
UNIT 5 BREAD LABOUR

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi had great regard and admiration for labour, whether bodily or physical labour, mental or intellectual labour. To him, the real wealth of any nation consists in its labour. He did not accept the labour theory of value which was propounded by David Ricardo or of Marxian form; rather he advocated the moral idea of dignity of labour and believed that labour has its unique place. He was more near to Saint Paul remarks that if any person would not work, neither should he eat or Saint Augustine who regarded labour as a means for perfection of man. The following extract from “Yervada Mandir” gives us an idea as to how the concept of Bread Labour gripped his mind: “The Law, that to live man must work, first came home to me upon reading Tolstoy’s writings on Bread Labour. But even before that I had began to pay homage to it after reading Ruskin’s “Unto This Last”. The Divine Law that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands was first stressed by a Russian writer named T. M. Bondaref. Tolstoy advertised it and gave it wider publicity. In my view the same principle has been set forth in the Third Chapter of Gita where we are told that he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food”(Gandhi,1932, p. 21). Sacrifice here can only mean Bread Labour.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the concept of Bread Labour as developed by Gandhi.
- Discuss how Gandhi gave equal importance to manual and intellectual labour.
- How Bread Labour can solve the problem of inequality and exploitation in society.

5.2 **RUSKIN ON WORK AND BREAD LABOUR**

John Ruskin, a British Writer and Thinker believed in sincere, honest and happy work, a work by the hand. The significance of manual work and necessity of bread labour was noted by him in 'The Seven Lamps of Architecture', where he is very much concerned with happiness of the carver when he is doing his work. "For we are not sent into this world to do any thing into which we cannot put our hearts. We have certain work to do for bread, and that is to be done strenuously, other work to do our delight, and that is to be done heartily: neither is to be done by halves and shifts, but with a will; and what is not worth this effort is not to be done at all" (Ruskin, 1925, p.318). He also said that hand-work elevated and machine work degraded the soul. In his famous essay on 'The Nature of Gothic', he expresses his concern for happiness and the delight that a worker should take in his work: "It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure" (Ruskin, 1924, p.194). Work with a will and with all delight is the first requisite of honest and simple life. Life can be made pleasant only on the sound principle of 'joyful human labour', as presented by Ruskin in 'Unto This Last': "Smooth in field; fair in garden; full of orchard; trim, sweet, and frequent in homestead ringing with voices of vivid existence" (Ruskin, 1934, p.10). Happy work in the field, in the garden and at home will bring peace and prosperity to the individual and will create conditions conducive to national health and wealth. In the same book, he noted that what was needed in England at that time was 'to show the quantity of pleasure that may be obtained by a consistent, well administered competence, modest, confessed and labourious.' In The Political Economy of Art, Ruskin wrote that all youths of whatever rank, ought to learn some manual trade thoroughly; "for it is quite wonderful how much a man's views of life are cleared by the attainment of the capacity of doing any one thing well with his hands and arms" (Ruskin, p.174). The members of Parliament should learn how to plough and how to make a horseshoe. Ruskin is all praise for the life of a labourer and deems him in no way inferior to the soldier and the author. The labourer serves his country with spade, as a man in the middle ranks of life, serves it with his sword or pen: so he deserves honourable rewards also.

Mahatma Gandhi admitted in his autobiography that he derived three principles from Unto This Last. (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 a life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living. He further acknowledged: The first of these I knew, second I had dimly realised. The third had never occurred to me. Unto This Last made it clear as day light for me that the second and third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn ready to reduce these principles to practice (Gandhi, 1927, p.275).

5.3 **IMPACT OF LEO TOLSTOY**

Gandhi was also deeply influenced by the thoughts of Tolstoy, who warned the humanity of the impending peril if it neglected the value of bread labour. Referring to the Russian writer Bondaref, Tolstoy observes that his discovery of the vital importance of Bread Labour is one of the most remarkable discoveries of modern times. The idea is that every healthy individual must labour enough for his food and his intellectual faculties must be exercised not in order to obtain a living or amass a favourite but only in the service of mankind. If this principle is observed everywhere, all men would be equal, none would starve and the world would be saved from many a sin. It is possible that this globe rule will never be observed by the whole world. Millions observe it in spite of themselves without understanding it. But their mind is

working in a contrary direction, so an incentive to those who understand and seek to practice the rule. By rendering a willing obedience to it they enjoy good health as well as perfect peace and develop their capacity for service (Gandhi, *Ashram Observances*, 1955 edn, pp.60-61).

To avert the moral degradation and cultural decadence, we have to order our life and vocation in such a manner as to exert our hands and legs. Brain work alone is not enough, because man has not only head. He has also the faculty or other limbs, which also needs attention and proper exertion.

Tolstoy discusses the system of division of labour and said that a section of society is in poverty, while another enjoys the fruits of others in the name of science and art. He said, 'Science and art are beautiful things, but just because they are beautiful they should not be spoilt by joining depravity to them, that is freeing oneself from a man's obligation to support his own and other people's lives by labour'.

5.4 MANUAL LABOUR

Gandhi practised the ideal of Bread Labour in Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm in South Africa. Body labour was essential for certain hours of a day in the ashrams. There were various activities carried on such as agriculture, dairying, weaving, carpentry, tanning etc. which were must for every member of the ashram. After returning to India, he included these items in his Ashram vows. He imparted special dignity and position by making it the pivot of all activities whether political, social, economic and educational activities. The real purpose of work is to develop man's higher faculties, just as food builds and sustains the physical body.

Gandhi was of the firm opinion that the adoption of bread labour by one and all as a necessary value of life would surely pave the way for the establishment of classless and casteless society. A millionaire cannot carry on his luxurious way of life for long and soon will get tired of this lifestyle of rolling in his bed all day long and being helped to his food. He has to induce hunger by exercise. Gandhi said, 'If everyone, whether rich or poor has thus to take exercise in some shape or form, why should it not assume the form of productive i.e. Bread labour? No one asks the cultivator to take breathing exercise or to work his muscles (Gandhi, 1932, pp.36-37). He was sure that the distinctions of rank would be abolished when everyone without exception acknowledged the obligation of bread labour.

According to Gandhi, everyone must be his own scavenger. Evacuation is as necessary as eating; and the best thing would be for everyone to dispose of his own waste. "If this is impossible, each family should see to its own scavenging. I have felt for years that there must be something radically wrong where scavenging has been made the concern of a separate class in society. We have no historical record of the man who first assigned the lowest status to this essential sanitary service. Whoever he was, he by no means did us a good" (Ibid.). We should realise that everyone of us is a scavenger and commence bread labour as a scavenger. By prescribing the adoption of bread labour by all the Varnas and by making the scavenging the concern of all, Gandhi attempted to rectify the social structure which was highly stratified into different castes with the attendant high low, caste outcaste syndrome.

In his own words, "Brahma created his people, with the duty of sacrifice laid upon them, and said: 'By this do you flourish, let it be the fulfiller of all your desires.'" He who eats without performing this sacrifice, eats stolen bread," this says the Gita, "Even thy bread by the sweat of thy brow," says the Bible, Sacrifices may be of many kinds. One of them may well be bread labour. If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and leisure for all. There would be no cry of overpopulation, no disease and no such misery as

we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice (Harijan, 29.06.1935, p.156). By this our wants would be minimised, our food will be simple. We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let anyone who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread, he will derive the greatest relish from the production of his labour, improve his health and discover that many things he took, were superfluities'. Men will no doubt do many other things, either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable.

He further elaborated, 'Everyone should deem it a dishonour to eat a single meal without honest labour. If we could shed the aversion to labour and adapt ourselves to unexpected changes of fortune, we would go a long way towards the acquisition of fearlessness and thus towards an upliftment of our national character'. He further clarified, let me not to be misunderstood. I do not discount the value of intellectual labour, but no amount of it is any compensation for bodily labour which every one of us is born to give for the common good of all. It may be, often is, infinitely superior to bodily labour, but it never is or can be a substitute for it, even as intellectual food, though far superior to the grains we eat, never can be substitute for them. Indeed, without the products of the earth, those of the intellect would be impossibility' (Young India, 15.10.1925, pp.355-356).

5.5 INTELLECTUAL LABOUR

Gandhi remarked that intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. He said, 'In the ideal state doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. Obedience to the law of bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of brute will be replaced by the law of man. Intellectual work, however superior, cannot compensate for bodily labour, even as intellectual food though far superior to the grains we eat, never can be a substitute for them. Gandhi said, 'Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man, I claim, ought to be free from that obligation. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output'. When the rich take to some useful physical labour, they will come to know the problems and difficulties of millions of labourers.

Gandhi wanted to stop the mad craze for white collar jobs and check the feeling of hatred towards physical labour. He said, 'Under my system it is labour which is the current coin, not metal'. Therefore he wanted that everyone must do some productive physical labour. Physical labour done out of ignorance or compulsion can also not be termed as Bread Labour. Compulsory obedience to the law of Bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health'.

Man cannot develop his mind by simply writing and reading or making speeches. Gandhi believes in eight hours' day of honest and clean labour. He would not approve of free meals because, he thinks, it has degraded the nation and has encouraged laziness, idleness, hypocrisy and even crime. He calls it a misplaced charity which adds nothing to the wealth of the country, whether material or spiritual, and gives a false sense of meritoriousness to the donor. He strongly recommends organising institution where honest work has to be done before meals are served. He wanted to give effect to a cultural revolution by asking even poets, doctors, lawyers, etc., to practise bread labour and to use their special talents for the service of humanity. There would be no diseases in the society because the physical labour will keep men healthy.

Gandhi felt that the conflict between labour and capital can be eliminated only when everyone voluntarily takes to some useful physical labour. He felt that agriculture, spinning, weaving, carpentry, etc. which are connected with some primary needs will flourish if all take to physical labour of the productive nature. The love for Bread labour will not only provide work to the unemployed manual labourers but will also solve the problem of educated unemployed. When everyone will be engaged in useful physical labour not only the wants will be reduced but also the production will increase. These two things will reduce scarcity and solve the problem of overpopulation, disease and misery.

Gandhi noted that in India, villagers lived a life worse than animals. They were so debased that they could not work and live naturally. If the people of India had realised the dignity of labour, they would have never debased and exploited their brethren. Gandhi emphasised that everyone had the capacity to work and earn more than his daily bread. No labour is too mean for an honest penny. The only thing is that man should be ready to use his hands and feet for his bread.

There was a great disparity between the rich and the poor and a great conflict between labour and capital. This disparity and conflict could be easily removed if everyone put in labour enough to win his bread. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated, said Gandhi. In India it was particularly required as caste distinctions had become severe and the number of the poor and the unemployed was increasing.

