in doing away with the superior-inferior relationship.

4.3. Minimisation of wants:

Gandhiji advocated strongly the principle of minimisation of wants. According to him we should remain satisfied
with the basic necessities of life and should not hanker after abundance of wealth. Conquering greed is an essential prerequisite of such a principle. For this view Gandhiji no doubt is indebted to the long standing spirit of renunciation of the ancient Indian tradition. Gandhiji was greatly inspired by Buddha who although being a prince adopted voluntary poverty. Jesus Christ the son of a shephered lived in a humble way throughout his life. The simplicity of these great men attracted the mind of the Mahatma. Gandhi was determined to adopt the maxim of simple living and high thinking in his personal life and showed it to the rest of the world. The man in the loin cloth was convinced of the teaching of the Upanishads that our mind is like a restless bird, the more it gets the more it wants. Gandhiji said "I do not want anything more for workers and peasants than enough to eat and clothe themselves and live in ordinary comfort as self respecting human beings."20

Minimisation of human wants paves the way for economic equality. Gandhi said "In India we have got............. people having to be satisfied with one meal a day ........ you and I have no right to anything, than we really have, until these people are clothed and fed better. You and I ........ must adjust our wants and even undergo voluntary starvation in order that they may be nursed, fed and clothed."21

According to Gandhi "possession implies provision for the future. A seeker after truth, a follower of the Law
of love cannot hold anything against tomorrow. We never created
more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If, therefore,
we repose faith in His Providence, we should rest assured that
He will give us everyday our daily bread meaning everything
that we require."22

Thus the religious spirit in Gandhiji desists him from
possessing more than what one requires. It is a well known fact
that the saints and seers of ancient times possessed nothing
and had to even beg for their livelihood.

4.4. Equality

The principle of equality is a virtue prized by almost all
the great religions of the world. In South Africa Gandhiji was
very much pained to see the existing inequality and the tyranny
against the weaker section of people. On returning to India Gandhi
was determined to gain both social and economic equality for the
masses. Gandhiji considered economic equality as the basis of
socialism. Gandhi said : "Working for economic equality means
abolishing the eternal conflicts between labour and capital. It
means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is con­
centrated the bulk of the nations's wealth on the one hand and
the levelling up of the semi starved naked millions on the
other."23
Gandhiji insisted that every person should have a right to the basic necessities of life that is food and clothing. One can afford to have luxuries only after the necessities of each and everyone have been fully satisfied. Gandhiji wanted everyone to have equal wages whether he is engaged in physical or intellectual labour as far as practicable. A teacher, a lawyer, a doctor, a labourer, a cultivator, all should get equal wages as far as possible.

But it should be noted that economic equality of Gandhi's conception did not mean that everyone would have the same amount. It simply means that everyone should have enough for his or her needs. An elephant needs a thousand times more food than an ant. Everyone should have enough according to his needs. Gandhi said in Harijan "It does mean, however, that everyone will have a proper house to live in, sufficient and balanced food to eat, and sufficient khadi with which to cover himself."

4.4.2. Equality should be attained by means of religion or morality:

This concept of equality is preached by the communists and Marxists but the difference between these and the Gandhian concept of equality lies in the means of attaining it. According to Gandhiji, if the means of attaining this equality is bad, the very beauty of this ideal will be shattered. Here Gandhi brings down morality and religion when he emphasises on just and good means in attaining equality. Thus with the idea of non violence and truth Gandhi prescribes a non violent way of
attaining equality. Gandhi wrote: "This socialism is as pure as crystal. It therefore requires crystalline means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalised by cutting off the prince's head. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth." 26 Again Gandhiji said "Truth and Ahimsa must incarnate in socialism ............ It (satyagraha) is the highest means, the greatest force. Socialism must not be reached by any other means." 27

4.4.3. Equality as preached by the Bible

In his idea of equality Gandhi was very much influenced by Ruskin and his book 'Unto the Last'. Ruskin in turn was influenced by the teachings of the Bible. On the basis of the study of the Bible, Ruskin preached three cardinal truths. The first truth which he preached was the universality of objects. This is similar to the Hindu concept 'All land belongs to Gopal.' The second principle sought to establish the freedom of the individual and the third stood for the maintenance of the dignity of the poor. The Bible gives us a parable which conveys abundantly the idea of sarvodaya and equality of wages.

Once Jesus went to Galilee and entered the region of Judaea, a large number of crowd followed him. Jesus tried to explain to them the concept of Heaven and Eternal life. In order to explain Jesus it uses the parable of the vineyard. One day Jesus went out of his house to hire some labourers for his vineyard. In his first
encounter the householder agreed to pay a Denarius (worth about 20 cents in those days) each a day to the workless way farer and so he sent them to work into his vineyard. After three hours he went out again and saw some more labourers standing in the Market place and he asked them too, to work in his vineyard and that whatever was right he would pay them. So the second batch of workers went into his vineyard. The householder again went out about the sixth hour and ninth hour and he did the same. Finally about the eleventh hour when the householder went out he found some others yet standing unhired all day. The householder asked them too, to go and work in his vineyard. When the day was over, the owner of the vineyard gave instructions to his trusted steward. "Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last up to the first." So all of them beginning with the last and each received a Denarius without any discrimination.

