



Gandhian Loom for Rural Development

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Abstract: 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 Bhagavad Gita, in particular. According to Mahatma Gandhi, this federation will be brought about not by coercion or compulsion but by the voluntary offer of every village republic to join such a federation. The work of the central authority will only be to coordinate the work of different village republics and to supervise and manage things of common interest, as education, basic industries, health, currency, banking etc.

Key words: Rural Development, Loom, rural reconstruction

Introduction:

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.. 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 found the only way of bringing hope of good living to the rural people it's by making the village the central place in the economic programme. Rural development as outlined by Gandhiji contained self-sufficiency, inter-dependence for other wants and development of Village Industries. He wanted to bring about rural reconstruction with sound scientific and spiritual values. Through his 18-point Constructive Programme, Gandhiji successfully implemented his rural reconstruction activities in Sevagram Centre near Wardha in 1935.

Rural Development: 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. Provision of certain basic amenities like drinking water, electricity, especially for the productive purpose, link roads connecting villages to market centers and facilities for health and education etc. figure prominently in the scheme of rural development.

Gandhi's idea to develop the Indian society was based on his understanding of the society and hence based on the village system. Talking about the importance of village, he wrote in 1936, "I would say if the village perishes, India will perish too. It will be no more India. His one mission



in the world will get lost.", Harijan. 29.08.1936.

My idea of an ideal village is that of complete republic independence of its neighbor for its own vital wants, and yet dependent for many others in which dependence is necessity. Such village will contain intelligent people. First concern of the village should be to grow its own food. Then only all communities will live together in harmony. The curse of untouchability, intoxicating drinks and drugs will not exist. Women will enjoy the same right as the men. People in villages will not live in dirt and darkness as animal. No one will wallow in luxury. The village community should take up the responsibility for providing work to all able bodied people and everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour.

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 Bhagavad Gita, in particular. The village is the basic unit of the Gandhian ideal social order. Gandhi succinctly pointed out, ***"If the village perishes India will perish too.... We have to make a choice between India of the villages that is as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination"***. Gandhi's ideal village belongs to the Pre-British period, when Indian villages were supposed to constitute the federation of self-governing autonomous republics.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, this federation will be brought about not by coercion or compulsion but by the

voluntary offer of every village republic to join such a federation. The work of the central authority will only be to coordinate the work of different village republics and to supervise and manage things of common interest, as education, basic industries, health, currency, banking etc.

The central authority will have no power to enforce its decisions on village republics except the moral pressure or power of persuasion. The economic system and transport system introduced by the British have destroyed the 'republican' character of the villages.

Gandhi, however, admitted that in olden times tyranny and oppression were in fact practiced by feudal chiefs. But, "odds were even". Today the odds are heavy. It is most demoralizing." In this way in the Gandhian scheme of things the ancient ***'republic'***, an Indian village without tyranny and exploitation serves as a model unit.

Swadeshi: Swadeshi is the moral principle underlying a decentralized self-sufficient economic structure. According to Gandhiji, "Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restrict us to the use and self-confidence of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote". In economic terms, a strict adherence to Swadeshi doctrine paves the way to decentralized self-sufficient economy. The buyers and sellers having a concern for each other, jointly work for the development of the local areas using local resources. Gandhiji emphasized, "every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit exchanging only such necessary commodities to other villages where they are not locally producible"..



The spirit of Swadeshi guiding man's economic behaviour leads to natural love and preference for local products and an attitude of service to the immediate neighbours. The consumers, for their requirements must buy from the local producers and thus support the local farmers, artisans such as weavers, carpenters, cobblers, potters etc. Adherence to the principle of Swadeshi leads to a natural economic order and harmony. The decentralized economic units would thus facilitate the best possible use of local raw materials, talents and manpower, promote occupational equilibrium, ecological balance and co-operative living. The village would be able to produce whatever is required, with the help of local resources and would be intended with whatever has been produced in closer surroundings. Gandhiji was profoundly moved by the poverty and miserable conditions of the masses due to the centralization of the economic power in the hands of the capitalist class. He enunciated the theory of trusteeship in order to bring about the required change in a non-violent way.

Conclusion: 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.

Gandhiji was very keen to bring about maximum regional self-sufficiency in regard to food, clothing and shelter in rural areas. To solve rural poverty, he

emphasized not only agriculture but also cottage and small scale industries. He focused his attention on non-agricultural aspect of the rural economy also. He wanted diversified economic activities in the villages and thus stood for all round development of rural India. It is a tragedy for India that we have never given a chance to "Gandhian Philosophy". However, Gandhiji's views on rural development Khadi and Village Industries,

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