Bread labour, further, was essential for those who followed a life of non-violence and truth, as these principles preclude every possibility of exploitation, idleness and the possession of property for private profit. Gandhi wants every man to work according to his capacity – and that too useful or serviceable work – that will be a sure remedy against the economic ills of the country.

5.6 MOTIVATION FOR WORK

One of the major sources of motivation for work lies in the ethical, moral and spiritual values. Gandhi formulated it in the form of bread labour. The concept of bread labour involves a union of two basic principles: (i) the expenditure of energy through body work and (ii) the moral and ethical values enjoined to such energy use. A person expresses oneself through work. Such work has both subjective and objective dimensions. The objective dimension is the production of values. The subjective part involves the process of raising the spiritual level of the person. In other words work is necessary for spiritual growth. It is this spirituality that provides the most important motivation for work. However, this work has to be searched so that it can promote spiritual growth. It cannot be ‘stranger defined work’. It has to be ‘friend or self-defined work.’

Gandhi’s idea about bread labour provides an alternative motivation and source for work and production. In the work emanating from bread labour, the motivating force is caring, love, and service. The person who performs bread labour questions both the nature of work and production; both ends and means are equally important. One does not justify the other. The production of values generated through bread labour must satisfy the criteria of service, caring, and love. Similarly the work that is done through bread labour must also be motivated by caring, love, and service.

5.7 COMPONENTS OF LABOUR

J. D. Sethi distinguishes four components of labour, namely (i) minimum physical necessary labour, (ii) instrument for self-actualisation, (iii) method for service, and (iv) means to earn a living. The concept of bread labour fully incorporates all the first three components. As regards component four, the concept of bread labour accepts a part of this component with the clear proviso that the labour involved in earning a living does not involve the giving up of the principle of morality and service.

This contrasts, fundamentally, with the nature of production in our “modern” production system of today. In this “modern” system the person who works has no say about the end of this work production. Many a time they do not even know what they are producing; as, for example, workers in chemical plants have no idea what sort of chemicals they are producing. It is not that the workers in our society do not care about what they produce and would like to produce. But they just do not have the opportunity to effectively express their preferences. They feel alienated both from the nature of their work and from the resulting production. The alienation of this work follows from its being devoid of moral and service criteria perhaps because of its injury to the spirit.

In spite of the alienation and “joyless economy”, the conventional wisdom of today is that the existing production system is the best, that is, it ensures the production of all the values desired. What is produced is justified by the existence theorem, namely that if it exists it must be desired and be desirable. Behind this, no doubt, there is a whole ethical and moral superstructure. In view of the existence of production, any alternative is immediately suspect particularly the one based on bread labour. It is dubbed as utopian, idealistic, impractical, and all that. Such characterisation, criticism and doubts imply a number of questions. Is production at all possible under an alternative system where the major motive for work is caring, love, and service? What type of values would such an alternative produce? Is such an alternative consistent with the existing nature of production? These questions deal with the feasibility, nature, and comparison of production under the principle of bread labour.

5.8 SHADOW WORK AND SUBSISTENCE WORKS

It should be quite obvious that certain values will certainly be produced by bread labour. It follows from the principle that human beings do like to work. Bread labour involves that people gain satisfaction, utilities, and enjoyment from work. The work is, in this case, its own reward. Such work will, thus, be done simply to raise the spirit of the persons working. In all societies from past to present, such work has been performed. In our own society a lot of work is done by people voluntarily. However, voluntary or unpaid work needs to be distinguished between shadow work and subsistence work. The real difference between the two kinds of unpaid activity- shadow work which complements wage labour, and subsistence work which competes with and opposes both is consistently missed. Subsistence work is nothing else but bread labour. The important point here is that the society/person has to bring in the elements of a different value system, that of caring, loving, and service.

A contrary view of work prevails when a community chooses a subsistence oriented way of life. There, the inversion of development, the replacement of consumer goods by personal action, of industrial tools by convivial tools is the goal. There, both wage labour and shadow work will decline since their product, goods and service is valued primarily as a means for ever increasing activity rather than as an end, that is, dutiful consumption. There, the guitar is

valued over the record, the library over the schoolroom, the background garden over the supermarket selection. There, the personal control of each worker over his means of production determines the small horizon of each enterprise, a horizon which is a necessary condition for social production and the unfolding of each worker's individuality. This mode of production also exists in slavery, serfdom and other forms of dependence. But it flourishes, releases its energy, and acquires its adequate and classical forms only where the worker is the free owner of his tools and resources; only then can the artisan perform like a virtuoso. This mode of production can be maintained only within the limits that nature dictates to both production and society.

5.9 VALUE-IN-USE AND VALUE-IN-EXCHANGE

Regarding the nature of production, virtually all things that satisfy basic needs will be produced. In addition, things and activities that bring joy to people and uplift them will be produced and performed. These are the values that have been classified as "values in-use". Even in the "modern" production system a very large part of "values in use" are produced by the voluntary and unpaid work process; e.g., the kitchen gardens, the caring for children, old and sick people, the comradeship, the production of arts and crafts, etc. Even in a "modern" society, where the emphasis of production is on "values-in-exchange" and "values in threat", the contribution of bread labour type work is considerable.

If the society promotes opportunities for and principles of bread labour, the share of "values in use" in total production will increase and the share of bread labour that produces these values will also go up. It is quite feasible for the "values in use" to be a preponderant part of production and all these "values in use" being produced by bread labour.

A question is generally raised: is bread labour consistent with technology? One has to be clear about technology. Obviously, any technology that dehumanises people is not consistent with bread labour. On the other hand, there are technologies more specifically tools that are complementary with bread labour. In a society where bread labour is performed, there will be a good amount of far more modern technology albeit of a different kind.

For purposes of comparison, it needs to be pointed out that production under the principle of bread labour may not produce "values in threat" and very little of "values in exchange". The reasons are not far to seek. The ethical dimensions of caring, love and service ensure that "values in threat" will not be produced since these manipulate, degrade and hurt people the very antithesis of caring and love. Theodore Roszak states the idea forcefully: "Work that produces unnecessary consumer junk or weapons is wrong and wasteful. Work that deceives or manipulates, that exploits and degrades is wrong and wasteful. Work that wounds the environment or makes the world ugly is wrong and wasteful".

The societies that produce "values in exchange" are generally export oriented. Successful export orientation involves a work force that feels equally committed to the goals of the society and willing to maintain the high quality of its product. Japan is, perhaps, the most visible example of such modes of production. The organisations in Japan are structured to make the workers identify with the organisations. Japan has been very successful in this effort. West Germany has also been successful in this regard.

The bread labour and "values in use" determine the quality of life in a society. In the current literature there is a growing discussion about the divergence between "standard of living" and "quality of life". With the growth in GNP, "standard of living" has been going up. However,

increasingly it is being found that the “quality of life” in these societies has been declining. Part of the explanation lies in the reduction in the use of bread labour and the production of “values in use”. As a result, growth has involved an extension of “values in exchange” and “values in threat”. Such growth has resulted in greater inequality in the society.

5.10 SUMMARY

Gandhi had great regard and admiration for labour, be it bodily or physical labour, mental or intellectual labour. He noted that the real wealth of any nation consists in its labour. He did not accept the labour theory of value which was propounded by David Ricardo or of Marxian interpretation. He firmly believed in the moral idea of dignity of labour and believed that labour has its unique place. He was highly influenced by the works of Ruskin and Tolstoy in his views on bread labour. He also believed with great conviction that the adoption of bread labour by one and all is a necessary value of life that would surely pave the way for the establishment of classless and casteless society. Above all, Bread labour was essential for those who followed a life of non-violence and truth, as these principles preclude every possibility of exploitation, idleness and the possession of property for private profit. Gandhi wants every man to work according to his capacity – and that too useful or serviceable work – that will be a sure remedy against the economic ills of the country.

5.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Analyse the doctrine of Bread Labour. How does it solve the problems of inequality and exploitation in the society?
2. Critically examine the concept of Bread Labour as developed by Gandhi.
3. Write short notes on the following:
 - a) Shadow work and subsistence works
 - b) Value-in-use and value-in-exchange
 - c) Ruskin and Tolstoy on Bread Labour

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 6 SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Structure

6.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

6.2 Swadeshi, Swadharma, Swabhava

6.3 Not against Foreign Trade

6.4 Principle of Neighbourhood

6.5 Self-reliance: A Moral Imperative

6.6 Economics of Khadi

6.7 Essence of Swadeshi

6.7.1 Swadeshi: Some Misunderstandings

6.7.2 Contemporary Relevance

6.8 Summary

6.9 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Winners do not do different things. They do things differently. Many of the conceptions Gandhi used, developed and made popular were not new. Gandhi claimed no originality for himself. He said, "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as hills" (Harijan, 28.03.1936, p.49). Originality does not always lie in inventing new ideas. It also lies in giving old ideas new meanings and made practical and are popularised. Swadeshi was one of the ideas, which was not new. Much before Gandhi, political reformers had talked of reviving indigenous industries. India had centuries-long traditions of indigenous industries.

The Indian patriots had realised, long before Gandhi that the poverty of India was principally due to the neglect of their industry at the hands of the British. R.C.Dutt's 'Poverty of India - under British Rule,' depicts it effectively about which Gandhi said that when he read it he was so powerfully affected that he began to shed tears. They felt that unless there was a revival of Indigenous Industry, the masses of India would remain poor.

The Swadeshi movement received a great impetus during the agitation of the Partition of Bengal (1905) and was characterised by a great deal of emotion and sentiments. During the partition days patriots could weave beautiful words but they could not produce articles of use. The result was that merchants passed off imported goods as India made. Early in 1919 a meeting was arranged between Gandhi and a patriotic mill-owner. The latter told Gandhi, "You are aware that in the days of partition (Bengal) the mill owner fully exported the Swadeshi movement. When it was at its height, I raised the price of cloth and did even worse things. We are not conducting our business out of philanthropy. We do it for profit" (Kripalani, 1967). Gandhi then understood why the Swadeshi movement of the partition days had fizzled out.

