Introduction

It was J C Kumarappa who introduced and popularised the term Gandhian Economics. In his treatise on *Economy of Permanence*, he classified different types of economies taking examples from nature which itself is an integrated economic Model. The names given to different economies are 1. Parasite economy 2. Predatory economy 3. economy of enterprise 4. economy of Gregation and 5. Economy of service which he considers as the highest form.

Applying the principle of non-violence to economies is an interesting exercise. It demands minimising wants to the minimum for meeting the needs of life. The wants are artificial and breeds greed, which has no limit, whereas needs are natural and limited. According to Gandhi, this can be achieved by incorporating a moral value system into the economic system. To this he invoked the concept of trusteeship to the property. Further, he made a subtle difference between “possession” and “possessiveness” and strongly believed this is the only alternative for people to live with happiness and harmony. In the process, he negated all other theories and practices of the West.

It is obvious that Gandhi was not an acclaimed economist in the known conventional understanding of the term. He did not study the subject of economie as an academic subject. He studied Karl Marx for the first time in 1942 while in Jail when he was seventy years old. However, he wrote extensively on economie problems like poverty, unemployment etc., facing India. The solution he postulated and promoted was to strengthen the rural economie and to develop Khadi and village industries to give gainful work to the millions of idle hands.

Interestingly even while Gandhi was virtually unchallenged during the freedom struggle there were many within the Congress party, who never endorsed his economie theories. Of them Nehru who never challenged Gandhi’s moral and political pre-eminence was the first and foremost who openly denied and discarded all his economie theories. He chose a path of Industrialization as first prime minister of India. Thereafter, Gandhi and Gandhian dictums were limited to academic discussions of Gandhian circles and Gandhian Study Centres of Universities.

Nonviolent Economies?

There are two terms here, nonviolence and economies. Nonviolence is an age old concept in this country since ages and even in *Bhagavadgita* which is understood wrongly by some antagonists as a book that preaches and propagates violence, explained the term nonviolence in its true form.

Buddha aptly took up this path of nonviolence and lived up to it and realised the ultimate in his own way. When we in the present times, think of this term, Mahatma Gandhi comes to our mind without our cognizance. Because, his life was a synonym to nonviolence.

According to Webster Dictionary, economics is a social science concerned chiefly with description and analysis of the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. This deals with wealth not just paper money. Wealth is, that which has primarily intrinsic value, whereas the currency is man made, to value the wealth and is secondary. “Wealth is best defined
in Sri Sukta, one of the most popular Vedic suktam as "Dhanamagni rdhanamvakruthyudhamsuryoDhanamvasuDhaamindroBrihaspathirvarunamDhanamvasuDhanamasnuthe" meaning that Agni, (the fire) Vayu, (the air we breathe), Surya, (The sun), Vasu (the earth), Varunam (the water), Indra (Lord of these elements) and Brihaspathi (The intelligence faculty that guides the Indra) formulate the real wealth because of which the creation exists and we survive.

Gandhi said that he has no historical proof, but believed that there was a time in India when village economies were organized on the basis of non-violent occupations, not based on rights of man but on the duties of man. Those who engaged themselves in such occupations did earn their living, through the labour they contributed.

Strictly speaking, no activity and no industry are possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little. Even the very process of living is impossible without a certain amount of violence. Indeed, the very word non-violence, a negative word, means that it is an effort to abandon the violence that is inevitable in life.

Thus, according to Gandhi for instance, one cannot conceive of a man believing in non-violence carrying on the occupation of a butcher or a fisherman. Thus, there are many activities and occupations which necessarily involve violence and must be eschewed by a non-violent man.

Even Agriculture, without which human sustenance is impossible, does involve a certain amount of violence. Therefore, the determining factor is the occupation and his work. Gandhi was of the view that since all activities involve some measure of violence, we must minimise the violence to the minimum in our day to day life. This, he reiterates, is possible with a heart with firm conviction in non-violence.

Johan Waltung under the caption Nonviolent economy made an important observation “Two important words enriching each other. “Nonviolent” easily becomes bla-bla, and “economy” is too general. But, he questions does “nonviolent” make a difference to better the economy? And vice versa,”3 It is evident that nature can evolve without us and not we without nature. We also know, it is the consumers that pay for products (goods and services), and producers pay for the resources. But nobody pays for nature; which is not only extracted, but exploited. This, itself is violence, that is prevalent in the present day industrial economy. Waltung also commented that the difficulty with the application of non-violence to economics is that it happens in a haphazard manner. Often, it is difficult to ascertain an analytical framework and cites the common misconceptions of Gandhian Economics as an example to this end.

Well, at this stage, let us give our thought on the question whether nonviolence and economics go together or it is a fashionably coined to combine Gandhi’s nonviolence, to which he lived up to his last breath. He attained the mission of rural empowerment through khadi and village industries. To my mind, nonviolence is a principle to practice and economics is the art of production and distribution of wealth. It is a process that involves trade and business. These processes cannot avoid certain rules and regulations but often violated when clash of interests come into it, which itself is a kind of violence but inherent in the very process. Thus when we accept and accede, to certain amount of violence. The question that has to be addressed is where to draw the line that is guided by certain postulates and principles. But yet, such an economic system should maximize the welfare and wellbeing of the people and the environment in a sustainable manner.