This brought protest from those who were working for the whole day in the vineyard. The owner's reply was that they got what they asked for and hence they had no reason to feel unhappy. More or less the need of all were more or less equal.

4.5. **Village Self Sufficiency**

Village self sufficiency means that all the requirements of a village like food, clothing and other necessities of life should be grown or manufactured in that village. Gandhiji believed that "Everyone must have a balanced diet, a descent house to live
in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief." To satisfy these basic needs one need not depend on any external agency. The ideal of bread labour is a key to self reliance. The development of cottage and small scale industries is meant to give each and every individual work and thus make them self supporting. The large scale industries cannot give employment to all the villagers. The idea of village self sufficiency was to protect the masses from exploitation which large scale industrialisation brings about. This again has its religious significance. When everyone is regarded as the creation of the same almighty God, the question of exploitation by the privileged class of the weaker class should not arise. Everyone has an equal right to the basic necessities of life which should be produced locally as far as practicable. Herein lies the importance of the spirit of swadeshi.

Gandhi wrote: "My idea of village swaraj is, that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants and yet inter dependent on many others on which dependence is necessary. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children .......... The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks."
However Gandhiji maintained that village self-sufficiency has its limits. It may not be possible for a village to supply all essential things required by the people. Gandhiji did not rule out the manufacture of certain goods by the industries which cannot be manufactured locally by the cottage industries. For that he recommended co-operative system of production. Thus Gandhi’s self-sufficiency does not mean that villages will not export or import. But as far as possible every one will make the best use of his capacity to fulfill his own demands.

Gandhiji tried his best to preserve the beauty and health of the Indian villages. Hence his stress on the maintenance of the Indian villages. He believed that ‘small is beautiful’. Gandhi himself said that if the villages in India go, nothing of India would remain. Gandhiji was also aware of the fact that religion and spirituality owe their origin and depends for its strength solely on the villages. Religion and religious life is closely associated on the natural living of man and natural living is inconceivable apart from the villages.

√4.6. Decentralisation √

Gandhi believed that in a decentralised economy participation of the people is the most important consideration. To achieve a decentralised order one requires a careful clarification of individual rights, initiative and participation. It
encourages division of labour and equal distribution. It also affects the general health of the masses due to the pollution of the atmosphere.

Gandhiji therefore visualised a decentralised economic policy where there would be no exploitation in the economic field. The development of cottage and small scale industries occupy the most important position in a decentralised economy. People should pay more head to cultivation and small industries. In the economic field therefore Gandhi was in favour of 'production by masses' in place of 'mass production'. Thus the doctrine of decentralisation naturally implies that production should be brought about by the masses and the benefits of distribution should be such that it reaches the last person.

Gandhi advocated the view that the land should belong to the tiller. Land and all property should be his who will work it. He explained his view in these words: "All land belongs to Gopal................. Gopal literally means shepherd, it also means God. In modern language it means the state, that is the people." Here Gandhi emphasises the age old religious viewpoint that everything in this universe is created by God, the Supreme Being and He alone is the master of all.

It must be mentioned, however, that Gandhiji did not oppose centralisation in some aspects. He realised that some key
industries, means of communication and such other may be undertaken in a centralised way. As Gandhiji said: he could do visualise electricity, ship building, iron works, machine making and like existing side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto the industrialisation has been so planned as to destroy the village and their crafts. He does not believe that centralisation would conduce to the common welfare of mankind.

4.6.2. Merits of decentralisation:

Decentralisation which was the most important principle of Gandhian economy has its own importance. Firstly decentralisation will produce larger national wealth with smaller capital. Secondly decentralisation will create greater opportunity for productive expenditure by reducing the necessity for defence expenditure. Simple homes from which there is nothing to take away require no policing. Rurally organised India will also run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanised India. Moreover the decentralised sector through village and cottage industries is labour intensive and hold potentialities for solving the unemployment problem. These industries could use raw materials and labour available locally, and adopt simple techniques of employment giving opportunities to a large section of the people.

These are the merits of decentralisation in the economic field. But what about the religious significance of the economy
of decentralisation? It is believed that decentralisation implies a greater importance to the rural sector which is the abode of peace, health and character. A centralised economy leads to the concentration of population in the cities leading to many problems of urbanisation. The problem of housing, slums, pollution, overcrowding, violence, immorality, disregard for spiritual values are all the results of a centralised economy. It is natural for Gandhi therefore to shun such an economy which has no respect for religion and spirituality.

Moreover a centralised economy leads to inequality, arbitrary competition, production of luxury goods and harmful articles which take us away from the path of morality. Violence, tyranny, injustice and exploitation are more pronounced in urban life than in rural life. A decentralised economy offers greater scope for equity and equanimity.