Gandhi realised that the Swadeshi and the boycott movement could not prosper without an increase in indigenous production, which would be independent of the mills. He also realised that in olden days the agricultural masses in India had always some subsidiary industries to add to their meagre income. He felt that the textile industry as the most viable one especially because of its being the biggest item of import from England. The tradition of hand-spinning and hand-weaving had been given up owing to the import of mill yarn from England and was wiped out in competition with foreign mill cloth. Upon realising that spinning and weaving could best provide subsidiary work to the agricultural masses of India, Gandhi worked for the revival of this industry; it would not only make the import of cloth from abroad superfluous, but also would greatly add to Indian's economic, social and political strength.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to

- Discuss the Gandhian concepts of Self-Reliance and Self-Sufficiency.
- Examine the relevance of Gandhi's concepts of Swadeshi in the contemporary world.

6.2 SWADESHI, SWADHARMA, SWABHAVA

Gandhi's conception of Swadeshi was very identical to that of Swadharma in the Gita. This Swadharma depends upon Swabhava, one's fundamental nature. People must follow in life such avocations as would not do violence to this nature. *The Gita* says: "One's own dharma though imperfect is better than the dharma of another well performed. The dharma of another is fraught with fear". Gandhi says of this: "Interpreted in terms of one's physical environment, this gives us the law of Swadeshi, for Swadeshi is Swadharma applied to one's immediate environment" (Ibid).

In a speech delivered before the Missionary Conference, Madras, on 14 February 1916, he defined Swadeshi in the following terms: Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of definition, I must restrict myself to ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting" (CWMG, Vol. 13, p.219).

As Dr. Gopi Nath Dhawan noted, Gandhi's views on Swadeshi seem to have undergone an evolution (Dhawan, 1951, p.106). A study of his address delivered at the Missionary Conference, Madras, 1916 shows that he then stood for total self-sufficiency of the country and its economic isolation from the world. Referring to the external trade, he said: "Much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from Swadeshi in the economic and Industrial life. If not an article of commerce had been brought from outside, she would be today a land flowing with milk and honey". He further said, "It has been argued that India can not adopt Swadeshi in the economic lift at any rate. Those who advance this objection do not look upon Swadeshi as a rule of life. With them it is a patriotic effort not to be made if involved any self-denial. Swadeshi is a religious discipline to be undergone in utter disregard of the physical comfort it may cause to individuals. Under its spell the deprivation of a pin or needle, because these are not manufactured in India, need cause no terror. A Swadeshist will

learn to do without hundreds of things which today he may consider necessary. Moreover, those who dismiss swadeshi from their minds by arguing the impossible, forget that swadeshi is the only doctrine consistent with the law of humility and tone" (CWMG, vol.13, p.222).

6.3 NOT AGAINST FOREIGN TRADE

In 1926 Gandhi wrote, "I have never considered the exclusion of every thing foreign under every conceivable circumstances as a part of Swadeshi. The broad definition of Swadeshi is the use of all home made things to the exclusion of foreign things, insofar as such use is necessary for the protection of home industry, more especially those industries without which India will become pauperized. In my opinion, therefore, Swadeshi which excludes the use of everything foreign no matter how beneficent it may be, is a narrow interpretation of Swadeshi" (Young India, 17.02.1926, p.213). From the excerpts of Yervada Mandir, we read: "To reject foreign manufactures because they are foreign and go on wasting national time and money in promotion in one's country of manufacture for which it is not suited would be criminal folly, and a negation of Swadeshi spirit" (Gandhi, 1957, p.66).

This shows that he moved away from his earlier position. Now he has permitted international trade and exchange of commodities if this meant an exchange of equal advantage and did not involve injustice. However, if it was to be a question of choice, he would have preferred self-sufficiency. But as a matter of practical policy he did not think that India should stand aloof in the matter of trade. "I would not wish India to live a life of complete isolation whereby it (sic) would live in water-tight compartments and allow nobody to enter her borders or to trade within her border" (Rajagopalachari, 1957, p.51).

He defined Swadeshi articles as any article which "subserve the interest of the millions even though the capital and talent are foreign but under effective Indian control" (Harijan, 25.02.1969, p.25). What was meant by effective control? What industry could satisfy Gandhi as being Indian? "An Industry to be Indian must be demonstrably in the interest of the masses. It must be manned by Indians both skilled and unskilled. Its capital and machinery should be Indian and the labour employed should have a living wage and be comfortably housed, while the welfare of the children of the labourers should be guaranteed by the employers. This is an ideal definition" (Ibid, 23.10.1937, p.311).

Though Gandhi did not ordinarily favour legislative interference, yet we find him as an ardent supporter of protectionism. He pleaded strongly for stiff protective duties upon foreign goods in order to nurture national interest. This may be cited as showing his allegiance to the Indian capitalist class. But a correct reading will be that he was not guided by any such definite interest, though objectively the Indian capitalists benefited by this demand. As P. Spratt reminds us, "His support is no doubt likely to benefit the capitalists rather than anybody else, but he does not advocate with that intention. His protection is a villagers' protection, designed to help the effort for self-sufficiency, not that for profits" (Spratt, 1939, p. 223).

6.4 PRINCIPLE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD

We have duties to all humankind but the duties we owe to all segments of it are not of equal importance. There is a hierarchy of duties based on the degree of proximity. Proximity is the decisive element in forming ties in terms both of closeness of feelings and knowledge of circumstances: "Our capacity for service is limited by our knowledge of the world in which we live" (CWMG, Vol. 63, p.233). Accordingly, we must start with service to our neighbours. An individual's service to his country and humanity consisted in serving his neighbours. One

should not serve one's neighbour and claim to serve one's distant cousin in Antarctica, for one must not serve one's distant neighbour at the expense of the nearest. This is not only the teaching of all the religions in the world but also the foundation of true and humane economics. Gandhi saw no contradiction between the principle of Swadeshi, interpreted in terms of neighbourhood, and that of rendering service to all humanity, which he also upheld.

Asked if a man can serve the immediate neighbours and yet serve the whole of humanity, Gandhi replied that he can, provided the service to neighbours was not itself exploitative of others. The neighbour himself would in turn serve his neighbours and in this way the chain of service would be expanded to include the world, rather than shut it out. For the same reason, the principle of neighbourhood, according to Gandhi, was neither metaphysical nor too philosophical for comprehension but just good common sense, for 'If you love your neighbour as thyself, he will do likewise with you, and both would gain thereby' (Ibid, Vol. 60, p.254).

The neighbourhood principle was not confined to the choice of commodity bundles but applied quite generally to choice of states of affairs. When you demand Swaraj, you do not want Swaraj for yourself alone but for your neighbours too. It was the choice of commodities however, that formed the primary concern of the Swadeshi Movement.

The neighbourhood principle has a direct consequence for the interpretation of ethical preferences in terms of Swadeshi, namely that whenever local products are available they should be preferred to their imported counterparts. Whether the latter were imports from foreign countries or from other regions of the same country made no difference. From around 1919 onwards Gandhi spelt out this moral imperative of local buying in much detail using numerous specific examples (Ibid, Vol. 16, p.30).

As between countries the neighbourhood principle translates as patriotism. An individual's preference ordering over commodity-bundles should therefore be guided by patriotism. The law of each country's progress demands on the part of its inhabitants preference for their own products and manufacturers. Accordingly, for Indians, there is a moral obligation to use products made in India whenever they can get them, even though these may be inferior to their foreign counterparts.

"There are several Swadeshi things on the market which are in danger of disappearance for want of patronage. They may not be up to the mark. It is up to us to use them and require the makers to improve them whenever improvement is possible", he pleaded (Ibid, Vol. 40, p.435).

Gandhi does not, however, explain how consumers continuing to use a product could, at the same time, require the makers to improve them. He mentions a number of goods belonging to this category. India produces a sufficient quantity of leather. It is therefore a duty on the part of an Indian consumer to wear shoes made of Indian leather in preference to foreign leather shoes, even if they are comparatively dearer and of an inferior quality. For the same reason products of Indian textile, sugar or rice mills 'must be preferred to the corresponding foreign product'. Swadeshi items should not be discarded in favour of better or cheaper foreign things, for comparisons of price or quality are not relevant for the kind of consumer's choice Gandhi is talking about, but patriotism is. "We attend flag-hoisting ceremonies and are proud of our national flag. Let me tell you that our pride has no meaning if you do not like things made in India and hanker after foreign ones" (Ibid, Vol.62, p.324).

If, on the other hand, a particular commodity is not, or cannot easily be made in India, the argument ceases to apply. Accordingly, while Gandhi regards it as a sin to import wheat from

Australia on the score of its superior quality, he would not rule out importing Oatmeal from Scotland, for Oats are not grown in India. "I buy useful healthy literature from every part of the world. I buy surgical instruments from England, pins and pencils from Austria and watches from Switzerland" (Ibid, Vol.26, p.279). For the same reason, in his Presidential Address at Belgaum Congress on December 26, 1924, he asserts "All British goods do not harm us. Some goods such as English books we need for our intellectual or spiritual benefit" (Ibid, Vol.25, p.475).

While upholding the principle of 'patriotic preference', Gandhi was at pains to explain that the spirit of Swadeshi was not vindictive. Exclusion of foreign goods was not intended as a punishment, it was a necessity of natural existence. Nor was it narrow or parochial, 'for I buy from every part of the world what is needed for my growth'. But by the same token, 'I refuse to buy from anybody anything, however nice or beautiful, if it interferes with my growth or injures those whom nature has made my first care' (Young India, 12.03.1925, p.88).

Not all foreign things, therefore, were to be excluded but only certain foreign things, especially cloth. Gandhi attached considerable moral importance to this distinction, "If the emphasis were on all foreign things, it would be racial, parochial and wicked. The emphasis is on all foreign cloth. The restriction makes all the difference in the world". Equally, the ethics of Swadeshi required that the exclusion should not be targeted at British cloth only. It applied just as much, say to the import of cloth from Japan, which was rapidly increasing during the 1930s. 'How can I take a single yard of Japanese cloth however fine and artistic it may be? It is poison to us, for it means starvation of the poor people of India' (CWMG, Vol.68, p.188).

6.5 SELF-RELIANCE: A MORAL IMPERATIVE

Gandhi's doctrine of buying local products was a moral imperative that had protectionist implications, but Gandhi had no particular allegiance to free trade. Responding to a comment that no country was free from foreign competition, Gandhi observed that on contrary each sovereign nation tried to protect its infant industries by bounties and tariffs and pointed to the sugar industry in Germany which had developed under a prohibitive tariff-wall. However, the exercise of ethical preference by consumer was, he claimed, a better solution because it was voluntary and was in correspondence with the principle of non-violence and was more likely to benefit the poor. Consumption behaviour that corresponded to the principle of ethical preferences, far from destroying the economic benefits flowing from foreign trade, would be conducive to the healthy growth of nations and so promote both matter and moral progress.

