
CONTRIBUTION OF MAHATMA GANDHI TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA -PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract: In the Indian context rural development may be defined as maximizing 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.

Theoretically, Gandhian approach to rural development may be labeled as 'idealist'. It attaches supreme importance to moral values and gives primacy to moral values over material conditions. Mahatma Gandhi, in the rear the affluence of villages and villagers, was inspired from his high philosophy of life concerned with finest human character and profound anxiety for the great poverty of the rural populace and how to eliminate it.

Gandhi firmly believes that village republics can be built only through decentralization of social and political power. In such a system decision-making power will be vested in the Village Panchayat rather than in the State and the national capital. The Panchayat exercises legislative, executive and judicial functions. It would look after education, health and sanitation of the village. It would be the Panchayats responsibility to protect and uplift 'untouchables' and other poor people. Resources for Gandhian Approach to managing village affairs would be raised from the villages.

Introduction: In the Indian context rural development may be defined as maximizing 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.

Theoretically, Gandhian approach to rural development may be labeled as 'idealist'. It attaches supreme importance to moral values and gives primacy to moral values over material conditions. The Gandhians believe that the source of moral values in general lies in religion and Hindu scriptures like the Upanishads and the Gita, in particular. The concept of 'Rama Rajya' is the basis of Gandhiji's idea of an ideal social order. Gandhi defined Rama Rajya as "sovereignty of the people based on moral authority". He did not view Rama as a king, and people as his subjects. In the Gandhian scheme, 'Rama' stood for God or one's own 'inner voice' Gandhi believed in a democratic social order in which people are supreme. Their supremacy is, however, not absolute. It is subject to moral values.

Mahatma Gandhi, in the rear the affluence of villages and villagers, was inspired from his high philosophy of life concerned with finest human character and profound anxiety for the great poverty of the rural populace and how to eliminate it. Gandhiji was intensely enthused after considering the wretched living conditions of the rural folk in spite of their enormous contribution in meeting the food

needs of the urban populace. This made him to deduce that unless the living conditions of the rural people enhanced, independence for the nation did not carry much connotation.

For expansion of cooperatives of cottage and other village industries, panchayats of the states can play an important role. Panchayats should support the unemployed people to organize cooperative of cottage and other village industries. Sarpanchs should make contacts with the officers related to development of cooperatives of cottage and village industries and appeal to them to come in the villages and tell about the extent and usefulness of cooperatives of cottage and other village industries to the people. If the people be in accord to organize these cooperatives, they should be guided about them.

Gram panchayats, devoted social workers, voluntary organizations and demonstration of films made on successful joint agriculture helpful societies before farmers having small land holdings can contribute to agree these farmers to cultivate on cooperative basis by organizing joint agriculture cooperative societies.

Through his 18-point Constructive Programme, Gandhiji successfully implemented his rural reconstruction activities in Sevagram Centre near Wardha in 1935.

Decentralization: Gandhi firmly believes that village republics can be built only through decentralization of social and political power. In such a system decision-making power will be vested in the Village Panchayat rather than in the State and the national capital. The representatives would be elected by all adults for a fixed period of five years. The elected representatives would constitute a council, called the Panchayat.

The Panchayat exercises legislative, executive and judicial functions. It would look after education, health and sanitation of the village. It would be the Panchayats responsibility to protect and uplift 'untouchables' and other poor people. Resources for Gandhian Approach to managing village affairs would be raised from the villages. All the conflicts and disputes would be resolved within the village. And as far as possible not a single case is to be referred to courts outside the village. The Panchayat would play its role in propagating the importance of moral and spiritual values among the ruralites for bringing about rural reconstruction. Apart from managing its own affairs the village would also be capable of defending itself against any invasion. A non-violent peace brigade of volunteers would be organized to defend the village. This corps would be different from the usual military formation. They would repose the utmost faith in non-violence and God.

Concept of Rural Reconstruction: His concept of rural reconstruction is a comprehensive one, emphasizing on the economic, political, social, educational, ecological and spiritual dimensions. The decentralized village economy should provide full employment to all on the basis of voluntary cooperation and work for achieving self-sufficiency in it is basic requirement of food, clothing and shelter. "My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants and get inter-dependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crop and cotton for its cloth. It could have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding Ganga, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own water works ensuring clean water supply"

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. He incorporated all these activities under his 18-point Constructive Programme and considers it as the truthful and non-violent way of winning 'pooma swaraj'. 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. The 18-point Constructive Programmes included the following Items: 1. Communal unity, 2. Removal of untouchability, 3. Prohibition, 4. Khadhi, 5. Other Village industries, 6. Village sanitation, 7. New or basic education, 8. Adult education, 9. Women, 10 Education in health and hygiene, 11 Provincial languages, 12 National language, 13 Economic equality, 14 Kisans, 15 Labour, 16 Adivasies, 17 Lepers, 18. Students.

Other Village Industries: According to Gandhiji village economy cannot be completed without the essential village industries such as hand-grinding, hand pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil-pressing etc. The village industries give employment to millions of people and provide an outlet for the creative skill and resourcefulness of the people. Large scale industries will eliminate the spinning wheel and the handloom, and through the large-scale industries, the wealth will be concentrated in the hands of a few. On the contrary, the village industries will lead to distribution of national income among the millions of people in thousands of villages. Gandhians are not against machine per se if it meets two aims: self-sufficiency and full employment. According to Gandhi, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they could make and could afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.

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.

Conclusions: 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 realized 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 approach of rural development his clear about everything on his personal life. Shriman Narayan said: "Gandhiji's sublime vision gives us a rare insight into the future of mankind! Gandhiji belongs to the future and not the past. He is not dead; his message is eternal and shall live as long as sun shines in the vast open skies"

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