4.7 Machinery

Gandhiji wanted that man should not be subservient to technology, rather technology should remain under the control of man. He objected to the use of machinery as an instrument of greed and which deprived the mass of the opportunity of labour. But it would be wrong to think that Gandhiji was totally opposed to the use of machines. Gandhiji had stated: "Machinery has its place. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary
human labour."\textsuperscript{32} Gandhi said "I am against its indiscriminate multiplication. I refuse to be dazzled by the seeming machinery. But simple tools and instruments and such machinery as saves individual labour and lightens the burden of millions of cottages, I would welcome."\textsuperscript{33} Such machines as sewing machines were allowed in every village.

Gandhiji pointed out what machinery helped a section of people to live by exploiting the vast masses. Thus the motive of using machinery on large scale is greed which Gandhi tried to attack with all his might. Mechanisation may help a country where population is scanty. But it is an evil in India with a vast population. Therefore Gandhiji insisted on a proper balancing of man power, small machinery and large machinery judged on the criteria of religious and moral values. Gandhiji was of the opinion that heavy industries deprived people of the pleasure of creation which Gandhiji used to call 'rasa'. People working in cottage and small scale industries derive a spiritual pleasure by creating something beautiful and useful which the big machines deprive them of.

As Louis Fischer observes: "On a higher philosophical level, Gandhi simply realised earlier than most, the dangers and horrors of a civilization in which machinery may enslave man instead of performing its essential function of liberating him . . .

............ The faster machines moves, the faster man lives.
and the bigger the tribute in nervous tension he pays to the machine. Culture, leisure, indeed living, becomes so interlinked with machines that man himself may be innerly impoverished .......

To Gandhi mechanisation or any other forms of progress was not an end in itself; he judged material advances by their moral and spiritual effect on human beings. The individual was his central concern." Thus Gandhiji took care to see that in the race for mechanisation men do not lose their religious values.

4.8. The spinning wheel or charkha in the light of religion

While rejecting large scale machinery Gandhiji wanted the most elementary type of machinery which he could put in the homes of the millions. Such a useful means he found in the spinning wheel or charkha. 'An idle mind is a devil's workshop' — so goes the saying. Gandhi was convinced that the spinning wheel could provide the millions of villages with productive occupation during the idle hours. Thus Gandhiji tries his best to keep the people engaged in their leisure which in turn would give them easy means of livelihood based on bread labour.

The spinning wheel can be interpreted in terms of religion. In fact Mahatma Gandhi got the first glimpse of the spinning wheel or the charkha in the Bhagavadgita's third chapter, in the slokas of the jagat chakra. The meaning of these slokas are :-
"From food springs all life, from rain is born food, from sacrifice comes rain and sacrifice is the result of action. Know that action springs from Brahman and Brahman from the imperishable, hence the all pervading Brahman is ever firm founded on sacrifice. He who does not follow the wheel thus set in motion here, below, he, living in sin, sating his senses, lives, O Partha, in vain." 35

Towards the beginning of the non-cooperation movement, Gandhiji wrote in an article in Young India, (Oct. 20th 1921) that he had derived his idea of the spinning wheel first from the Gita. "The reader will be interested to know that my belief is derived largely from the Bhagavadgita. In these verses is contained for me that whole truth of the spinning wheel as an indispensable sacrament for the India of today. If we take care of today, God will take care of tomorrow." 36

The slokas of the jagat chakra points out that everything in this universe is born due to the sacrifice of another. Thus for example, from sacrifice we get clouds, from clouds form rain, rain in turn produces food and food nourishes human beings.

"Evaṃ pravartitam chakram nanu vartayatihayah
Aghaṃ indriyaramo mogham partha sa Jivati" 37
Therefore it is one's duty to tune himself with this ever moving cycle of the world.
But when we say that we must move in accordance with this ever moving cycle, what do we mean? The ancient seers and sages said that such actions meant 'yajna' or sacrifice. In ancient times 'yajna' or sacrifice was the only thing done for the sake of others. In the purusasukta hymn of the Rgveda creation has been described as a great form of sacrifice. According to it God has sacrificed himself for the sake of creation. Every item in the jagat chakra of the Gita is a symbol of sacrifice. Only by means of such sacrifice and action for the sake of others can we realise our identity or oneness with the universe.

Gandhiji did not accept the teachings of the Gita or any other religious teachings as it was. He was concerned only with the basic teachings and he modified it to suit his views and the needs of his time. So he gave the concept of 'yajna' as found in the Gita his own interpretation and meant physical labour by it. As Gandhiji said, 'Work here undoubtedly refers to physical labour, and work by way of sacrifice can only be work to be done by all for the common benefit. Such work — such sacrifice can only be spinning. I do not wish to suggest that the author of the Divine Song had the spinning wheel in mind. He merely laid down a fundamental principle of conduct. And reading in and applying it to India, I can only think of spinning as the fittest and most acceptable sacrificial body labour. I cannot imagine better worship of God than that in His name. I should labour for the poor even as they do.'
So spinning was the best available form of physical labour to establish communion with the poor masses. The rich men need not spin, he can use the cloth produced by the poor. But even the rich should spin, not as a hobby, but to realise his oneness with the poor. In doing so he will also add to the production in the country in whatever meagre form it might be. There can be no better method of self purification than spinning and this self purification is the most important means of spiritual upliftment. It also purifies the heart of the spinner through concentration and selfless work. This is why the term sutra yajna was coined by Gandhiji. There are many types of yajna's cited in the Gita which lead to the destruction of sin which in other words means 'citta suddhi'. Gandhiji recognised spinning as a means to this end and that is why he regarded spinning as 'sutra yajna'. Verrier Elwin speaks highly about the importance of the spinning wheel. He says "A person who wants to subdue his passions has need to be calm. All commotion within him ought to cease, and so quiet and gentle is the motion of the spinning wheel, that it has been known to still the passions of those who have turned it in the fullness of faith."