"That economics is untrue which ignores or disregards moral values. The extension of the law of non-violence in the domain of economics means nothing less than introduction of moral values as a factor to be considered in regulating international trade." He emphasised this approach to foreign trade would not lead to anarchy. "There will be nations that will want to interchange with others because they cannot produce certain things. They will certainly depend on other nations for them but the nations that will provide for them should not exploit them" (Harijan, 12.02.1938, p.5).

6.6 ECONOMICS OF KHADI

While the argument applies in principle to all home grown products, Gandhi singled out the products of village industry for special attention. In that Khadi claims place of pride. Indeed, the Swadeshi movement comes to be regarded primarily as a means of encouraging consumer

to wear Khaddar. Accordingly, people were asked to buy Khaddar in preference to mill-made cloth and to boycott foreign cloth altogether.

Gandhi's identification of the Swadeshi Movement with village industry, and with hand-spinning in particular, was based on a two-fold argument, that the urban population of India owed a special moral duty towards the villages; and that this duty would be best discharged by providing a market for village products and above all for hand-spun cloth. This argument is a logical consequence of the principles of neighbourhood (there are few towns or cities in India that are not surrounded by villages) and patriotism (most Indians are villagers). Gandhi sought to strengthen it further by introducing yet another moral principle, that of historical justice. Both economic and moral standards in the villages had declined through long neglect. City people as a whole were partly to blame. "The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen, the city dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it" (CWMG, Vol.83, pp.26-27).

Reparation had to be made. "We are guilty of a grievous wrong against the villagers and the only way in which we expiate it is by encouraging them to revive their lost industries and arts by assuring them of a ready market" (Ibid, Vol.60, p.256).

This solution was entirely feasible, provided, that city people come to accept their moral responsibility. 'We have to be rural minded and think of our necessities and the necessities of our households in terms of rural mindedness- it is in consonance with the true economics of our country' (Ibid). Gandhi saw himself as an exponent of this 'true economics'. 'A link has been built to bridge the yawning gulf between the cities and villages. We have only to cross this bridge. Patronising village industries will constitute the crossing of the bridge'. To Gandhi this was not a matter of charity, but a purely commercial proposition, requiring one to exercise ethical preferences when choosing one's consumption bundle.

The second part of the argument seeks to justify the use of hand-spun cloth as the appropriate means of repaying the debt that city people owe to the villagers, and is based on standard economic reasoning. Spinning was a solution for rural unemployment. The whole scheme of Khadi, according to Gandhi, rested upon the supposition that there were millions of poor people in India who had no work during at least four months of the year. Around three-quarters of the population of India belonged to this category, because agricultural work was seasonal, they remained idle for a third of the year or more. This contributed to their endemic poverty, pushing them to the verge of starvation. If there was crop-failure or famine, the extent of involuntary unemployment became much greater and many of them died of hunger and disease. For the semi-starved but partially employed millions, spinning provided a means of part-time employment as well as insurance against famine. Spinning, therefore, is primarily a supplementary industry for agriculture.

Why, one might ask, choose spinning rather than some other subsidiary occupation for agricultural workers? Gandhi answered that 'Spinning had long been practiced by villagers in the past. It required a few simple and low cost implement and little technical knowledge and skill. It could be learnt easily, did not require too much attention, could be done at odd moments and, for these reasons, was suitable as part time employment for masses of rural people. Neither cattle-breeding nor weaving, which has been suggested as possible alternatives to spinning, as a supplement to agriculture, enjoyed these advantages even though they were more remunerative'.

Spinning was the easiest, the cheapest and the best, that requires minimum capital outlay and organisational efforts. The test of Swadeshi was not the universality of the use of an article which goes under the name of Swadeshi but the universality of participation in the production or manufacturing of such articles. Judged by this test spinning had a potential unmatched by other contenders.

Gandhi neither contemplated nor advised the abandonment of a single, healthy life giving industrial activity for the sake of hand-spinning. On one occasion, he found that a number of women had been spinning who were not without occupation or means of making a living. 'Perhaps they spin in response to our appeal and because they realize it is good for the country' (Ibid, Vol.30, p.386). Gandhi remained firm in his resolve that their spinning should stop, for the Charkha movement had not been conceived with such people in mind but only for able bodied people who were idle for want of work. The operative principle was quite clear: if there were no crises of semi-unemployed people, there would be no room for spinning-wheel.

Gandhi viewed Khadi as not only an economic but also as a political phenomenon. He believed that the universal adoption of Khaddar by Indians was equivalent to the acquisition of Swaraj. Daily spinning on the wheel was a symbolic offering-of dedication to India. Khadi was also the symbol of unity of India. Spinning was a daily sacrament and a concrete viable technique of participation for the unification and revivification of India. Further, Khadi was a potent instrument of mass-uplift and mass-education. The spinning-wheel, therefore, was divine instrument and satisfied the needs of the meanest and humblest of human beings.

Much to Gandhi's disappointment Khadi could not become a sustainable alternative. It had limited patronage, and never became an economic proposition as he viewed it.

6.7 ESSENCE OF SWADESHI

The essence of the concept of Swadeshi lies in the following propositions:

1. An individual, a la' consumer, will reduce one's wants. In reducing one's wants, the utility function will depend upon the commodities that are, or can be produced locally by neighbours. In other words, one's utility function will not be made up of commodities imported in their entirety. In urban areas, particularly in developing countries, the utility functions of the affluent members of the society are entirely made up of important commodities. Such a utility function is un-swadeshi since it denies the local producers the necessary means to produce commodities and thereby earn a livelihood for themselves.
2. Not only will the consumer redesign his or her utility function such that it is made up of commodities produced, or producible, in the neighbourhood, but also the consumer will make an effort to obtain these commodities from the neighborhood itself. In other words, the consumer will prefer the commodities produced by the immediate neighbour to the commodities produced by a distant neighbour except when either the immediate neighbour does not produce these goods or refuses to improve the efficiency of production. Only in such cases will the consumer obtain these goods from a distant neighbour.
3. The consumer will cooperate with the producer neighbour in the process of improving the efficiency of production. This translates into the idea that the utility function not only contains the commodities produced in the neighbourhood but also a variable reflecting cooperation with the producer. In this sense the consumer and producer do not generate antagonistic relationships as the consumer is sovereign and the producer the willing slave.

On the contrary, the consumer and the producer are jointly involved in a cooperative effort.

4. Translated in economic language swadeshi involves two shifts: an upward shift in the demand curve and a downward shift in the cost curve for a commodity produced in the neighbourhood/locality. Both these shifts take place simultaneously. It ensures that the production of the needed goods producible in the neighbourhood is profitable and hence feasible. Swadeshi, thus, is opposite to the trend in the last fifty years where the demand curve has been shifting downwards and the cost curve upwards. This was exactly the policy of British colonialism in India. People were encouraged to consume goods produced in England and high taxes were levied on the producer in India of competing goods. Neo-colonialism is also operating through this mechanism. As a result of these two movements, the village industries have become uneconomic and eventually have gone out of production.

Swadeshi, if revived, can provide the resurgence of village industries. In view of the dynamic interactions between the consumers and producers, it can lead to a process of self-reliance.

6.7.1 Swadeshi: Some Misunderstandings

As the idea of Swadeshi mingled with the national movement for independence, a number of even well meaning intellectuals equated Swadeshi, with the 'buy Indian' movement. This 'buy Indian' movement stood by itself and was, in a way, the economic dimension of the political movement. It involves an act of resistance. It was argued that the British colonialism was able to obtain resources through exports to India. Further, the 'buy Indian' movement will generate production, employment and income of Indians. This will help the resistance. This idea of buy nationally produced goods has been refined into a new 'import substitution industrialisation strategy of development'. In this strategy, the country attempts to produce goods that it imports and goods that are produced in other countries. Both these versions reflect a misunderstanding of the Gandhian concept of Swadeshi. In the 'buy Indian' idea the consumer should switch to production within India which is different from the idea of production, by the immediate neighbour. The 'buy Indian' idea does attempt to shift the demand curve for the goods in India upwards. However, it also pits the Indian manufacturer against the foreign producer; i.e., it involves a concept of narrow national patriotism and generates a competitive struggle between the national and the international or foreign producer. In this sense, it goes against the Swadeshi spirit which is to serve the world via service to the immediate neighbour. The import substitution strategy, on the other hand, does not have any redeeming features. It is based on the proposition that the utility function of the consumer is based on commodities produced in foreign countries from which imports are obtained. Swadeshi involves changing these utility functions. Import substitution strategies work towards the satisfaction and further accentuation of such utility functions. Since import substitution is not necessarily based on the idea of local resources, the import substitution prices do not even ensure the reduction in the cost curves of the production of substitution goods. There is thus nothing Swadeshi about import substitution.

Some scholars have confined Swadeshi with autarky, where a country produces everything within its borders. It is a state in which there is no trade. Autarky concerns itself only with production. It differs from Swadeshi in that autarky poses no relationship between the consumer and the producer. Swadeshi involves a dynamic relationship between the consumer and the producer wherein cost curves are shifted downwards and demand curve upwards. In an autarky, demand curve remains independent of production and cost curves may be shifted upwards. Furthermore, autarky imposes a competitive relationship between the foreign and domestic producers.

6.7.2 Contemporary Relevance

During the freedom struggle, most of the Congress leaders missed the comprehensive nature of Swadeshi as conceived by Gandhi. They merely concerned themselves with its economics. In the boycott of British goods they also found an effective weapon to fight the foreign government. They did not fully grasp the meaning of Swadeshi, as enunciated by Gandhi in terms of Swadharma, which meant for him, as has been already discussed, that the swadeshi dharma required people to give preference to the goods made by their neighbours over goods made at far-away places. In India or outside, the educated Congressmen, and more especially the socialists and communists, conceived of Swadeshi in its limited aspect of patronising Indian goods, whether made through village and cottage industry in the villages or factories in the cities.

The economics and business of India's globalisation of trade and investment flows have undermined its complex cultural and strategic policy perspective. India's economic priorities have to be shaped within the emerging global power structure, maintaining internal socio-economic stability and defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

6.8 SUMMARY

If India is to emerge as a nation whose global relevance is commensurate with its image, it must establish its credentials by furthering productive multilateral economic and political relationship all around, and not remain hostage to the western global interests. In fact the linkage of India's economy with the global economy is such that India has no option but to grapple with the dynamics of globalisation. Whether to globalise India or not is not the question now because globalisation of the world financial system is a historical process. India is already hooked on to both the world financial economy and the ballooning flow of world information. It cannot hope to remain half-pregnant, and its choice now is either to abort or to go all the way. It is in this context that the application of Gandhi's Swadeshi assumes much relevance for us.

