

Views of Chaudhary Charan Singh Over Indian Economy

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Abstract:-

*If the country has to be saved, we will have to return to Gandhi for redemption. He is thought to have immense relevance not only to India, 1977, but also to India, 2000. India made a great mistake in 1947 in entirely abandoning the Gandhian path and in adopting a Westernized, centralized, trickle-down*from -the-top model that persists till today. There are two main remedies: revision of the allocations in favour of agriculture and discarding of the big machine to the extent possible. The former involves top emphasis on rural development. Neglect of agriculture is, so to say, the "original sin" of the planners of India's destiny. Neglect of agriculture meant lack of agricultural surplus.*

Gandhi wanted to build the country from the bottom upwards on the strength of its own resources—with the village or agriculture and handicrafts as the base and the town or a few large-scale industries, that we must inevitably have, as the apex.

Keywords

1. Revolutionary
2. Land Reform
3. Socialistic
4. Janta Coalition
5. Communism
6. Decentralization
7. Democracy
8. Nationalization
9. Centralization
10. Leviathan
11. Individuality
12. Westernised

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Chaudhary Charan Singh became particularly notable in Uttar Pradesh since the 1950s for drafting and ensuring the passage of what were then the most revolutionary Land Reform laws in any state in India under the tutelage of the then Chief Minister Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant; first as Parliamentary Secretary and then as Revenue Minister responsible for Land Reforms. He became visible on the national stage from 1959 when he had the strength of conviction to publicly oppose the unquestioned leader and Prime Minister [Jawaharlal Nehru](#)'s socialistic and collectivist land policies in the Nagpur Congress Session. Though his position in the faction ridden UP Congress was weakened, this was in a way the starting point of the middle peasant communities across castes in North India looking up to him as their spokesperson and later as their unquestioned leader.

The leader of the [Bharatiya Lok Dal](#), a major constituent of the [Janata coalition](#), he was disappointed in his ambition to become Prime Minister in 1977 by [Jayaprakash Narayan](#)'s choice of [Morarji Desai](#), not to seek power for himself but to enable him implement his revolutionary economic programs in the interest of the rural economy. Unfortunately, few amongst his rural based part had the intellectual heft to fully comprehend his wide-ranging agenda to remake Indian society and economy, and this weakness dogged him his entire career specially in Delhi. Urban intellectuals were mostly beholden to either the communist / socialist models, or were neo-liberal and capitalist and hence looked askance at his uniquely Indian solution.

During [1977 Lok Sabha Elections](#), the fragmented opposition united a few months before the elections under the Janata Party banner, for which Ch Charan Singh had been struggling almost single handedly since 1974. It was because of efforts of [Raj Narain](#) he later became Prime Minister in the year 1979 though Raj Narain was Chairman of Janata Party-Secular and assured Charan Singh of elevating him as Prime Minister, the way he helped him to become Chief Minister in the year 1967 in Uttar Pradesh. However, he resigned after just 24 days in office since [Indira Gandhi's Congress Party](#) withdrew support to the government. Charan Singh said he resigned because he was not ready to be blackmailed into withdrawing Indira Gandhi's emergency related court cases.^[5]

Chaudhary Charan Singh's government did not face the [Lok Sabha](#) during his brief tenure as the Indian National Congress withdrew their support from his Government as he refused to agree to the terms of the Congress to protect Indira Gandhi and her associates from prosecution under the laws of the land. Charan Singh resigned^[5] and fresh elections were held six months later. He continued to lead the Lok Dal in opposition till his death in 1987.

While advocating the Gandhian approach to solve the human problems of poverty and unemployment, Charan Singh traces the present economic ills of the country to the grievous mistake made after independence to go industrial. He therefore suggests that top priority should be given to agriculture accompanied by cottage industries and handicrafts, followed by small-scale industries, and then by heavy industries. The author's thesis is that unless production of food and raw materials in a country is increased and consequently men are released from agriculture for absorption in non-agricultural sector, there can be no improvement in the living standards of its people. He emphasizes the economic truth that small farms and small industry are more labour-intensive than large farms and large industry. Small units produce more goods per unit of land and fixed capital investment.