The Buddhist dharma chakra which was adopted by Asoka as the national symbol for his empire and which has been adopted by our Government as the central figure in the national flag can be explained in the light of this chakra of the Gita. This acted as a source of inspiration for Mahatma Gandhi.
From the economic standpoint the utility of the spinning wheel can be felt more in the villages where thousands of people move about under-fed and ill-clad. Few people in the villages get a square meal a day, they have no proper clothes to cover themselves, no proper house to give them shelter. This is the common sight, most of the Indian villages. For us who live in cities amidst plenty it is difficult to realise their true pathetic condition. There are many such people who after their day's labour collect a bundle of firewood to be sent to the towns and that day fortunately they get something to satisfy their hunger, though that may be the only single meal.

Spinning wheel can help us in such tragic times. The income from producing the thread can add to one more meal a day, give them at least a cloth to cover themselves. On the other hand the rich can also contribute to the country's production through spinning.

Thus the spinning wheel or the charkha while being a part of the economic programme of Gandhiji has also a religious significance in it.

4.9. Production, distribution and consumption:

Gandhiji was in favour of production by each and every one and not mass production. He wanted the production pattern should be such that its benefits could reach the millions of poor people. He wanted cottage and small industries to exist side by side with agriculture so that it would provide employment to
the vast majority of people.

Gandhi's method of distribution was based on justice and equality. This was the result of his sense of brotherhood and oneness with all beings created by God. He wanted that every individual should have a house to live in, balanced food and enough clothing with which to cover himself. These benefits should reach the last man of India. Gandhi asserted that the possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity. The ideal of Gandhiji is equal distribution but as it is very difficult to realise such a state one should work for equitable distribution.

With regard to consumption Gandhiji advocated the principle of voluntary poverty. One should remain satisfied with the basic necessities of life. Gandhiji therefore preached the ideal of trusteeship which considers the state to be the trustee of the enormous wealth or surplus wealth. According to Gandhi therefore civilisation consisted not in the multiplication of wants but in the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants.

4.10. Mixed economy

The economic programme of Mahatma Gandhi brings out several sectors of production. At the basic level is the small scale industry mostly owned by the workers themselves and they are concerned with the manufacture of goods locally needed. It is self-employment
sector. This constitutes the major part of the economy. Next to it is the village co-operative sector engaged in the supply of goods which cannot be sufficiently supplied by the self employment sector. This can be regulated by the Panchayat of the village elected by the adult population of the village. The third sector relates to the goods which are produced as a result of the joint effort of several villages. The urban areas may have certain industries relating to machinery, electricity and so on owned either by the state or the co-operative societies. The state ownership is mostly confined to the heavy industries.

The primary motive of Gandhiji in introducing such a mixed economy was his idea of social welfare. He realised that for the benefit of the people, whose service he regards as the highest religion, confinement to only the private or the small scale sector will be inadequate. Certain things that are required cannot be produced by the village industries, hence he introduced the large scale sector also.

4.11. Co-operation

Gandhiji had faith in co-operation as a means to uplift the condition of our economy. Apart from the individual effort, agriculture and village industries could be conducted by the method of co-operation. As Gandhiji said "The world today is moving towards the ideal of collective or co-operative efforts in every department of life. Much in this line has been and is
being accomplished. It has come into our country also, but in such distorted form that our poor have not been able to reap its benefits ................. I believe that we shall not derive the benefits of agriculture until we take to co-operative farming ........ As what applies to land applies equally to cattle.  

Co-operation is also encouraged from the religious spirit of man. For the sake of peace and prosperity, it is essential for us to work in co-operation amongst one another.

4.12. Gandhian Socialism

Gandhiji with his deep faith in religion had a different view of socialism. His approach and the means to achieve socialism differs from that of Karl Marx, Lenin or Mao Tse Tung. The greatest beauty of Gandhi’s concept of socialism is in the fact that he gave a very simple and a practical idea of socialism. With regard to the question ‘What is socialism?’ Gandhi answered; "Socialism is a beautiful word, and so far as I am aware, in socialism the members of the society are equal, none high, none low." Gandhiji gave in this context the analogy of the human body. All the parts of the body whether the head or the limbs are equally important. So are the members of the society. Equality of the members of the society in all spheres of life is the essence of socialism.
Gandhi considered economic equality as the main key to socialism. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between the labour and capital. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand and the levelling up of the semi-starved, naked millions on the other."