6.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the Gandhian Concepts of Self-Reliance and Self-Sufficiency.
2. Examine the relevance of Gandhi's concept of Swadeshi in the present world.
3. 'Swadeshi does not mean close door Economy, but is based upon 'Swadharma and Swabhava'. Comment.

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UNIT 7 TRUSTEESHIP

Structure

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Aims and Objectives

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7.3 Kinds of Property

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Suggested Readings

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The most important and controversial issue of economic philosophy is the right to private property. The controversy as it developed, mainly between Capitalist and Communist economists, led scholars to no definite conclusion. This (right to property) remained more a matter of dogmatic attachment to ideology than of rational convictions. The former believes that right to property is absolute and needs no intervention by the state. They believe that each man is the best judge of his own interest and would make efforts to better his own lot and also promote general good. The Communists rejected the Capitalist model on the ground that it inevitably led to the growth of monopolies and imperialism on one hand, and the perpetual immersion of the working class on the other. They suggested the revolutionary overthrow of the entire politico economic system, the socialisation of all means of production and the total elimination of 'bourgeoisie' through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Gandhi rejected both these solutions. He believed them to be based on violence, exploitation and tyranny. He was of the confirmed belief that instead of changing the property relations, if we change the uses to which property is put, we can have the desired results. He advocated trusteeship as a relevant choice between the existing but unacceptable system of Capitalist organisation and its 'inevitable' throw by violence. He believed that as far as the present owners of wealth are concerned they have to make a choice between war and voluntarily converting themselves into the trustees of their wealth. The choice is not between the two parties, that is wealth-owners and their workers, but for the society as a whole. He seeks to harmonise the economic relations and to conciliate the ultimate values into a state of equilibrium through Trusteeship.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to understand

- the Doctrine of Trusteeship as propounded by Gandhi
- its contemporary relevance.

7.2 TRUSTEESHIP - ROOTS IN INDIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

Trusteeship, to Gandhi, was neither an economic expedient nor a make shift for him. It was a way of life. He said: “My theory of trusteeship is no make shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it” (Harijan, 16-11-1939, p.376). The Indian philosophy, religion and morals are replete with this. The ancient Indian concept of rulers or kings was that of a real trustee. The philosophy contained in the concept of ‘Ramarajya’ bears testimony of the fact that under the Indian cultural heritage, the rulers wielded power not for their own sake but for the sake of their subjects. Bharat reigned over Ayodhya during Ramachandra’s absence as the latter’s trustee. Lord Krishna acted as the charioteer of Arjuna in the battle of Mahabharata, not with any ulterior motive or expectation of any gain from the battle; he acted as a trustee of Arjuna to give satisfaction to the latter.

In the past, the heads of Hindu joint families used to live the life of true trustees. According to K.M. Munshi, “He held the family property and was expected to manage and administer it for the welfare of the family. He was expected to watch with care the advancement of its younger members belonging even to collateral branches and had to give asylum to the orphans, widows, destitutes in the family” (Munshi, 1956, pp.15-16). Writing specifically about the property, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has pointed out, “Property according to the Hindu View, is a mandate held by its possessors for the common use and benefit of the commonwealth. The Bhagavata tells us that we have a claim only to so much as would satisfy our hunger. If any one desires more, he is thief deserving punishment” (Radhakrishnan, 1937, p.127).

Thus the concept of trusteeship should be viewed in the context of the values it stood for. Though the doctrine is as old as the age, Gandhi tried to apply this philosophical teaching to the concrete realities of life for the solution of the existing economic problems.

The words like, *aparigraha* (non possession) and ‘*samabhava*’ (equability) had gripped him. He realised that the principles of non possession and renunciation of one’s property or possession or assets as advocated in the Gita can be given effect to by way of trusteeship whereby the propertied people, while retaining their property, can still divest themselves of such possessions by holding the property in the form of trust for the real beneficiaries. His study of English Law also came to his help in deciding upon his divesting himself of all possessions. To quote from his autobiography, “My study of English Law came to my help. Snell’s discussion of the maxims of Equity came to my memory. I understood more clearly in the light of Gita teaching the implication of the world trustee ... I understood Gita teaching of non possession to mean that those who desired solution should act like trustees who, though having control over great possessions, regards not an iota of them as his own” (Gandhi, 1947, p.221).

In a letter to Polak on October 14, 1909, who was at that time in India, Gandhi employed the word ‘trustee’ for the first time. He wrote, “Then the British rulers will be servants and

not masters. They will be trustees and not tyrants, and they will live in perfect peace with the whole of the inhabitants of India. Laying his heart bare before the august audience assembled on the occasion of the opening of the Banaras Hindu University on February 4, 1916, he appealed to the 'richly bedecked noblemen' present on dais to strip themselves of the jeweller and 'hold it in trust' for their countrymen in India" (CWMG, vol.9, p.481).

7.3 KINDS OF PROPERTY

7.3.1 Gifts of Nature

Gandhi opined that all forms of property and human accomplishments are either gift of nature or the product of social living. They belong not to the individual but to the society and therefore, should be used for the good of all. He said, "Everything belonged to God and was from God, and therefore, it was for his people and not for a particular individual. When an individual has more than his proportionate portion, he becomes trustee of that portion for God's people." He further argued, "Suppose I have come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy or by means of trade and industry I must know that all my wealth does not belong to me; and what belongs to me is the right of an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belong to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community" (Harijan, 3-6-1939, p.145).

'Land, mines and other natural resources, are the gift of nature. No individual has made them. God created these not for any particular individual or group of individuals. Man has only occupied a piece of land and demarcated it. He is only the maker of a boundary line. He cannot be called the real owner of that property. Let us take an example. There is a landlord in a village having 100 acres of land. From where he got this land? 'From his forefathers', can be the safest answer. His forefathers got the land from their forefathers and so on. Actually what would have happened? Some one from that family might have occupied that portion of land and created a boundary line. That person was not the creator of land but the creator of that boundary line. The land which should have belonged to other persons also, belongs to one particular landlord because of the boundary line'.

7.3.2 Product of Social Living

A person cannot accumulate wealth in social vacuum. Suppose a person has accumulated huge wealth and established several industries, he alone cannot make that. There may be so many persons who helped that person in accumulating that wealth. Gandhi emphasised that the ownership of the labourers and the peasants is something more than mere moral ownership. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the help of the poor in the society. Since they have helped the capitalist in accumulating the wealth, they have their share in that also. Each is entitled to acquire only that much of wealth or property that is essential for his immediate need or his existence. None has a right to acquire more than what is needed to satisfy his absolute and immediate needs particularly, when millions are unable to satisfy their most basic requirements. He wrote, "You and I have no right to anything that we really have until these ... millions are clothed and fed better."

He allowed the people with talent to earn more but asked them to utilise their talent for the good of the suffering people. They would have their earnings only as trustees i.e., owners in their own rights but owners in the right of those whom they have exploited (Young India, 26-11-1931, p.369).

An industrious person with more than average intelligence may acquire by legitimate means,

more property than idle men and men of average or below average intelligence even without resorting to violence and exploitation. He admitted, "It is my conviction that it is possible to acquire riches without consciously doing wrong. For example, I may light on a gold mine in my one acre of land" (Harijan, 8-3-1942, p.67). Writing in the form of a reply to Shankar Rao Deo, who raised an issue, whether crores can be earned by legitimate means, 'Surely a man may conceivably make crores through strictly pure means assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches.... If I own a mining lease and I tumble upon a diamond of rare value I may suddenly find myself a millionaire without being held guilty of having used impure means' (Ibid., 22-2-1942, p.49). Although such wealth may be legitimately acquired without violence and exploitation, he was not prepared to accept it as a source of one's real happiness and his balanced growth. Rather they stand as stumbling block on the way of self realisation and blossoming of an integrated personality and all-round development of the individual since worship of the mammon and cultivation of manliness do not go hand in hand. As a remedy for such an untenable position arising out of the possession of wealth flowing into one's purse almost without any conscious effort on his part for the accumulation of the same, Gandhi suggested cultivation of a spirit of detachment for wealth and utilisation for oneself only a portion of it that is needed for meeting one's 'legitimate needs' and 'honourable livelihood'.

He accepted trusteeship as a practical proposition which shall liberate the wealthy and the possessing class of their sin of acquisitiveness and greed and effect a change over in favour of egalitarian society. Elaborating the Upanishadic mantra 'Tena Twaktena Bhunjitha' he said, 'Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours, it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs and use the remainder for Society' (Ibid., 1-2-1942, p.20).

Gandhi knew that both physical and intellectual ability differs from man to man. Some are capable of working with greater vigour and energy than others and their labour sincerely performed and honestly executed, may prove more productive of material wealth than that of others, who are less energetic and enterprising. Besides, people with better intellectual ability and vigour may devise ways and means for greater material prosperity and intellectual excellence of the nation. The material prosperity and progress of the nation depend upon enthusiastic performance of such capable, energetic, enterprising and imaginative individuals and not on the half-hearted work of the idler, sickly, and the mentally deficient citizens. Gandhi's ideas do not imply that men of greater ability and vigour shall not work more than what is necessary to earn their absolute minimum. It also does not propagate the idea that men of more than average physical strength and vigour, resourcefulness and enterprise, intellectual ability and excellence, shall allow their additional ability and energy to be frittered away or wasted. Nor does it fix a premium on idleness, inactivity, inefficiency, mental incapacity and intellectual deficiencies. Gandhi realised that the society shall be poorer, unless such men of ability keep themselves active throughout. He clarified, "We do not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes, or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish" (Gandhi, 1949, p.24).

Gandhi preferred that such individuals with more than average, or unusual ability shall work as per their capacity but shall get in return for themselves only what is required for fulfilling their legitimate needs.

There is a finer, subtler, and a more vital chord, according to Gandhi, in every human heart, that is noble, self sacrificing and full of compassion for others. Sometimes the dust of greed, selfishness and egoism may accumulate on this chord, but properly handled, this subtle chord in human heart shall transmit the melodious music of sacrifice, self sufferings and renunciation

for the benefit of the others. "There are chords in every human heart. If we only know how to strike the right chord we bring out the music." Besides, he said later: "We must appeal to the good in human-beings and expect response."

