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Revisiting Gandhian Economics: S. D. Javadekar's Vision of Non-Violent Social Transformation

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Revisiting Gandhian Economics: S. D. Javadekar's Vision of Non-Violent Social Transformation

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Abstract

In the domain of Gandhian political economy, one can witness the remarkable contributions from the many writers, scholars and political activists. In the world of Gandhian thought and its ideological foundation inter connection of all existing literature make Gandhian thought more effective. To explore deeper analysis of Gandhian social philosophy this chapter rediscover the socio-political thought of S.D Javdekar one the prominent freedom fighter, writer and Marathi scholar of 20th century. S. D Javdekar is widely considered as ‘Acharya Javdekar’. Javdekar was a social diplomat in his political thinking, and was influenced by the political and social views of ‘Mahatma Gandhi’ and ‘Vinona Bhave’. His political and economic thinking was based on his mastery over Gandhism and Marxism. In year 1952, he discovered the concept of ‘Sarvodaya Samajawad’. His contribution towards Gandhian literature is unparallel in comparison to contemporary scholars of dependent India.

Reflection of revolutionary socialistic ideas can be seen in his scholarly work and editorials. He was journalist by profession and editor of news dailies 'Nava Shakti' and 'Lok Shakti'. In the next section of this paper, we will try to understand the theological perspective of ideas of S. D Javdekar. Main reference point of our analysis will be prime work of S.D Javdekar and his writings including his editorials¹. His economic and social understandings are mainly available in the published volume including '(Adhunik Bharat, 1938) and (Sarvodaya and Samajwad, 1954). In this study, we will also try to find out similarities and differences between his thought and Gandhi's thought. Even he contributed in Gandhian literature and Gandhism but there are some differences also.

Keywords: Gandhian Social Thinker, Acharya Javadekar, Satyagrahi, Sarvodaya

Introduction

In the realm of Gandhian political economy, numerous writers, scholars and political activists have made significant contributions to its development and discourse. The interconnectedness of this literature enhances the impact and relevance of Gandhian thought. This chapter aims to delve deeper into the socio-political thought of S. D. Javadekar, a prominent freedom fighter, writer, and Marathi scholar of the 20th century, widely known as 'Acharya Javadekar.' Javadekar's political philosophy reflects his deep understanding of both Gandhism and Marxism, which he synthesized into his unique concept of 'Satyagrahi Sarvodaya's.' His contributions to Gandhian literature, as well as his revolutionary socialist ideas, distinguish him from his contemporaries. As a journalist and editor of the dailies 'Nava Shakti' and 'Lok Shakti,' Javadekar's writings captured

¹ His main writings are available in Marathi Language, so all references are use here from the translated version of his

his advocacy for democratic decentralization, economic self-sufficiency, rural development, and the principles of non-violent social transformation. This chapter will explore Javadekar's ideological foundation, particularly through his major works, such as *Adhunik Bharat* (1938) and *Sarvodaya and Samajwadi* (1954), while also comparing and contrasting his ideas with those of Gandhi and other key figures in Gandhian thought.

Satyagrahi Sarvodayism

He was the founder of concept of Satyagrahi Sarvodayism. To him main motive of Satyagrahi Sarvodayism is self motivation. Like Gandhi he believed in the philosophy of self purification. Satayagrahi Sarvodayism is a higher order of non-violent society. Satayagrahi Sarvodayism demands for social, economic and as well as cultural revolution. The non-violent revolution which changes the attitude of human beings. Acharya Javedkar was familiar the role of individual as Satyargarhi to achieve the goal of social equality. Social equality cannot achieve without the individual Satyagrahi. To him, Satyagraha must be universal principle applicable to all. He quoted "***The final goal of this self motivation it to merge with the universe. The attitude of human intelligence gang towards truth form untruth is itself a self motivation. The revolution of Satyagraha should happen in social, economic and political field of society as well as inner fields of Satyagrahi***"²(Javedkar,1953). Vinoba Bhave's conception of Satyagraha. Vinoba stated that, "***There may be individual Satyagraha in a society where corporate problems are decided with the consent of all. Our ways of life and attitudes of mind must be so shaped that the principles of unanimous decision not hold up all progress. People will have to learn how to work***

² Javadekar, S.D, "Rashtrawad Samajwadi, Chitramaya Jagat, Dec 1953, pp 954.

together so that their work does not suffer, in this new notion that Satyagraha has no place in a democracy. We must make up our minds about it”.³ (Bhave, 1962).