4.12.2. Socialism inspired by Religion

The religious influence in Gandhi, has moulded his idea of socialism in a different perspective. Other socialists like Marx were also concerned with equality but they never bothered about the means. But according to Gandhiji socialism should be achieved by non violent peaceful means. The end cannot be good if the means are bad. A tree sprouting out of a seed of a poisonous tree cannot bear fruits with juices of nectar. Herein Gandhiji tries to introduce religious principles like truth and non violence which increases its beauty. According to Gandhiji truth and Ahimsa must incarnate in Socialsim. Gandhi's concept of socialism was not related to material progress alone but he was more concerned with spiritual development.

Gandhi was against the western type of socialism because it suppressed freedom of the individual. Freedom according to Gandhiji is necessary in the pursuit of truth. Gandhi's
philosophy was based upon the long standing religious belief on the freedom of the human soul. Like Kant, Gandhi believed that freedom was the chief postulate of morality and religion. Thus Gandhiji expressed that to deprive a man of his natural liberty is worse than starving his body. It is the starvation of the soul which no amount of bodily comfort can restore. Gandhiji said: "I want freedom for full expression of my personality. Under socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body." By socialism here Gandhi meant western type of socialism. Again he said: "Where there is no freedom of thought and action, there can be no religion. In the absence of religion, a people cannot but perish."

Socialism Gandhi believed should be evolved out of the traditions and culture of the country. Gandhiji did not propagate the abolition of the rich or capitalist class but advised the principle of trusteeship. So there was no question of force or violence against the capitalist. The approach was a completely peaceful and non-violent one. Therefore it was in perfect tune with the spiritual virtues.

4.12.3 Did Gandhi support Capitalism?

When we say that Gandhi was not against capitalism, do we mean that he supported capitalism? Gandhi's idea of socialism therefore needs to be clarified here.
Gandhi has been often described as a 'socialist with a difference'. As Gandhi ji described his idea of Socialism in a conversation with Louis Fischer at Panchgani in the last week of July 1946. "Whilst I have the greatest admiration for the self denial and spirit of sacrifice of our socialist friends", said Gandhiji, "I have never concealed the sharp difference between their method and mine. They frankly believe in violence and all that is in its bosom. I believe in non violence through and through."

In Gandhi's vision of an ideal state, all ownership of the means of production would be socialised, but the transition to it from capitalist ownership, which was contemporary to him, would be a strictly non violent process. For Gandhiji the idea was to reform capitalist ownership, and make it fit with his ethical ideal and the principle of trusteeship to take for his personal consumption only as much as he needs and to turn the rest of his riches to meet the needs of society.

In 1936 K.G. Mashruwala contributed series of articles under the caption 'Gandhism to Socialism' which were edited and corrected by Gandhiji himself. There he explained Gandhi's idea of socialism as follows:

"He (Gandhi) would like to dispossess every person of all kinds of belongings. If he tolerates the institution of private property, it is not because he likes it, or holds it to
be necessary for the progress of humanity, but because he has yet to discover a truthful and non violent method of abolishing that institution. I think, that all socialists believe that possessions are absolutely essential to make mankind happy. Gandhiji does not accept that position in theory. But as a practical proposition, he feels, that mankind is not going to give up possessions, within a time which can be estimated. The only thing therefore to be considered is in what capacity persons having actual control over and possession of property should be deemed to have it, or in what spirit they should be suffered to possess it, Gandhiji says that "where persons possess property, they must be deemed to hold it in trust for society and not for themselves."

Now the question arises: Who was the rightful owner of the property purported to be held in trust? What was the nature of this property which fell under this category? And what was the nature and extent of property, which would be allowed by Gandhiji to be treated as private.

K.G. Mashruwala tries to explain it as such. The theory of trusteeship make no distinction between private and non private property. All property is held in trust, no matter who possess it, and what its nature or quantity is. Indeed, the theory of trusteeship applies not only to tangible and transferable property, but also to places of power and position and to intangible and non transferable property such as the muscular
energy of a labourer ...................... Who is then the owner? Gandhiji, would say God. To God alone belongs the universe and all that is in it, animate or inanimate, tangible or intangible. To take an instance, neither the shareholders, directors, managing agents, technicians, and the labourers, jointly or separately, nor even the state is the absolute owner of an industry. Every one of them must use those powers honestly and diligently and take no more of it for personal consumption than what is just and proper under the conditions in which humanity lives. Everyone who has contributed to the success of the industry to the best of his capacity may take a wage (if he needs) but the wage should be in accordance with his needs and not in accordance with the value of his contribution. The monetary wage would be no guide for evaluating a man's capacity or worth.

The idea of ownership being thus disposed of, the next question is who are beneficiaries of the property? The answer is, the entire creation is the beneficiary. For instance, it is not only those actually engaged in working in an industry that are entitled to its fruits; but everything is to be shared with every one else, not forgetting even non-human life.