7.4 SPIRIT OF JAPANESE NOBLES (SAMURAI)

Through the device of trusteeship, the capitalists and the privileged classes were given an opportunity by Gandhi to reform themselves. As a pragmatist, he realised that inspite of all persuasions, many moneyed men, capitalists, industrialists and landlords may not easily respond to such a moral appeal. When he found that many propertied people were not voluntarily converting themselves into trustees by shedding their greed and acquisitiveness, without any physical or mental coercion and blackmail, he administered a dose of warning to the possessing class. On the eve of Salt Satyagraha, he wrote, "All these (moneyed men, landlords, factory owners, etc.) do not always realize that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous as the British principals whose tools and agents they are. If like the Japanese Samurai they could but realize that they must give up their blood stained gains, the battle is won for non violence. It must not be difficult for them to see that the holding of million is a crime when millions of their own kith and kin are starving and that, therefore, they must give up their agency" (Young India, 6-2-1930, p.44).

He advised the *Zamindars* and *Talukdars* to imbibe the spirit of Japanese nobles, to revise their notions, and hold their wealth as trustees for the good of the people and the ryots. Without that surrender, the famishing millions would plunge the country which no government nor armed force can stop. "There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of capitalists of the superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other by impending chaos, into which, if the capitalists do not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which, not even the armed force, that a powerful government can bring in to play can avert" (*Harijan*, 15-12-1944, p.396).

Though Gandhi was firmly dedicated to the application of non violent technique of persuasion and conversion and non violent non cooperation for the attainment of any objective, he specifically warned while writing in the Constructive Programme: "A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good." He repeatedly pointed out to the capitalists that their wealth was the cause of their worries and anxiety, unhappiness and insecurity. "They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them." Writing in *Harijan* he further warned the wealthy sections of the society, "As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make choice between class war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth" (*Ibid.*, 31-3-1946, pp.63-64).

Gandhi was not prepared to condone violent methods for the sake of realisation of his ideas of Trusteeship. Non violence is too precious an ideal to be sacrificed by Gandhi. Besides the concept of Trusteeship was devised as an alternative to the violent overthrow of privileges so that violent method cannot take precedence, yet if the privileged sections of the society, inspite of all manners of persuasion and moral pressure fail to live up to the ideal of trusteeship, the technique of social compulsion short of violence or coercion can be employed against them.

"All exploitation", observed Gandhi, "is based on co operation willing or forced, of the exploited." If the real producers the labourers and the peasants resort to Satyagraha, accumulation of wealth will fizzle out and the spring of the prosperity of the wealthy sections

of the society will dry up. Speaking about the conversion of the recalcitrant landlords into trustees, Gandhi also suggested the adoption of the same formula of non violent non cooperation. He said, "The moment the cultivators of the soil realise their power, the Zamindari evil will be sterilized. What can the poor Zamindar do when they say that they will simply not work the land, unless they are paid enough to feed, and clothe and educate, themselves, and their children, in a decent manner? In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power."

The non violent non cooperation, although a potent instrument that can compel the wealthy section of the society to act as trustees, is dependent on the promise that the labour or the working class must become conscious of the strength and should be ready to assert its right. Besides, the strength of the labour comes from its unity and collective behaviour. But in real life, labour is not united and when some labourers non cooperate with the employers, others are ready to take their place. Under these circumstances, requisite amount of pressure cannot be exerted on the propertied classes to compel them to act as trustees.

7.5 STATE REGULATED TRUSTEESHIP

Gandhi, having realised the limitations of the concept of voluntary assumption of trusteeship by the rich and the need for the adoption of the strategy of pressure to be exercised by the labourers, came around to the significance of statutory measures or legislation for giving effect to his idea of trusteeship. But the statute that Gandhi had in his mind is not one which is imposed from above by the all-pervading state that represents violence in its concentrated and organised form. It shall not be planned out and implemented by a coterie or clique of the ruling party or the bureaucracy.

His ideal picture of social and political organisation comprehended a system of self sufficient and self governing village republics, democratically organised, with Gram Panchayat as the basic unit of the government erected on the basis of consent of the people. The legislation regulating the wealth of the propertied class shall therefore emanate from such Gram Panchayats after a free and full discussion and proper appreciation of the principles by people in general. "Such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves beginning with Gram Panchayats will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow. Coming from above it is liable to prove a dead weight."

Gandhi favoured the statutes or legislations as technique of last resort to give effect to the idea of Trusteeship. He did not overlook the potency of the technique of persuasion and conversion to aid, and effectualise the statutory enactments. He felt that persuasion and conversion should precede statutory enactments so that it will make the propertied classes mentally prepared to accept the statutory enactments intended to give effect to trusteeship system. As he said, "Conversion must precede legislation. Legislation in absence of conversion is a dead letter." But the technique of conversion that he suggests is not by way of prayer and petitions, but by exhibition of potency of democratic forces or public opinion. He said, "If the owning class does not accept the trusteeship basis voluntarily its conversion must come under the pressure of public opinion."

Gandhi also felt that the state may be depended upon for the introduction of trusteeship. Educating the people in the principles of trusteeship to provide a basis to the statutory trusteeship system, or educating the workers and peasants to be conscious of their rights and

dignity so that necessary social conditions conducive to trusteeship are created, is a time consuming process. But unless the state intervenes in time, some national assets may be spoiled by unimaginative and useless owners of that property. Although Gandhi was afraid of the power of the state and the violence perpetuated by it, for the sake of the long term interest of the nation, he was prepared to allow state intervention to force trusteeship upon the possessing and the privileged class: "I would be happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees, but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the state."

The question of inheritance is vital for any scheme of socio economic reconstruction. While advising the Congress ministries in 1937 to tax the rich persons heavily, he dealt the question of inheritance also, "For the inheritance should rightly belong to the nation."

When Gandhi wanted to fetter the original trustees' choice making it a subject to 'legal sanction', he acted as a pragmatist who felt that the trustees, however above the average men and however, self sacrificing they themselves may be, may have some weakness for their own children. If the trustees are given unrestrained power to choose their successor they may choose their own people to succeed them as trustees. This may be particularly true in case of statutory trustees who have not voluntarily renounced their possessions or possessiveness, but have been forced to act as such under the pressure of the statute enacted either by the village Panchayat or the state. Gandhi suggested that the nomination made by the original trustees needs to be confirmed by the state.

7.6 TRUSTEESHIP FORMULA

K.G. Mashruwala and N.D. Parikh drew up a trusteeship formula which was placed before Gandhi, who made a few changes in it. The final draft reads as under:

- I. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of the society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
- II. It does not recognise any right of ownership of private property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
- III. It does not exclude legislative regulation of ownership and the use of wealth.
- IV. Thus, under state regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of the society.
- V. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for a maximum income that could be allowed to any person in a society. The difference between such minimum and maximum should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so that the tendency would be toward obliteration of the difference.
- VI. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed (Harijan, 25-10-1952, p.301).

7.7 CRITICISM

The principle of trusteeship has been subject to much misconceived criticism, and described as a 'make shift', as an 'eye wash', as a shelter for the rich and as merely appealing to the more fortunate ones to show a little more charity. As a means of affecting social transformation,

this theory, its ethical content notwithstanding, is seen as ineffective. Professor M.L. Dantwala, in his 'Gandhism Reconsidered', quotes a Marxist appraisal of the doctrine: "The division of the society into the property owning and the property less classes, which is the characteristic of capitalism, is sought to be retained in Gandhism also. The only difference in Gandhism is that the erstwhile capitalist, property owning classes will consider itself trustee on behalf of the proletariat. The change is purely on the subjective sphere. The objective conditions of production will continue by remaining as they were in capitalism. Production will continue by unplanned private competition among the individual trustees. These conditions of production have a compelling logic of their own which will lead to the same contradictions as are witnessed under capitalism today. The class appropriation of surplus value, which trust production will continue in a pious guise, will mean larger and larger accumulations of the capital on the one hand and pauperisation of the masses on the other... These evils cannot be banished by wishing a change in the hearts and minds of the owners of property" (Dantwala, 1945, pp.54-55).

As Professor Hiren Mukherjee says, "This apostle of pity wanted a sea change in human relationships, but he had a great deal more than the convinced conservative's caution in bringing it about; he was ready to be gentle even with fragrantly self seeking and basically anti social vested interests; and in his pre occupation with the right kind of means for social change, he would make compromises and concessions to the 'status quo' which were often paradoxical and in their implications as in the idea of the rich being 'trustees' of the poor, positively pernicious" (Mukherjee, 1960, p.204).

E.M.S. Namboodiripad has attacked not only Gandhi's philosophy but his intentions also. He said, "Not only in relation to the rural poor, but also in relation to the working class and other sections of the working people, his was an approach which, in actual practice, helped the bourgeoisie. His theory of trusteeship, his insistence on certain moral values as the guiding line for any political activity, the skilful way in which he combined his own extra parliamentary activities (constructive programme and satyagraha) with the parliamentary activities of his lieutenants, the characteristically Gandhian way of combining negotiations with the enemy even while carrying on mass direct action against him all these proved in actual practice to be of enormous help to the bourgeoisie in (a) rousing the masses in action against imperialism and in (b) preventing them from resorting to revolutionary mass action. This ability of his to rouse the masses and yet to check them, to launch anti imperialist direct action and yet to go on negotiating with the imperialist rulers made him the undisputed leader of the bourgeoisie" (Namboodiripad, 1959, p.115).

Critics of this theory include not only the Marxists but also from sympathetic reviewers of Gandhian economics, like Professor J.J. Anjaria regarding its validity as a long term solution. "As a short term measure, this is excellent; coercion is ethically bad; on any large scale, it is also not expedient. But the run away from the problem by merely appealing to the more fortunate ones to show a little more charity awful word is no solution" (Anjaria, 1944, p.31).

Nobel Laureate, Gunnar Myrdal, who calls Gandhi 'a radical liberal', maintains in his 'Asian Drama' that "the trusteeship idea is fundamentally a concept that fits into paternalistic, feudal, pre democratic society. It is so flexible that it can serve as a justification for inequality. Possibly Gandhi realized this, for he demanded a moral revolution, a change of heart among the rich. But in the real world, such a revolution is unlikely and the trusteeship ideal is nought but a vision of society where the rich are charitable so that the poor can remain weak ... by his stress on the principle of trusteeship, and his friendliness towards many in exalted economic positions, he established a pattern of radicalism in talk but conservatism in action that is still very much a part of the Indian scene" (Myrdal, 1968, p.755).