If still one wants to use the term nonviolent economy with a kind of fashion and inexpressible attachment, I suggest this can be used to the processes nearer to nature and flourish in a sustainable way, affecting the environment least. Such processes, unlike indiscriminate industrialization perpetuating the wants of man and creating an unwanted and dangerous attitude
of consumerism, help regeneration of resources in a cyclic manner a process embedded in Nature. The term “Green economy” which in a way includes sustainability and degrowth, a recent concept meets the above requirements.

**Green Economy**

The term green economy is defined as an economy that aims at reducing environmental risks and ecological sacrifices and simultaneously aims at sustainable development without degrading the environment.  

The International Chamber of commerce (ICC), defines green economy as “an economy in which economic growth and environmental responsibility work together in a mutually reinforcing fashion while supporting progress on social development”.  

If we carefully examine this term it appears very close to the so called nonviolent economies that could not picture what it exactly meant and stands upon. Whereas green economy though recently coined has a firm base of sustainability which is environment friendly and based on welfare of the society.

In the year 2011 United Nations Environment Programme Green Economy Report clarifies “that to be green, an economy must not only be efficient, but also fair. Fairness implies recognizing global and country level equity dimensions, particularly in assuring a just transition to an economy that is low-carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive.”

In the light of this background let us further examine the economies and nature of the green economy.

The ICC published the road map to Green Economy Roadmap in 2012. The Roadmap represents a comprehensive and multidisciplinary effort to clarify and frame the concept of “green economy”. It highlights the essential role of business in bringing solutions to common global challenges. It sets out conditions which relate to business/intra-industry and collaborative action for a transition towards a green economy.  

The sensational publication of Rachel Carlson's “Silent Spring” in the year 1962, drew attention for the first time to the relationship between economic growth and development, and environmental degradation. The Club of Rome a Global thinktank in 1972 published a classic report by group of scientists led by Dennis and Meadow of MIT Boston on “The Limits of growth”. According to them it was a search for a model for sustainable world system capable of satisfying the basic material requirements of all the people.

**Sustainability and Development**

The word sustainable development was first introduced in 1980 by the International Union for the Conservation, in its publication on world conservation strategy. Two years later in 1982, the United Nations World Charter for Nature raised five principles of conservation by which human conduct affecting nature is to be guided and judged.  

These are:

1. Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels  
2. On underground metals, and minerals  
3. Reduce dependence upon synthetic chemicals and other unnatural substances  
4. Reduce encroachment upon nature.  
5. Meet human needs fairly and effectively

Burtland Report titled “Our common future” provides a widely recognised definition of sustainable development. The report says,” Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”
See, it has two key concepts:
1. The concept of ‘needs’, in particular, the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
2. The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs. (Quite similar if not identical to the views expressed by Gandhi and other likeminded thinkers.

Sustainability is the key for green economy, since this will enable the earth to continue support life in general and including human life. The underlying principle for sustainability, is sustainable development, which includes ecology, economics, politics and culture. UN charter the millennium declaration identified principles and treaties on sustainable development, that include economic development, social development and environmental protection, pointing to the sustainable science is the study of sustainable development and environmental science ecologically, sustainability, is the property of biological systems to remain diverse and productive indefinitely. Long-lived and healthy wetlands and forests are examples of sustainable biological systems. In more general terms, sustainability is the endurance of systems and processes. The organizing principle for sustainability is sustainable development, which includes the four interconnected domains: ecology, economics, politics and culture.

Sustainability can also be defined as a socio-ecological process characterized by the pursuit of a common ideal, an ideal by definition, but unattainable in a given time and space. But by constant and persistent dynamic approach, the process results into a sustainable system.

**Degrowth**

The idea of Degrowth or sustainable Degrowth, a concept akin to green economy and sustainable development, was originated in the beginning of 21st century in France, as a challenge to growth. This movement visualises and accepts voluntary simplicity, reducing individual consumption, simple living as liberating and profound, based on earlier works of Walden or Life in the Woods from Henry David Thoreau, Happy Sobriety by Pierre Rabhi, Voluntary Simplicity by Mongeau, Schumacher’s apology for Enoughness and Kumarappa’s Economy of Permanence. Schneider, F et al. in 2010, elaborated this as socially sustainable Degrowth in their paper on ‘Degrowth of production and consumption capacities for social justice, wellbeing and ecological sustainability’.

The essence of this concept was, explained by Federico et al. in their publication “What is Degrowth” as the emerging need for more meaning in life (and of life) in modern societies and it negates the life-styles based on the mantras of working more, earning more, selling more and buying more which was an accepted norm of the modern economies. In a way this concept of Degrowth is an economic, political and social movement based on ecological economic and above all Anti-consumerist ideas.

**Conclusion**

To achieve sustainability, is a social challenge, that involves law (international and national), planning, transport, life styles and ethical consumerism. This invokes many forms like reorganizing living conditions (eco-villages, Sustainable cities), sustainable agriculture, Organic farming and other traditional farming processes, green technologies for Buildings, transport, renewable energies etc., most importantly adjusting individual life styles that conserve natural resources.

Though all this sounds like Gandhian economic concepts, but it differs in its approach towards accepting the modern technologies with an underlying principle of green economy and
sustainability. Well if Gandhi is alive today, He, I am sure, would plead this concept for the benefit of the humanity with an acceptable life style to the present times without harming the nature and environment. Well it is a wishful thinking in remembering this great personality, once again.

Notes and References

7. See “Green Economy Roadmap” op.cit.
8. See the Wikipedia entry on sustainability

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