The question as to the nature and extent of property Gandhiji would allow to be used as private is now easily answered.
That which is due to a worker and needed by him, he may use in a discreet manner for proper purposes. If, however, for any reason, he does not need it, he should give it over to one who needs it or return to the common fund of his unit.\footnote{47}

Thus it is evident that even in his idea of socialism Mahatma Gandhi takes resort to religious ideals.

\section*{4.13 Trusteeship}

Gandhi differed from the other socialists in one more important respect which is that he is ready to accept the rich. The persons endowed with aptitude and qualities are free to produce more goods in the society and earn money. They may take active part in trade and commerce of the country and increase personal and national income. What Gandhiji wants of the rich people is that they should keep away from exploiting others in the process and should not enjoy or appropriate more than what they actually need. This Gandhiji used to call the theory of Trusteeship. Every person should consider himself the trustee of the surplus money. The money must be used for the good of the society and not for personal consumption. He is only a trustee of the extra income after meeting the requirements for his personal and family expenses.\footnote{Gandhiji had no faith on coercive methods and legislations. What he valued most was the change of heart in the individuals that would make the society an ideal one. Even in matters of big industries and
companies Gandhiji exhorted for the adoption of this method of trusteeship.

The principle of trusteeship is therefore not renunciation of holding but renunciation while holding property. Gandhiji also made a distinction between possession and possessiveness. In his view the evil is not in possession as such but in possessiveness. If any rich man went to Gandhi to renounce his wealth and business activities, Gandhi would advise him that he wanted neither the renouncement of his wealth nor his business activities, but what he wanted was their application for the services of the poor and the oppressed. He wanted the rich class to become trustees of the nation and to run their business for the welfare of the people. Thus the rich man will have possession of his wealth of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will remain as a trustee for the rest which will be used for the welfare of the society. In this the honesty of the trustee is assumed. As soon as a man takes himself as a servant of the society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earnings and there is ahimsa in his activities. So Gandhi here tries to introduce purity which is a religious virtue in the economic field of earning.

Gandhi said "I must know that all the wealth does not belong to me what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth
belongs and must be used for the welfare of the community .......
I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour.48 According to Gandhi the trusteeship theory is a means to end exploitation and he suggests the weapon of non violent satyagraha for ushering trusteeship.

4.15.2. Religious influence in his idea of trusteeship

It is important to note that Gandhi's theory of trusteeship can be traced back to the 'Vratas' of Jaina religion—asteya and aparigraha (non stealing and non possession). Non stealing and non possession again are elaboration of ahimsa. When I take something which I do not need I am guilty of depriving others which is another form of himsa or violence.

Even according to the Hindu scriptures amassing of huge wealth is regarded as adharma (evil). It is an evil to desire far more than what he actually needs. Thus in the Bhagavata Purana a man who wants more than what he needs is doubted as a thief and goes further to say that he deserves punishment.

"Yavat bhriyeta jatharah tavit
Svattam hi dehinah adhikam
Yo hi manyeta sa stene danjam arhati."49

Manu also prescribed soma Yajna (an elaborate sacrificial performance) requiring a huge amount of money for a person who
masses three years income so that wealth accumulated by a person is distributed among the various persons of the community, supplying the commodities of a yajna. Gandhiji had this fundamental principle of asteya of Hindu religion into the economic field and consequently his idea of trusteeship has been influenced by it.

4.14. **Gandhi's economic ideals in practice**

As is always said that Mahatma Gandhi did not preach his ideas only in words. But he tried to put each and every principle into daily practice. He did not simply advocate that spinning is an important aid to self-purification but he himself took to spinning in his daily life. He did not only preach the gospel of simplicity, but his very life itself was a glaring example of utmost simplicity. He ate very simple food and dressed himself in a loin cloth.

Gandhiji also undertook certain important steps for economic upliftment of the masses. When Gandhiji went for his daily walk with others, everyone was asked to collect small pieces of stones as much as he or she could carry and deposit them all in the backyard of Gandhiji's house. This was done to build a small road to connect Gandhiji's house with the main road which was a few hundred yards away. When Gandhiji was questioned about it, he replied that he wanted to add some useful work to his morning and afternoon walk. Moreover if the road needed to be built, everyone who felt its need should be involved in building it. Gandhiji wanted
every citizen to contribute according to his ability for economic and social welfare.

Another important aspect is that Gandhiji fought hard to remove injustice in the economic field since corruption in one sphere was bound to affect other spheres of life. Here the case of Champaran may be mentioned.

The lives of the peasants of Champaran was very pathetic. They mainly depended for their livelihood on the cultivation of indigo. But gradually the Europeans began to take over the cultivation. They made great profits at the cost of the peasants and their lives were made miserable. There were several attempts of revolt but all efforts were nipped in the bud. When the cultivation of indigo became unprofitable due to the development of chemical substitutes, the planters tried to shift the heavy losses to the poor peasants. They were beaten and placed in temporary prisons, houses were looted, cattle were seized, many illegal levies were imposed and marriages were taxed.