Even Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi's political heir and most trusted disciple, wrote in his autobiography, "Again I think of the paradox that is Gandhiji. With all his keen intellect and passion for bettering the downtrodden and oppressed, why does he support a system and a system which is obviously decaying, which creates this misery and the wastes? He seeks a way out, it is true, but is not that way to the past barred and bolted? And meanwhile he blesses all the relics of the old order which stands as obstacles in the way of advance the feudal states, the big zamindaris and taluqdaris, the present capitalist system. Is it reasonable to believe in the theory of trusteeship to give unchecked power and wealth to an individual and to expect him to use it entirely for the public good? Are the best of us so perfect as to be trusted in this way? ... And is it good for the others to have even these benevolent supermen over them" (Nehru, 1936, p.528).

Whether it is the association of ideas around the word trusteeship or a deliberate refusal to understand the principle or pre conceived determined attack on the doctrine, that is responsible for these misconceptions, it is difficult to say. "Whatever it may be," writes Prof. Dantwala, "I shall content myself with restating, at the cost of repetition the basic principles of doctrine."

1. The erstwhile capitalist is reduced to the status of a manager of the trust property. But the change is not confined to the name. The schedule of rights, privileges and obligations of the two is basically different. The capitalist, instead of being sent to the concentration camp as under the socialist dispensation, is given an opportunity of conforming to the ethics of the new society. It is misnomer to call the class of trustees the property owning class. They are not different from the property managing class under the socialist economy.
2. The trustees will not be allowed to appropriate for his personal use more than twelve times the income of the poorest paid workers. The difference in income of the managerial class and the common run of the workers, permitted in Soviet Russia is much wider than is allowed under Gandhism. Yet, the critics accuse Gandhism of allowing "larger and larger accumulations of capital on the one hand and pauperisation of the masses on the other." It may also be pointed out that since the instruments of production under Gandhism will be comparatively simple and cheap, the danger of managerial class appropriating political and economic power will be much less than under socialism.
3. Production under Gandhian economy will not be unplanned. The character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed. What warrants the critics have for asserting that "production will continue by unplanned private competition", is difficult to ascertain.
4. In case the trustee does not conform to the discipline imposed by doctrine, and, as critics fear, goes on appropriating the surplus value under a pious guise, the Gandhian techniques will not rest content with "wishing a change in the hearts and minds of the owners of the property" (Dantwala, 1945, pp.55-56).

7.8 SUMMARY

The main thrust of trusteeship is very broad and deep and is thus not easy to comprehend. There is no historical example of it to go by. Besides full trusteeship cases have not been experimented anywhere. This doctrine has been either bitterly criticised or eulogised but not experimented. It was also said that Gandhi had a way of prescribing sugar coated quinine for the maladies of the society. He would administer the bitterest of truth under a thick coating of ahimsa. But his followers have developed a way of lapping up the sugar and spitting out the quinine. The theory of trusteeship has been dealt in the same manner.

7.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Gandhi's Theory of Trusteeship. Is it practicable in our time?
2. "To make the World Happier the concept of Gandhi's Trusteeship is essential". Discuss.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 8 PREFERENCES, UTILITIES AND WANTS

Structure

- 8.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 8.2 Maximum Satisfaction from Limited Resources
- 8.3 The Affluent Society
- 8.4 Problem of Scarcity
- 8.5 Limitations of Human Wants
 - 8.5.1 Wants are Sources of Pain
 - 8.5.2 Killing of Wants
- 8.6 Doctrine of Non-possession
- 8.7 Criticism
- 8.8 Summary
- 8.9 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Economic theory deals with the laws and principles which govern the functioning of an economy and its various parts. An economy exists because of two basic facts. Firstly, human wants are unlimited. Although differing degrees of acquisitiveness have been exhibited in different civilisations, it appears indisputable that human wants can be regarded as insatiable. At no time in our own society has our economic system had sufficient resources to produce all the goods that would be needed to satisfy everyone. Wants have been and remain greater than the quantity of goods, available for the satisfaction of these wants. Secondly, the means to satisfy wants are limited. The resources of a society consist not only of the free gifts of nature, such as land, forests and minerals, but also of human resources, both mental and physical, and of all sorts of man-made aids to further production, such as tools, machinery and buildings. If the resources like wants were unlimited, no economic problem would have arisen because in that case all wants could have been satisfied and there would have been no problem of choosing between the wants and allocating the resources between them.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to

- Explain the doctrine of the limitation of wants as propounded by Gandhi.
- Examine its practicability in this age of growing consumerism.
- Understand the significance of the doctrine that can lead to peace in the society.

8.2 MAXIMUM SATISFACTION FROM LIMITED RESOURCES

Since our wants are unlimited and the means to satisfy them are scarce, we cannot satisfy all our wants. We may be able to satisfy one want for all times or all the wants for one time but we cannot satisfy all the wants for all the times. We must decide some way of selecting those wants which are to be satisfied. Thus a society is faced with the question of choice i.e. choice among vast array of wants that are to be satisfied. We know that the resources have alternative uses. If it is decided to use more resources in one line of production, then resources must be withdrawn from the production of some other goods. As the resources are scarce, we are confronted with the problem of choosing among the different channels of production to which resources are to be devoted. In other words, we have the problem of allocating scarce resources so as to achieve the greatest possible satisfaction.

Thus it is clearly evident from the above discussion that the economic problems are due to unlimited wants and limited resources. Had there been limited wants or unlimited resources or both, then there would have been no economic problem or even the need to study Economics. In that state of affairs, goods would have been free goods. But in actual life we cannot obtain goods freely or without price; we have to pay price for them and do labour to obtain them.

8.3 THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY

It may be pointed out here that recently some economists in the industrially developed countries, especially the U.S.A., have pointed out that the basic problem now confronting them, is the problem of 'affluence' rather than 'scarcity'. During the past century or two, there has been a rapid economic growth in these countries which has brought unprecedented riches and prosperity for their citizens. As a result, the standard of living of the people there has gone up very high. It is said, they have won over the problem of scarcity and poverty, and are facing the problems created by affluence and growth; such as problems of mental tensions, optimum use of leisure, luxury, longevity etc. Thus having achieved growth and affluence they are now thinking with reference to what might be called, 'beyond economic growth'. The economist who has put forward this point of view is J.K. Galbraith, Professor of Harvard University and former Ambassador of U.S.A. to India. He presented this view point in his revolutionary work, "The Affluent Society".

The use of the term, 'the Affluent Society' looks strange, since economists have always been laying a great stress on the point that the basic economic problem a society has to encounter is the problem of scarcity, which is the mother of all economic problems that arise in a society.

8.4 PROBLEM OF SCARCITY

It is true that the U.S.A. and the Western European countries have eliminated general poverty and with the phenomenal progress of science and technology, have achieved unprecedented affluence and abundance of production of goods with which they have been able to satisfy their citizens' wants to a greater extent. But from this it should not be construed that the economic problem of scarcity of resources has ceased to exist in the so called affluent world of USA and Western Europe. The term scarcity in Economics is used in a relative sense, that is, in the sense of scarcity of resources relative to the wants of people. With technological advancement, no doubt the developed and rich countries have greatly increased their resources and production but with growth and development new wants have also been created. The

problem of economic scarcity could be said to have been won only if the resources would have been abundant in relation to wants which are multiplying during the process of growth. The problem of unlimited wants still exists in the affluent societies also.

Even otherwise, it is important to note that two-thirds of the world is still lying in poverty. The abysmal poverty, hunger, disease, squalor and unemployment rule the land here. The problem of scarcity is present here in its full strength and the affluence for these people is still a far cry. They nourish unlimited wants, not to speak of desires. It is important to note here that there is a vast difference between desires and wants. Every desire is not a want. Human beings cherish unlimited desires in their hearts. To fulfill some of the desires, they make efforts and earn money. If they are still willing to spend that money to fulfill their desires, then these desires become wants. Thus the number of wants is several times less than the number of desires. When wants are unlimited, the number of desires can only be imagined. But we are taking the wants into consideration and not the desires. Thus, because of the unlimited wants and limited resources, human beings strive to get the maximum satisfaction from whatsoever they have.

The economic activity of man is concerned with the production of material goods, their exchange, distribution and consumption. These activities are necessary not only for the existence of man but also for his happiness and progress. Man lives in society and all these activities concern not only the individual in isolation but also they create social relations. As a matter of fact, if we think of it, all wealth is socially produced. That is Gandhi's view. No Robinson Crusoe on a solitary island- whether he is a capitalist or labourer- can produce wealth. Gandhi, therefore, held that the socially produced wealth must be equally divided among all those who are instrumental in producing it. If this is too idealistic a view, socially produced wealth must be equitably divided. He says: "According to me the economic constitution of India, and for that matter of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing" (Young India, 15.11.1928, p.381). In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realised only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. "They should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be.... Their monopolisation by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the world too" (Ibid).

8.5 LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN WANTS

From the above conception is derived Gandhi's idea of limitation of human wants within certain limits. Some amount of material goods is necessary for the good life, as the Greek philosophers called it. The possession of material goods beyond that, instead of working for the freedom and the happiness of the individual, works for his enslavement and often, for his unhappiness. It is, therefore, necessary that one should limit one's wants and not increase them indefinitely. About this multiplication of wants as a mark of progress, Gandhi's reply to a questioner was: "If by advance you mean everyone having plenty to eat and drink and to clothe himself with, enough to keep his mind trained and educated I should be satisfied. But I would not like to pack more stuffs into my belly than I can digest and more things than I can usefully use." While discussing the possibility of world peace, Gandhi said: "This again seems impossible without great nations ceasing to believe in soul destroying competition and to multiply wants and increasing their material possessions." Once he said that his attempt was to see beauty in voluntary simplicity, poverty and slowness, "Multiplicity of wants has no fascination for me".

“They deaden the inner life in us,” he added (Ibid, 23.02.1921, p.59). Again he says: “A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary, but above a certain level it becomes a hindrance instead of a help. Therefore, the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare. The satisfaction of one’s physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one’s narrow self, must at a certain point, come to a dead stop before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness” (Ibid, 8.12.1927, p.414).

Gandhi also says: “In so far as we have made the modern material craze our goal, so far are we going downhill on the path of progress. That you cannot serve God and mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. We have to make our choice.... I have heard many of our countrymen saying that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to submit that such an attempt, if made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be wise, temperate and furious in a moment” (Speeches and Writings, 1933, pp.353-354).

If Gandhi was against the artificial multiplication of wants, he was also against the enforced grinding poverty of the masses in India and elsewhere. It was not only materially harmful but was also morally degrading. About this, he says: “No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation. Every human being has the right to live and therefore to find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary to clothe and house himself. But for this simple performance we need no assistance from economists or their laws.” Gandhi also held: “... Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world.... But so long as we have got this inequality, so long we are thieving” (Young India, 3.7.1924, p.221).

