

Mahatma Gandhi's Views on the Indian Economy: A Path to Self-Reliance and Social Justice

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi, a prominent leader of the Indian independence movement, held distinctive and profound views on the Indian economy. His economic philosophy was deeply rooted in his broader ideology of non-violence, truth, and self-reliance. This research paper explores Gandhi's economic ideas and their implications for India's socio-economic development. It discusses his thoughts on swadeshi, decentralization, village-based economy, and his vision for economic self-sufficiency, while highlighting the contemporary relevance of his ideas.

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi, one of the most influential figures in the history of the Indian subcontinent, is renowned for his role in achieving India's independence from British colonial rule. In addition to his political activism, Gandhi also had a distinctive economic philosophy that played a crucial role in shaping his vision for a free India. Gandhi's economic principles were rooted in his belief that economic and political independence were closely intertwined. He advocated for an economy that prioritized self-reliance, sustainability, and social justice.

Swadeshi and Self-Reliance

Gandhi was a strong advocate of swadeshi, a term that encompassed the idea of using local resources, promoting indigenous industries, and boycotting foreign goods. He believed that swadeshi was not merely an economic concept but a moral and spiritual one. By promoting local production and consumption, Gandhi aimed to reduce dependence on foreign imports and, in the process, strengthen India's self-sufficiency.

Decentralization

Gandhi envisioned a decentralized economic system where power and decision-making were shifted from the urban centers to villages. He advocated for the idea that each village should be self-sustaining and capable of meeting its basic needs. Decentralization, according to Gandhi, would not only empower local communities but also reduce economic disparities and ensure greater social justice.

Village-Based Economy

Central to Gandhi's economic philosophy was the idea of a village-based economy. He believed that rural India, with its agrarian roots, could provide the foundation for economic self-sufficiency. Gandhi promoted cottage industries, such as spinning and weaving, as a means to empower villagers economically. He saw these industries as a way to create employment opportunities, promote skill development, and improve living standards in rural areas.

Non-Violent Economics

Gandhi's commitment to non-violence extended to his economic philosophy. He advocated for fair economic practices that would not exploit labor or harm the environment. He believed in ethical economic principles that aimed at reducing inequality, promoting cooperation, and respecting the dignity of labor.

Relevance of Gandhi's Economic Ideas Today

Gandhi's economic ideas continue to hold relevance in the contemporary world. In an era marked by globalization, environmental concerns, and socio-economic disparities, his emphasis on self-reliance, decentralization, and ethical economics provides valuable lessons for sustainable development and social justice. Many of his concepts, such as local sourcing and sustainable living, resonate with modern movements advocating for responsible consumption and production.

Industrialization

Gandhian economics is not based entirely on handicraft and cottage industries. Gandhiji visualized that electricity, ship building, iron works etc. should exist side by side with village and cottage industries. Industrialization leads to maximum exploitation of man and nature. Industrialization is based on large scale and highly sophisticated technology which leads to unemployment, poverty, urbanization, deforestation, desertification, pollution etc. large scale industries should be owned by the state and administered wholly for public good.

Mechanization

Gandhiji had no objection to mechanization of production if it doesn't hurt the dignity of man and self-reliance of villages. He believed that mechanization is good when the hands are few for the work to be done. In a country like India, here labour is abundance maximum industries should be labour intensive and not capital intensive.

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi's views on the Indian economy were deeply intertwined with his broader philosophy of truth and non-violence. His emphasis on self-reliance, swadeshi, and decentralization, as well as his commitment to ethical economic practices, continue to inspire discussions on sustainable development and economic justice in India and beyond. Gandhi's economic ideas provide valuable

insights for crafting economic policies that prioritize self-sufficiency, social equity, and ethical conduct in a globalized world. Understanding and applying his economic principles can contribute to creating a more just and sustainable future.

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