When all efforts failed the people turned to Gandhi to find a solution to the problem. Gandhi wanted to inquire into the condition of the peasants of Champaran and to study the situation so that he could understand it in order to remedy the ills. Gandhi went to Champaran and began to interview the peasants as well as the planters. But after a few days, he was ordered to leave the district of Champaran, failing which he was told would be arrested.
On the day of the trial, the Government prosecutor pressed the Magistrate to postpone the case, but Gandhi would not allow. The Magistrate then tried another approach. "If you leave the district now and promise not to return, the case against you will be withdrawn." To this Gandhi replied: "That cannot be. Not to speak of this time alone. I shall make Champaran even after my return from jail."  

Thus after a long struggle with the Government, a unanimous report favouring the peasants was submitted. The Government had to yield at last. It was essentially a compromise. A portion of the illegal taxation was to be refunded and the tinkathia system was to be abolished by law. This oppressive system which had been in existence for about a century was abolished and the planters' rule came to an end.

This is only one instance from the life of Mahatma Gandhi to show how he implemented his thoughts into action.

4.15 A critical survey of Gandhi's ideas on economics

Gandhian economy is built on the principle of "Simple living, High Thinking." Therefore the Gandhian theories of consumption, production and distribution are all derived from this basic principle.

a) Gandhian Theory of Consumption or limited wants:

In Hind Swaraj, Gandhi wrote, Civilisation in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication of
wants but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases capacity of service. The mind is a restless bird. The more it gets the more it wants and still remains unsatisfied. In a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi wrote, "We can realise truth and non violence in the simplicity of village life. The essence of what I have said is that man should rest content with what are his real needs and become self sufficient." Gandhi was of the opinion that every human being must satisfy his basic wants like food, clothing and shelter. Gandhi opposes the acquisition of wealth more than the minimum required. Gandhi believed that greed destroys human values like honesty, high thinking etc. Temptation to have more than what is necessary has led to increased production leading in turn to capitalism, exploitation and state control. A simple economy of limited wants does not invite aggression.

But the question here is: How many people would accept Gandhiji's ideal of 'Simple living and high thinking'? Limited wants means limited production but it becomes rather difficult to stick to such a principle in the competitive world of today when all the other nations are increasing their production and raising their standard of living. Moreover many may object to Gandhiji's belief that high thinking is possible only in case of simple living. Bertrand Russell said on one occasion, "Nothing improves the moral level of the community as much as increase of wealth ...."
the harshness of the general outlook from the Rhine to the Pacific at the present day is very largely due to the fact that, so many people are poorer than their parents were."53

b) Gandhi's theory of Production:-- Gandhi was opposed to large scale production for he believed that it leads to exploitation. Large scale production and industrialisation are the result of man's greed, according to Gandhi. The machine by taking the place of labourers creates unemployment and by its mechanical performance drives out all creative instincts and initiative. These evils are inherent in industrialisation according to Gandhi, and no amount of socialisation can eradicate them. Gandhi once wrote in Harijan "Pandit Nehru wants industrialisation because he thinks that if it is socialised, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that evils are inherent in industrialisation and no amount of socialization can eradicate them."54 Moreover, according to Gandhi, industrialisation led to exploitation of the village by the urban areas because the cities with greater earning prospects deprive the talented villagers of earning their income.

Now, it can be argued that Gandhi's idea of production is not acceptable to many because it will inevitably reduce the national economy to a poor level in the competitive world of today. Besides Gandhi's view that drudgery and exploitation are inherent in industrialisation is also questionable. In fact it may be
otherwise what is drudgery may result in the absence of machines due to an increase in the number of working hours. The machines by reducing the time of work can save some time for leisure. Moreover exploitation may be there in a rural or simple economy as much as in urban, developed economy. Exploitation is a part of one's character and mentality and has nothing much to do with machines. It depends upon the character of the individuals forming the society. For example farmers in India are exploited by the middleman who pay a negligible amount of money to them and sell the same products at a very high price in the market. This in fact has nothing to do with machines.

c) Gandhi's theory of distribution and trusteeship

Gandhi while advocating his views on distribution seems to change his view on many occasions. For example, in the beginning Gandhiji advocated the theory of absolute equality following Ruskin where he claimed that no profession is superior or inferior to the other and hence all workers whether lawyers, scavengers or doctors should be paid an equal amount of wage.

Later on Gandhi accepted a concept of equality more or less like that of Marxism 'from each according to his ability to each according to his need.' Gandhi insisted that everybody should have a "living wage" which would ensure the worker a balanced diet, a descent home and sufficient khadi with which to cover himself. Differences of wages should be on the basis
of differences in needs. Thus Gandhi wrote, " ... Just as it would be preposterous if an ant demanded as much food as an elephant; in the like fashion if a man demanded as much as another with a wife and four children that would be a violation of economic equality."

