

## Gandhian Approach to Rural Development

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### Abstract

It is a paradox that inspite of rapid strides made in the field of science and technology, the economic problems have multiplied and have become more and more complex. In most developing countries, problems like poverty, unemployment and inequalities are still there. Gandhian approach to economic problems has its basis in Gandhiji's general philosophy which places premium on welfare of all. In the economic sphere, Gandhiji laid stress on self-sufficiency, full employment and decentralization of power etc.,. Gandhian economic units have a degree of specialization according to the natural skill, talent, aptitude and capabilities of its inhabitants. His economic thinking thus lays stress on human resource use, village economy, rural industrialization, and decentralization, etc.,. Growth does create some problems. But Gandhiji wanted that growth process should be a pleasant exercise. Mahatma Gandhi as a visionary of India, had a very clear perception of its villages and made an emphatic assertion that "India lives in her seven and half lakhs of villages'. He further believed that India will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts not in palaces. He held this conviction by saying that "If village perishes, India will perish too. Gandhi, played the leading role in securing for India political independence from the British Raj, through organizing and mobilizing Indian people from all walks of life in a peaceful and non-violent manner. He is therefore rightly called the 'Father of the Nation'. Gandhiji's approach to India's rural development was holistic and people-centred. It was rooted in his conviction in the tenets of truth, non-violence and the goodness of human-beings. Influenced as he was by Tolstoy, Ruskin and the teachings of the Gita, he placed more emphasis on moral and spiritual values than economic motives as a means of overall development.

**Keywords:** *Sevagram, Poornaswaraj, Light and Ventilation, Missionary Zeal, Harijian Quarters, Gandhian Model.*

## Introduction

In the Indian context rural development may be defined as maximising production in agriculture and allied activities in the rural areas including development of rural industries with emphasis on village and cottage industries. It attaches importance to the generation of maximum possible employment opportunities in rural areas, especially for the weaker sections of the community so as to enable them to improve their standard of living.

Mahatma Gandhi as a visionary of India, had a very clear perception of its villages and made an emphatic assertion that “India lives in her seven and half lakhs of villages”. He further believed that India will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts not in palaces. He held this conviction by saying that “If village perishes, India will perish too. Gandhi, played the leading role in securing for India political independence from the British Raj, through organizing and mobilizing Indian people from all walks of life in a peaceful and non-violent manner. He is therefore rightly called the ‘Father of the Nation’. Gandhiji’s approach to India’s rural development was holistic and people-centred. It was rooted in his conviction in the tenets of truth, non-violence and the goodness of human-beings. Influenced as he was by Tolstoy, Ruskin and the teachings of the Gita, he placed more emphasis on moral and spiritual values than economic motives as a means of overall development. He found that the progress of the country lies in the development of majority of its rural villages, develop rural economy, industry and rural skills. Gandhiji successfully implemented his rural reconstruction activities in Sevagram centre near Wardha in 1935.

## Gandhian Dream of Indian Villages

Gandhiji’s ideal village belongs to the pre-British period, when Indian villages were the small republics undisturbed by the periodical visitations of barbarous hordes. This republican character of the villages was destroyed by the British rule. Therefore, in Gandhian plan of rural reconstruction, the ancient republican village without any kind of exploitation served as a model unit<sup>3</sup>. Gandhi aimed at the attainment of Village Swaraj and said in 1942, “My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital understood the consequence of western type of industrialization in India.

He was conscious of the fact that far industrialization would destroy the Indian society by eliminating our decentralized rural industries and further leads to improvement. He said, “my deal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague nor cholera nor small pox, none will be idle, no one will wallow in luxury. This paper endeavours to bring out the vision of Mahatma Gandhi in attaining Gram Swaraj via Rural Developments and get inter-dependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity.

### **Objective:**

- To analyse Gandhiji’s vision of Rural development as means of,
- For Economic Progress of India,
- To achieve a sustainable economic model,
- To achieve specialization through natural skill, aptitude and capabilities,
- For human resource use.

The rural development means maximum production of Agriculture and allied activities in the rural areas, including development of rural industries and cottage industries. It gives more than employment opportunity in rural areas especially for the weaker section of the community so as to enable them to improve their socio-economic status. Gandhiji wanted to bring about rural reconstruction with scientific and spiritual values.

Mahatma Gandhi idea to develop the India society was based on his understanding of the society and hence, based on the village system. He further believed that India will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts not in places. He was aware of the realities of the village life and knew the plight of half-starved masses of India. His understanding of the plight of the people has been extremely well brought out in his writings, identifying his emphasis on removal of poverty over aesthetics. He wanted to bring about rural reconstruction with sound scientific and spiritual values. Gandhiji successfully implemented his rural reconstruction activities in Sevagram Centre near Wardha in 1935.