8.5.1 Wants Are Sources of Pain

However, there is a paradoxical twist in the Gandhian method of solving this economic problem of unlimited wants and limited resources. It almost amounts to putting the energy in reverse gears. Instead of satisfying the maximum wants with limited resources, Gandhi advocated wantlessness. He was of the opinion that wants are the sources of pain. Instead of adding to the sum total of human happiness, wants subtracts from it a good deal. In fact, he thinks that maximisation of satisfaction is rather completely inconsistent with the maximisation of human wants. A want is a painful experience. This is evident from the fact that we wish to satisfy it and want to rid of it as soon as possible. We would not have bothered to remove or satisfy it had it not been painful. So the removal of a want means removal of pain and procurement of pleasure. And this pleasure is the same thing as satisfaction or utility. If one wants to get maximum pleasure one should see to it that all pain is removed and no fresh pain is experienced in future. At least this is the ideal for any one who wants to achieve maximum pleasure from his limited resources.

The absolute removal of pain by eliminating wants, seems impossible on the surface. But it is really not as impossible as thought by several scholars. This, of course, is true that for a man, who has a large number of wants to satisfy and, therefore, a large amount of pain to remove, the task of removing all pain becomes more difficult than for one who has less wants and hence a smaller amount of pain to be rid of. But this does not imply that complete removal of pain is necessarily impossible in each case. It rather implies a more hopeful state of affairs, that it becomes increasingly possible to remove all pain provided the wants and hence the pain, corresponding to them decrease in their number and amount. The less wants we have, the less our pain, and hence easier the task of removing that pain and achieving maximum

satisfaction. If therefore maximum satisfaction is the object behind the behaviour of human being while he makes his choices for satisfying his wants, it would be more fully achieved if his wants are few rather than if they are many. And thus we are led to the objective of controlling or simplifying wants for the purpose of attaining maximum satisfaction through human behaviour. Now Economics studies human behaviour as concerned with the maximisation of satisfaction and maximisation of satisfaction is better achieved when wants are at the minimum rather than when they are not. This led Professor J.K. Mehta to define Economics as the study of human behaviour as concerned with the wantlessness (Mehta, 1962, p.67). And this minimisation of wants can be rightly regarded as the ultimate objective of the science of economics.

Professor Mehta further elaborates his thesis that to satisfy a want is to yield to it, as it were. When we satisfy a want we obey the commanding voice of the wanting mind. When we go on satisfying wants as and when they arise all that we do is to pamper the wanting mind. One who yields to such a mind becomes virtually its slave (Ibid). To remove the pain caused by the presence of wants by satisfying them is, therefore, an undignified way of getting pleasure. Instead of obeying the orders of a want we can ourselves order the want to quit. When we satisfy a want, we make it quiet for the time being. When we order it to quit, we do not merely make it quiet, we kill it as it were.

8.5.2 Killing of Wants

The process of killing wants has been called elimination of wants. But wants can be killed only by wants. Therefore, stronger wants must be employed to kill the weaker and inferior wants. And when such a battle is fought all the inferior wants get ultimately killed and one is left with superior wants only. The better among these can, in their turn, be employed to kill the other wants. In this way we can ultimately reach a stage in which only one, the most superior want would be left. It is only when this stage is reached that we can, with impunity, satisfy the wants. Once satisfied such want never recurs. The pleasure then obtained lasts as it were, forever. The state of happiness is reached—the state in which the mind remains absolutely free from the tormenting pressure of wants. The one final want, the satisfaction of which frees us from all wants, can be called the want of being wantless. By the process of killing or eliminating wants we thus ultimately reach the state of wantlessness – a state in which perfect happiness is experienced.

8.6 DOCTRINE OF NON-POSSESSION

Gandhi approached the problem of wantlessness from another dimension also. “We should not receive any single thing that we do not need”, he wrote in “From Yervada Mandir’. We are not always aware of our real needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants, and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject, we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants (Gandhi, 1940). One who follows the observance of Non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of his own wants. Much of the distressing poverty in this world has arisen out of breaches of the principle of non-stealing. He further clarified that the profound truth upon which this observance is based is that God never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. Therefore who ever appropriates more than the minimum, that is really necessary for him, is guilty of theft. The propensity to accumulate commodities cramps the soul and degenerates into the morbid desire to make a fetish of external goods of life. The luxury of the ascendant classes, therefore, makes them morbid desire to make a fetish of external goods of life. The luxury of the ascendant classes, therefore, makes them morally deprived. The monopolisation of the things

needed by all by a few men at the top, is unjust. Moreover accumulation is condemnable because it is not possible to be practised by all. Accumulation by a few amounts to the dispossession of the many. Thus the alternative lies in renunciation. To Gandhi, renunciation is life. Accumulation spells death. But he clarified: “This does not mean that, if one has wealth, it should be thrown away and his wife and children should be turned out of doors. It simply means that one must give up attachment to these things and dedicate one’s all to God and make use of His gifts to serve Him only” (Harijan, 28.04.1946, p.111). He advised the moneyed men to earn their crores (honestly only, of course) but asked them to dedicate themselves to the service of all. For those who wish to follow this way, “The best and most effective mantra is Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it”. Expanded, it means: Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society” (Ibid, 01.02.1942, p.20).

Thus it is clear that Gandhi offered his doctrine of non-possession as an indictment of one of the most powerful drives in the modern economic society, the drive for multiplication of wants, fuelled by an insatiable propensity for superfluous or conspicuous consumption. One may justify such consumption as an essential prerequisite for economic growth. This argument is, of course, based purely on economic grounds. To Gandhi it was an economic as well as a moral issue. To him, Ethics and Economics are inseparable. “I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between Ethics and Economics. The Economics that hurts the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and, therefore, sinful” (Young India, 13.10.1921, p.325). But he realised that the perfect ideal of wantlessness is unattainable because it demands total renunciation. His pragmatic mind would accept the perfect realisation of the ideal, namely a movement towards it through the process of gradual reduction of wants and minimisation of consumption.

The doctrine of non-possession, if it implied only voluntary reduction of wants, could be construed as a totally negative doctrine. But Gandhi expounded it as a positive doctrine. According to him, the doctrine of non-possession would teach that every one should limit his own wants and spend the rest for the welfare of others. He considered this as a desirable non-violent method of reducing inequality of income distribution and unequal distribution of wealth. To explain in his own words, “Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step towards it, is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum bearing in mind the poverty of India” (Harijan, 28.08.1940, p.260). He was aware of other means of dealing with these problems of inequality of income distribution and unequal distribution of wealth but he discounted this because of his fear that other methods may include the coercive power of the state. Thus Gandhi put utmost reliance on the individual and his moral awakening to bring these radical changes in the distribution of income and wealth in the society through wantlessness.

8.7 CRITICISM

Gandhi’s insistence on minimising wants has been attacked on several grounds. ‘Necessity is the mother of invention’ is an old proverb that we often hear. It describes the way in which men’s wants have brought into existence new wants and then these new wants have created fresh activities and wants, and these in turn have produced more new wants. All the discoveries of new lands, of new material, of new variety of food, clothing and houses, of new machinery etc. are due to the working out of this proverb. And if the doctrine of wantlessness is followed

then all progress will stop leading to economic stagnation and reversing the circle of human progress. Again, more than two-third countries of the world are underdeveloped or developing. Majority of people in these countries are living on bare necessities. Their daily needs are hardly fulfilled. And to preach further reduction of wants to these persons is a sin. Their wants are already minimum. For a country like India, where nearly 40% of the population is living below poverty line, the doctrine of wantlessness has no meaning. It is rather a mockery to teach them to reduce their wants. Further, this doctrine may not take the form of Escapism: That we know that all our wants cannot be satisfied. Instead of making efforts to satisfy those wants, we may not take the shelter of wantlessness. This is against 'The theory of Karma', which teaches us to work tirelessly. Then, the doctrine may be philosophically sound but it is almost impossible to practise it. If attempted to do, it will create several problems.

Man has many urges. The economic urge is one, however basic it may be. It is true that an individual's life would be bleak indeed if he lacked the minimum requirements of a cultured life. But if economic competence is necessary for the happiness and progress of an individual and a group, freedom too is as necessary and so are moral and spiritual values. Christ truly said, "Man does not live by bread alone." But it is also a fact that he cannot live without it either. Matter may be less important than the spirit, but in human beings the spirit manifests itself and works through the flesh.

Thus it is not necessary to go fully with Gandhi in reducing wants to follow a godly path. But it also remains true that anyone who wants to pursue serious interests in life, apart even from spiritual ends, finds it essential to regulate his wants severely: he chooses to forego many of his wishes. It is also patently wrong to say that human wants are insatiable.

Anthropological studies of tribal culture show that there is no inherent insatiability where wants are concerned. This is also proved today, by the fact that huge amounts are spent to persuade people to buy what they, in all likelihood would not buy otherwise. At best, then, it can be said that human want is malleable and can be manipulated to make it insatiable. The converse would also be true then: Wants could be reduced without loss.

8.8 SUMMARY

Our wants are unlimited and the means to satisfy them are scarce; therefore, we cannot satisfy all our wants. The resources of a society consist of the free gifts of nature, such as land, forests and minerals, and that of human resources, both mental and physical, and of all sorts of man-made aids to further production, such as tools, machinery and buildings. These tools are taken as important for satisfying the human wants. Gandhi was against the artificial multiplication of wants, as he was against the enforced grinding poverty of the masses in India and elsewhere. These are not only materially harmful but also morally degrading. In order to solve the problems arising out of such unlimited wants with limited resources, Gandhi advocated voluntary reduction of wants or wantlessness. Wants are the sources of pain; instead of adding to the sum total of human happiness, wants subtracts from it a good deal. Gandhi opined that maximisation of satisfaction is rather completely inconsistent with the maximisation of human wants. He felt that the doctrine of non-possession would teach that every one should limit his own wants and spend the rest for the welfare of others. For Gandhi, ethics and economics are inseparable. He envisioned a natural blend of the two, for he considered this as a desirable non-violent method of reducing inequality of income distribution and unequal distribution of wealth. Ethics should, he felt, ultimately guide us with regard to wants.

8.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss how, according to Gandhi, multiplicity of wants and acquisitiveness lead to moral decay and social disintegration?
2. Discuss Gandhi's doctrine of limitation of wants. How is it practicable in the face of growing consumerism of the day ?
3. "Only by deduction of needs can one promote genuine reduction in those tensions which are the ultimate causes of strife and war." Comment.
4. Analyse the doctrine of limitation of wants and show how it would lead to prosperity and peace in the society.

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