Again Gandhi at one time says everyone's work should include physical labour and Gandhi insists that everyone should do agricultural work. Then Gandhi says that everyone must contribute according to his ability and each person 'for earning his livelihood should follow the hereditary and traditional calling of his forefathers.' Moreover it is surprising that Gandhi with a strong belief in equality should make such a remark: "A Shudra has as much right to knowledge as a Brahmana but he falls from his estate if he tries to gain his livelihood through teaching." How could Gandhi neglect one's aptitudes and interests? Can we allow a stupid Brahmana to teach or preach simply by account of his birth? Or should a Brahmana with great capability for manual labour be deprived of earning his livelihood by the means of his own interest?

Coming to the Gandhian theory of trusteeship, its application to the modern society is rather questionable. According to Gandhi, "Earn your crores by all means but understand that your wealth is not yours, it belongs to the people. Take what
It is difficult to ensure that a trustee will keep only as much as he needs. Here the honesty of a trustee will have to be assumed. The labourers are forced to have complete confidence in their trustee masters and always assume that a trustee always works for their benefit. Today it is very difficult to have complete confidence in the morality of individuals and hence the trustee-ship principle is more a dream than reality.

But the above criticisms should not make us blind to the fact that certain features of Gandhiji's economic theory has far reaching significance specially in the case of Indian economy.

4.16 Conclusion

Gandhi insisted that the vast masses of people be rehabilitated and India's socio-economic structure built on the agricultural economy. We have tried to imitate Western civilisation by giving priority to the industrial sector over the agricultural. In a vast country like India the primary necessity is food and cloth for the people and raw materials for the industries which agriculture alone can provide and this should be the foundation of Indian economy.

The objection of Mahatma Gandhi against machinery found its sophisticated echo even in contemporary America, in the voice of Galbraith in his book 'New Industrial State'. The highly industrialised community of the United States of America has been the marvel
of many people today. People believe that such a highly industrialised nation is sure to promote the dignity and freedom of the individual. But Galbraith in his 'New Industrial State' has shown that the reverse is the case. Imperceptibly the industrial economy has been transforming itself into a dragon that was swallowing bit by bit all the noble features of human life. The dragon is represented by the large Corporation. It is not only the freedom of the individual in the large corporation that is threatened but that of even a million shareholders of the corporation himself. The group personality has emerged, integrating the individual into a group. In terms of freedom of the individual, consumer's choice, pattern of consumption, function of the market and the like, Galbraith concedes, that there is no difference between an industrial society of capitalist America and that of a totalitarian Socialist State and calls this resemblance the principle of convergence.

Many criticisms have been levelled against the Gandhian economic system. Economists have dubbed his theory as outdated and impractical and people laugh at it. As V.M. Dandekar in his article 'Gandhian economic system' in the book "Gandhi in Today's India" writes: "It is a path leading to an alternative goal of human life and existence; a human society which is unmoved and immovable, unchanged and unchangeable using the same kind of plough as existed a thousand years ago, living in the same kind of cottages as there were in times immemorial... a society which limits and minimises its material...

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needs and one in which everyone earns his daily bread by a full day's physical labour seeking happiness as a mental condition of life. 60

Gandhi has already given an answer to such criticism in his own words in a lecture delivered at a meeting of the Muir Central College Economic Society at Allahabad "By economic progress, we mean advancement without limit, and by real progress we mean moral progress which again is the same thing as the progress of the permanent element in us. I hold that economic progress in the sense I have put it is antagonistic to real progress. Hence the ancient ideal has been the limitation of activities promoting wealth ......... That you cannot serve God and Mammon is an economic truth of highest value. We have to make our Choice." 61

If we enter the race of material progress by following the economic ideals prescribed by Gandhi we may not be very successful because Gandhiji's economy is one of self sufficiency and simplicity. But we must bear in mind that to Gandhi economics is not an end in itself but only a means to ultimate self realisation.

Gandhiji as has been said was influenced by the ideals of religion in shaping his economic principles. Schumacher suggests that a religious view of man often affects his economic judgements. The fourth noble truth of Buddhism is the eightfold path. This is the path one has to follow in order to rid himself
of the cravings (tanha) that binds one to the samsaric world of suffering (dukkha). One of the requirements of the eightfold path is right livelihood which as Schumacher points out involves economics. In Buddhist thought therefore economics and religious values are inter related and there can be no conflict between the two. That is to say a Buddhist way of life demands Buddhist economics. According to Schumacher the Buddhist philosophy teaches a man to develop his talents which help him to remove his self centredness which perpetuates his cravings that binds him to the world of impermanence (annica). 

Buddhist economy therefore lays more importance on the development of character than on the development of economy.

Even Hinduism attaches the highest importance to simple living and high thinking. The early Hindu Society was regulated by the principle of Varnashrama dharma. There were four different stages, four different castes and four different ends of human life - dharma, artha, kama, moksha. These set up kept away many of the problems of the modern society namely food, class conflict, competition, exploitation, illiteracy and so on. There were other rules of conduct like yama and niyama which taught on the art of self restraint through control of the palate, control over the senses and the restriction of human wants. These helped to solve the problem of food shortage, over-population, hoarding etc. Thus Gandhi realised the greatness of these ancient teachings and therefore formulated his ideas of economics from these basic principles of religion.
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