The Gandhian blueprint for the framework of our economic policy is revolutionary in the sense that it seeks to keep the people and their capacity to lift themselves by their own efforts in a democratic manner as the focal point of every measure, every move. In the ultimate analysis what mattered to Gandhi was neither money nor machines but men. The primacy given to agriculture, the priority accorded to handicrafts and cottage industries, the emphasis on decentralization and self-reliance, and above all the anxiety to prescribe, as minimal a role as possible, under the circumstances, to the state agencies in the ordering of the economy have all but one aim, and that is to translate into reality the fundamental maxim of democracy as a rule of the people, by the people, for the people.

In view of the need to conciliate public opinion, the New Congress (led by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi) made a categorical declaration in its election manifesto issued in January 1971—subject to measures which will serve to prevent concentration of economic power and wealth in a few hands, “it has no intention of abolishing the institution of private property.” On the other hand, in order to emphasize the “socialist” character of her policies, she declared a year later in Bhubaneswar that “the thinking of the Communists and the Congress was the same in domestic and foreign policies and faced, however, by criticism of the working of the public sector, she declared at public functions, time and again, that socialism did not mean nationalization of all industries and that the government would nationalize an industry only when it was essential. In Gandhinagar (Gujarat) on 9 and 10 October 1972, she is reported to have exploded the myth, as the press put it, that nationalization by itself was a socialistic step.” Whereas, while Gandhi was clear in his mind that the minimum number of large-scale projects or industries that are inevitable must be either owned or controlled by the state. He said: What I would personally prefer would be not

centralization of power in the hands of the state but an extension of the sense of trusteeship as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the state. However, if it is unavoidable I would support a minimum of state ownership. What Gandhi thought of socialism as a system where property is owned by the state will be clear from the fact that he had warned the country against the state developing into a leviathan: Self-government means a continuous effort to be independent of Government control whether it is foreign Government or whether it is national. Swarajya Government will be a sorry affair if the people look up to it for the regulation of every details of life. A nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much state interference is truly democratic. Where such condition is absent, the form of Government is democratic only in name. I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear because although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress. Planning from the top down, which socialism necessarily involves, undermines freedom because it requires people to obey orders rather than pursue their own judgment. Further, it is inefficient because it makes impossible the use of the detailed knowledge stored among millions of individuals. Whereas planning from the bottom up, which the economy of Gandhi's conception implied, enlists the interests of each in promoting the wellbeing of all and, thus, subserves true democracy.

In 2014, the [National Crime Records Bureau](#) of India reported 5,650 farmer suicides.^[1] The highest number of farmer suicides were recorded in 2004 when 18,241 farmers committed suicide.^[2] The farmers suicide rate in India has ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 per 100,000 total population, over a 10-year period through 2005.^[3]

[India](#) is an agrarian country with around 70% of its people depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture. Farmer suicides account for 11.2% of all suicides in India.^[1] Activists and scholars have offered a number of conflicting reasons for farmer suicides, such as monsoon failure, high [debt](#) burdens, government policies, [public mental health](#), personal issues and family problems.^{[4][5][6]} There are also accusation of states manipulating the data on farmer suicides.^[7] Left leaning economists like Utsa Patnaik, Jayati Ghosh and Prabhat Patnaik suggest^{[46][47]} that structural changes in the macro-economic policy of Indian Government that favoured privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation is the root cause of farmer suicides. The present situation can therefore be remedied by a shift of resources from them metropolitan, industrialized, capital-intensive and centralized production based on the purchasing power of the upper-middle classes to agriculture, employment-

oriented and decentralized production which, in Gandhi's telling words, is "not only for the masses but also by the masses." the development of both agriculture and labour-intensive industries, which Mahatma Gandhi had advocated, came first and this policy has paid them handsome dividends. This is the only way that a large and labour-surplus country, particularly India, can solve the employment-poverty problem for the mass of the people, while simultaneously building the heavy industry it ought to have.

it is agriculture, and agriculture alone

which is the "root and base" of economic progress.

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