

GANDHIAN ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY /APPROACH

Gandhi's economic philosophy was greatly influenced by Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. From this book: he learnt: (a) that the good of the individual is theories of Development contained in the good of all; (b) that a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, in as much as all have the same right to earn from their work; and, (c) that a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living. Further, Gandhi was also inspired by the ideas of Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Kropotkin. Tolstoy's principles of simplicity, asceticism, and equalitarianism became a part of Gandhi's philosophy. Besides, the Indian scriptures (the Bhagavad Gita, and the Upanishads) and Indian saints such as Kabir, Mira, and Guru Nanak, also left a deep impression on Gandhi.

Gandhi's ideas on economics are embedded in his philosophy of life. Gandhian economics differs from mainstream economics in the following manner

- 1) It replaces the assumption of the perfect mobility of labour with the assumption that community and family stability should have priority.
- 2) It rejects the more-is-always-better principle. It replaces the axiom of non-satiation with a principle of limits, the recognition that there is such a thing as 'enough' material wealth.
- 3) It recognizes that consuming more than 'enough' creates more problems than it solves, and causes consumer satisfaction or utility to decline, rather than increase.
- 4) It aims at a better quality of life, rather than higher standards of living as propagated by other economists.

Let us have a clear idea of Gandhi's philosophy of life to understand Gandhian economics. Gandhi viewed life as a whole, and not in its isolated compartments. According to the Indian scriptures, there are four aspects of an individual's life: Artha (money), Kama (desire), Dharma (righteousness), and Moksha (liberation). These aspects are interrelated, and, therefore all of them should be harmoniously developed. Money is required to satisfy the basic requirements of life, however, it is not the end in itself. Man's aim is not to multiply worldly desires and engage his whole life in acquiring wealth to satisfy all his desires. The goal of life is to control desire and transform it, through righteousness, into liberation. He argues for the liberation of man from the cyclical order marked by artha, kama, dharma and moksha. According to him, true happiness lies in the all round development of a human being's personality, and in living a full life.