Javedkar developed his political philosophy under the core parameters of Gandhian political economy. He believed in democratic decentralization, self sufficiency, small scale industries, rural economy and ‘Antodaya’. His Sarvodayism is innovative version of Kumarappa’s ‘Economy of Permanence’. To achieve goal of non-violent socio-economic order individual, play an important role as stake holder. To Him, true revolution is ‘Satyagrahi Revolution’. Non violent social transformation through Gandhian way is ultimate goal of his ‘Satyagrahi Sarvodayism’ society. He was having opinion that

*“Satyagraha revolutionaries have to take complete care to protect the individual freedom and independence in the society after establishing social ownership of wealth. The arrangements should be made to see that every unit and every family in the society is made self sufficient about the basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. The principle of decentralization is implemented. It was decided by resolution at the ‘Sarvodayism’ that the rural industries would encourage at its ways also decided that things which were produced in big factories would be boycotted. There should be self dependent society in regard to food and clothing. Rural industries must be independent and economically self dependent village are the economic bases of future society”*⁴ (Javadekar, 1953).

Acharya Javadekar believed that India had embraced secular

³ Bhave, Vinoba, “Democratic Values”, Sarv Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, Pp 100-101.

⁴ Javedkar, S. D, “Samajwad Krantika Satyagrahi Deeksha”, Article no 4, Sadhana, 1954, p 12.

nationalism alongside democracy, and this combination instilled self-confidence and strength in its people. He argued that secular nationalism, democracy, and socialism were crucial for shaping Modern India. Additionally, he emphasized the necessity of implementing Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha. Javedkar stressed that the foundation of Modern India should be grounded in the principles emerging from the Indian Freedom Struggle.

On Marxism, Socialism and Democracy

Javedkar believed in the philosophical base of democratic values propagated by the Vinoba Bhave. He wanted self rule state not the representative democracy. He was an advocator of land reforms movements especially 'Bhoodan Yagya'. Classless society can be formulated when there is freedom from government and not absence of government.⁵ He criticized the Marxian way of social reconstruction and violent social change. In the words of Javedkar

*"We have to go from representative democracy to self-ruled state. Establishment of stateless and classless society was our aim. It was unambiguously explained by 'Bhoodan' movement. The way to self-government wants through social ownership of wealth and classless society. Class systems and individual ownership of property were two obstacles in the way of self government. Those who wanted to establish stateless society should take economic revolution as immediate goal. But in Marxism the means of revolution were different. Marxism tries to have revolution by forming one party dictatorship. On the other hand, Gandhian tries to do this with the help of people's power"*⁶

(Javedkar, 1953).

For Javedkar, eradication of private ownership of capital is a

⁵ Bhave, Vinoba, "Democratic Values", Sarv Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, Pp 30.

⁶ Javedkar, S. D, "Samajwad Krantika Satyagrahi Deeksha", Article no 4, Sadhana, 1954, p 12.

necessary condition for achieving the goal of principle of trusteeship. Trusteeship is a way to achieve democratic values and classless society.

Ultimate Goal of Self-Government

Acharya Javadekar highlighted that both Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Jayprakash Narayan had embraced the objectives of socialism and Gandhi's concept of 'Atmarajya' (self-rule). While Marxism shared the same ultimate aim, it sought to achieve it through violent means. However, Indians were opposed to violence because it led to communist dictatorships in Europe. The American hydrogen bomb had failed to eliminate the threat of such dictatorships, but a 'Satyagrahi' revolution, based on non-violence, could succeed. Javadekar believed that the spiritual power derived from a Satyagraha-based revolution would lead to the social ownership of wealth and the creation of a free society. He had opinion that

*“Satyagrahi revolutionaries have to take complete care to protect individual freedom and independence in the society after establishing social ownership of the wealth. The arrangements should be made to see that every unit and every family in the society is made self-sufficient about the basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. The principle of decentralization be implemented. It was decided by the resolution at the Sarvodaya Puri that the rural industries would be encouraged and it was also decided that the things which were produced in big factories would be boycotted”*⁷ (Javadekar, 1954)

Satyagraha and the Role of Religion in Social Transformation

Satyagraha is described as a method for social revolution where spiritual and religious elements are crucial. The

⁷ Javadekar, S.D. "Samajwadi Krantila Satyagrahi Deeksha", p. 12, Article No. 4, Sadhana, May 1954.

Bhoodan Movement, led by Vinoba Bhave, exemplifies how religious and spiritual values can drive progressive change rather than perpetuate reactionary views. Despite the fact that many religious institutions are seen as oppressive and sectarian, the underlying spiritual and religious instincts are viewed as progressive forces capable of fostering social transformation.

Acharya Javadekar emphasized that it is India's historical responsibility to demonstrate that religion and spirituality are not inherently reactionary. Instead, they can be harnessed for progressive purposes, such as the establishment of a classless society. This involves adopting principles like trusteeship, where resources are managed for the benefit of all rather than for personal gain, and the eradication of class struggle through non-violent means. By creating a new civilization grounded in these values, the aim is to promote human progress and liberation.