### **Rural Reconstruction**

In 1935, Gandhiji's started his rural reconstruction activities Sevagram to implement his idea of Constructive Programme which Included Items such as the use of Khadi, promotion of Village Industries, Basic and Adult Education, Rural Sanitation, upliftment of the Backward Classes, the welfare of Women, Education in Health and Hygiene, Prohibition and propagation of the Mother tongue, considers it as the truthful and non-violent way of winning 'poornaswaraj'. Constructive Programme is not a fragmented approach. It is an attempt to develop society at the grassroots level with the resources that are available locally.

## Village Economy

Gandhiji believed in the organization of economic life in India as composed of a number of decentralized, self-sufficient economic units. According to him, every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. He advocated a self-sufficient villages economy and self-sufficient villages economy and self-reliant village community, and emphasized the full utilization of local resources for development purpose. Village panchayats have to exercise real power. He also believed that as far as possible, every activity should be conducted cooperative basis. Cooperative activities would develop fellow feelings, and abolish poverty and idleness from the villages.

## Rural Industrialization

Gandhiji knew that agriculture by itself will not bring balanced development of our villages. He thought encouragement of small and cottage industries will promote opportunities for self-employment. This would make man independent and free so that his creativity and expression are simulated. In India, the small and cottage industries have been playing a significant role in the generation of employment and output. They are also earning precious foreign exchange. He wanted a large number of small industries units in our villages. He have 'charkha' the highest place of honour. Promotion of village industries will enhance output of essential output of essential goods, with little demand on capital. The small units may be protected by the Government till they become economically viable. What Gandhiji wanted was spread of industries to villages, that would solve many problems like rural migration, regional disparities in

development and ecological problems like air pollution. Also, rural infrastructure will automatically develop.

### **Decentralisation**

It helps in attaining the goals of economic equality and justifiable distribution. Therefore, Gandhiji wanted village development on the lines of decentralization and self-sufficiency. Gandhiji supported decentralization as that would help achieve that laudable objective of growth with social justice. He also believed that capital should flow into the rural areas rather than labour should flow into urban areas. Swadeshi is the basic moral principle underlying a decentralized, self-sufficient economic structure.

### **Khadi**

Khadi mentality means decentralization of production and distribution of the necessities of life. Gandhiji considered Khadi as an inevitable means for the all-round development of the Nation. He said in 1921, "Just as we cannot live without breathing and without eating, so it is impossible for us to attain economic independence and banish pauperism from this ancient land without reviving home-spinning. I hold the spinning wheel to be as much as a necessity in every household as the hearth. No other scheme that can be devised will ever solve the problem of the deepening poverty of the people. In 1934 Gandhiji wrote in Harijan, "Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support Khadi in return for the heat and substance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow... and also without the revival of the other industries, khadi could not make further progress. For, villagers to be able to occupy their space time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points. The spinning wheels provides the people food, cloth and make them self-sufficient.

### **Village Sanitation**

The deal village envisaged by Gandhiji could be constructed on the basis of the principles of public hygiene and sanitation. The houses which are to be built with locally available material will have sufficient light and ventilation. Each house or a cottage shall have a courtyard to grow vegetables for domestic consumption and to house cattle. The village streets and lanes will be

kept clean. Each village shall have its own waterworks to ensure clean water supply. The village people to maintain cleanliness in and around the village, including public wells, tanks and rivers.

## **Women**

Gandhiji believed that the same soul resides in both man and woman and both of them have equal opportunities to develop their personality. They are inseparable pair and one cannot live without the other. Though both man and woman possess equal mental abilities, they differ in certain respects. Women possess greater degree of non-violence than man. As a mother, she exhibits greater degree of suffering, sacrifice and love. She is the mistress of the house, keeper and distributor of the bread in the house and takes greater interest in the management of the house. After completing her house work, she can take up some constructive activities. As the future of the country is to be shaped by her children, the women should teach her children simplicity, faithfulness, non-violence, truth, fearlessness, dignity of labour and self-reliance. Such children will shape the destiny of the country on sound moral lines.

## **Education in Health and Hygiene**

Gandhiji considered the fundamental laws of health and hygiene is as follows: Think the purest thoughts and banish all idle and impure thoughts. Breathe the freshest air day and night. Establish a balance between bodily and mental work. Stand erect, sit erect and be neat and clean in every one of your acts, and let these be an expression of your inner condition. Eat to live for service of fellow men. Do not live for indulging yourselves. Hence your food must be just enough to keep your mind and body in good order. Man becomes what he eats. Your water, food and air must be clean and you will not be satisfied with mere personal cleanliness, but you will infect your surroundings with the same three-fold cleanliness that you will desire for yourselves.

## **Kisans**

Kisans form the bulk of India's population and are the backbone of this rural country. Majority of the India's population depend on agriculture and associated occupations such as cattle farming, dairying, poultry, piggery etc. In order to do this, they must acquire sufficient theoretical as well as practical knowledge about agriculture. According to him, the agriculture of a village should be planned in such a manner that each village shall be self – sufficient in its food requirements. If geographical conditions permit, the farmers should cultivate cotton required for the village. Gandhiji was in favour of farmer's organisations but which are to be directed to redress the grievances of the peasants. But it should not be used for low – level competitions for political gains of certain individuals.

## **Labour**

The land owners should not take more than their needs and should lead a simple life they should engage themselves in the upliftment of the poorer sections of the village and should become partners in the peaceful evolution of socio-economic change. The landless labourers should get sufficient wages to provide their primary requirements such as food, clothing and shelter. To them, their labour is the capital. This capital should be given due recognition in the society. According to Gandhiji, "he who tills the land should own the land. The land owners should not think that the possession of land gives them any superiority over the tenants and the landless labourers. They should recognize that the tenants and the landless labourers possess the same soul which they possess. The land owners whose agricultural income is surplus should act as trustees for the benefit of the agricultural labourers and others".

## **Trusteeship**

Gandhiji was not against the institution of private property. But he wanted to restrict the right of private property to what was necessary to yield an honourable livelihood. For the excess he prescribed the principle of trusteeship. Gandhiji emphasized the principle of trusteeship in social and economic affairs. He firmly believed that all social property should be held in trust. The capabilities would take care not only of themselves but also of others. Some of their surplus wealth would be used for the rest of the society.

## **Lepers**

According to Gandhi, service to the lepers is service to the suffering humanity. He said “India is perhaps a home of lepers next only to Central Africa. Yet they are as much a part of society as the tallest among us. But the tall absorb our attention though they are least in need of it. The lot of the lepers who are much in need of attention is studied neglect. I am tempted to call it heartless which it certainly is, in terms of non-violence.” He visualised in swaraj state, no suffering man should go uncared. In this regard he said, “If India was pulsating with new life, if we were all in earnest about winning independence in the quickest manner possible by truthful and non – violent means, there would not be a leper or beggar in India uncared for and unaccounted for.” For this, the social workers with a missionary zeal should take up the Projects for their welfare.

## Students

Gandhiji wished that the students should possess the following qualities: i)The students must have initiative, they must not be imitators, ii)They must possess freedom. However, they must exercise freedom with restraint and humility. iii)They should have purity of heart which ensures the purity in personal life. iv)They are brahmacharis, they must maintain self – control in thought , word and action and should preserve the vital energy. v)They should cultivate the sense of service to the community. vi)They must develop sense of dignity of labour. Gandhiji wished that the students should wear Khadi clothes and engage themselves in constructive programme. They will study the literature about spinning with all its economic, social, moral and political implications. During their vacation, they must conduct day and night schools for the illiterates. They could clean the Harijian Quarters, their children and give simple lessons in hygiene both to the young and the grown up. According to Gandhiji students must not take part in party politics. The students are to study, they are researchers but not politicians. It is not possible for the student to be active politicians and be real students simultaneously. They custody the programmes and ideologies of the various political parties and listen to their point of view. They should have & freedom of opinion and can openly sympathizes with any party which they like. But they should not support political strikes and demonstration. Gandhian approach to rural development strives to reconstruct village republics which would be non-violent, self-governed and self-sufficient so far as the necessities of ruralises are concerned. Apart from creating a new socio-economic order, it



Endeavour's to transform man; otherwise the changes in the socio-economic order will be short-lived.

## Conclusion

Gandhiji concept of rural development is uplift of the common man. A common man is developing is uplift of the life village have developed. He realised the need for integrated rural development and believe that education and health. Education is knowledge of power and health is stamina of person and society, his approach of rural development which would be non-violent. Self-governed, self-sufficient in regard to food, clothing, and shelter in rural areas through reduce the rural poverty. He focused his attention of agriculture and Non-Agriculture aspect of rural economy through all-round development of rural India. Remove the untouchability, Caste and social evil and give the rights of people, which are enhancing social and political status. He was shared different concept of rural development, if any doubt arise from Gandhi vision of rural development his clear about everything on his personal life.

The Gandhian model of rural reconstruction, like any other development model, has both its proponents and opponents. The proponents argue that under the prevailing sociocultural and economic conditions in India, the Gandhian model is still relevant, and is the only alternative available for bringing about equitable and sustainable rural development. They assert that panchayati raj institutions and cooperatives are still as relevant as when they were in Gandhiji's days, and that the role of appropriate education cannot be overemphasized even in the present Indian context. The critics argue that Gandhiji's ideals of swadeshi, voluntary curtailment of one's wants, trusteeship, self-sufficient villages, and use of manual labour in preference to machines sound obsolete these days, particularly in the weeks of India's new economic policy characterized by privatization, liberalization, and globalization. As a matter of fact, by adopting an economic growth-oriented development part and by following the Western model of industrialization, both under the influence of Jawaharlal Nehru, India had abandoned the Gandhian model long ago, they assert further. Gandhiji wanted India to travel east, but India decided to travel west, and it is known that 'the twain never meet'.

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