“I have to teach the society that there should not be any one’s right on the land. As the rich think themselves (to be) owners of the land, the poor, too, think themselves (to be) the owners of the land. I see to free both of them from. the feeling of ownership” (Javadekar ,1954)

The text critiques the Indian Constitution from a socialist perspective, emphasizing its perceived failure to align with Gandhian principles, particularly regarding land reforms. It highlights a fundamental tension between constitutional provisions that protect individual ownership of land and the Gandhian ideals of trusteeship and community ownership. Gandhi’s concept of trusteeship envisions individuals managing resources not for personal gain but as custodians for the benefit of the broader community. This principle inherently challenges the notion of private land ownership that perpetuates social and economic inequalities. Furthermore, the text underscores the importance of community ownership, a cornerstone of Gandhian thought,

which argues that land and resources should serve the needs of the entire community rather than being concentrated in the hands of a few. The critique also touches on the ideal of non-violent socialism, where equitable distribution of resources is achieved without conflict or coercion. The content suggests that the existing constitutional framework does not facilitate these Gandhian principles, arguing that any genuine attempt to integrate them would require a fundamental constitutional amendment, thus calling into question the authenticity of claims that Gandhian values are embedded within the current constitutional structure

On Representative Democracy

Javadekar opined that the transition from a representative democracy to a self-ruled state was essential for achieving a stateless and classless society, a goal clearly articulated by the Bhoodan movement. According to Javadekar, the path to self-government involved the social ownership of wealth and dismantling the class system, with economic revolution as an immediate objective. However, he pointed out a fundamental difference between Marxism and Gandhism in achieving this vision. While Marxism advocates revolution through a one-party dictatorship, Gandhism emphasizes the use of people's power and non-violent means for social transformation. For Javadekar, Gandhism's reliance on moral authority and self-discipline contrasts with Marxism's focus on state control and coercive measures, underscoring the Gandhian belief in decentralized governance and voluntary cooperation over authoritarian rule

“We have to go from representative democracy to self-ruled state. Establishment of stateless and classless society was our aim. It was unambiguously explained by Bhoodaan movement. The way to self-government went through social ownership of wealth and classless society. Class system and individual ownership of property were two obstacles in the

way of self-government. Those who wanted to establish stateless society, should take economic revolution as immediate goal. But in Marxism the means of revolution were different. Marxism tries to have revolution by forming one-party dictatorship. On the other hand, Gandhism tries to do this with the help of peoples' power.” (Javadekar, 1954)

On Economic Policies of Socialist Planners

Javadekar was in Favor of the nationalization of fundamental industries, especially those involved in international trade, and advocated for national ownership of these sectors. He supported allowing private capitalists to manage secondary businesses and trade, albeit with certain regulatory controls to ensure alignment with national interests. While the Congress highlighted various obstacles and difficulties in implementing such policies, Javadekar believed these challenges could be effectively managed. He argued that with proper national planning, the obstacles were not insurmountable; resources could be mobilized, and the efficiency of industries and trade could be enhanced. According to Javadekar, the Congress's hesitation was unwarranted, and he viewed the Socialist Party's program as not only practical but also likely to succeed, as reflected in the manifesto of the Congress Socialist Party.

“Nationalization of fundamental industries of international trade, national ownership, secondary business and trade be kept for private capitalists but certain controls be imposed on them. Thus, the Socialist Party pleaded national planning. The Congress tried to show that there were obstacles and difficulties in the implementation of this policy, but Acharya Javadekar held that these obstacles and difficulties could be overcome and the resources mobilized and the efficiency of the industry and trade increased. All these things had been put in detail in the manifesto of the CSP. The difficulties that the Congress tried to show as an

*excuse were baseless and from this point of view Socialist Party's programme was practical and was bound to succeed*⁸ (Javadekar, 1954)

Conclusion

Acharya Javadekar's vision was centred on achieving a non-violent socio-economic order through democratic decentralization and the concept of 'Satyagrahi Sarvodaya's,' where every individual acts as a stakeholder in social transformation. He critiqued Marxism for its emphasis on a one-party dictatorship and violent means of change, instead advocating for a non-violent, people-powered revolution to establish a stateless and classless society. Javadekar believed that India's path to modernization must be grounded in principles derived from the Indian Freedom Struggle, combining secular nationalism, democracy, and socialism. He also saw the importance of land reform, rural self-sufficiency, and decentralized governance in achieving these goals. While Javadekar aligned closely with Gandhian principles, he offered his own unique interpretations, particularly in his call for the nationalization of key industries and his vision of a self-ruled state. His contributions to the Gandhian literature provide a nuanced perspective on the interplay between social, economic, and spiritual dimensions in achieving an equitable and just society.

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