



## Relevance of Gandhian thought and rural development in India

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**Abstract:** India is the world's most populous democracy, tenth largest economy by nominal rates, third largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity and one of the fastest growing major economies of the world. India achieved high growth rates in the recent years but the problems of unemployment and poverty are not solved. In the present context of unemployment, poverty, economic inequalities, foreign exchange problems, we need to give greater emphasis to Gandhian thought. Gandhian path is the best way to solve over socio economic problems. We can build better India with Gandhi's moral values and mutual understandings. According to Mahatma Gandhi, India lives in villages and real independence is got only when rural poverty is eliminated. Gandhi conceived of Village Swaraj. Every village will be a republic or Panchayat. It will grow its food. It will have reserve land for its cattle. It will have school, hospital, community hall, roads, water and other facilities. He advocated setting up of cottage and small scale industries employing millions of workers. He wanted villages to be self-sufficient. Rural development is an important aspect of national economic development of a developing country like India. It can be considered as one of the best solutions to the problems of migration, unemployment, poverty and economic disparities in rural areas.

**Key words:** Relevance, Gandhian thought, rural development

### 1) Introduction

India is the world's most populous democracy, tenth largest economy by nominal rates, third largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity and one of the fastest growing major economies of the world. India achieved high growth rates in the recent years but the problems of unemployment and poverty are not solved. In the present context of unemployment, poverty, economic inequalities, foreign exchange problems, we need to give greater emphasis to Gandhian thought. Gandhian path is the best way to solve our socio-economic problems.

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### 2) Gandhian Thought and village Swaraj:

Gandhiji is not a combination of some dry ideas, dry thoughts and theories. He is like an eternal stream in thought, action, teaching and practice. He lived simple life and expressed the most valuable ideas on health, education, economics, politics, village swaraj, constructive programme and etc., Albert



Einstein said that the generations to come will scarce believe that such a person like Gandhi walked on this earth in flesh and blood.

Different religions, philosophies, personalities like Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi's close intimacy with village life influenced Gandhi's thought. He was first influenced by Bhagavath Gita. According to Gandhi, socialism was stated in the first sloka of Esha Upanishad. He appreciated the universal brotherhood of Islam and universal love of Christianity.

According to Gandhi, non-violent state is not possible when the majority of people are not able to get the basic needs of life, so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the poor persists and the conflict between them is not abolished. Gandhiji believed in a decentralized society with equality pervading everywhere in life. Gandhiji conceived of village swaraj. Every village will be a republic. It will grow its ::1::

Food it will have reserve land for its cattle, it will have a school, hospital, community hall, road, water and other facilities. Every village will be organized on "cooperative basis"

Gandhiji believed in a decentralized economic system in which there are no large scale production units. He advocated setting up of small scale industries which provided employment to millions of workers. He objected to labor saving machines for a country like India. The use of machine should cease just at the point, where it ceased to help man, when it began to encroach upon his individuality.

### 3) Constructive Programme of Gandhi:

The Constructive Programme in India, as envisaged by Gandhi, essentially consisted of village work. Gandhi included eighteen items under constructive programme and each of these items were considered vital in the emancipation of the nation through non-violence. The eighteen items are

- 1) Communal unity.
- 2) Removal of untouchability.
- 3) Prohibition.
- 4) Khadi.
- 5) Other village industries.
- 6) New basic education.
- 7) Adult education.
- 8) Village sanitation.
- 9) Service of backward tribes.
- 10) Uplift of women.
- 11) Education in hygiene and health.
- 12) Propagation of one's language.
- 13) Love of one's language.
- 14) Working for economic equality.
- 15-17) organization of kissans, labour and students.
- 18) Nature cure.

Communal unity, removal of untouchability, the uplift of women, propagation of Rastrabhasa and love of one's language are directed towards elimination of sources of conflicts in Indian society.

Khadi, village industries, and working for economic equality are for



economic betterment of masses of our population.

Prohibition is to divert peoples' mind from unnecessary consumption and for moral upliftment of the people.

Basic education, adult education, village sanitation, nature cure, education in hygiene and health, service for backward tribes emphasise the equality of human beings.

Organization of kisans, labour and students show the concern for functional organization of kisans, labour and students

Gandhiji's constructive programme was primarily based on the needs of India. The ultimate aim was regeneration of society through non-violent means and creation of decentralized economic structure and social equality based on the right kind of education.

#### 4) **Meaning and Importance of Rural Development:**

Rural development in the context of national economic development in a developing economy can be interpreted as a special effort at restructuring the social milieu of rural society to induce growth through human resource development. The total prospective or horizon of rural development or integrated development of rural areas has several components. The maximization of production in agriculture and allied activities, the development of rural industries, generation of employment opportunities, specially for weaker sections and provision of basic amenities such as drinking water, health, education, roads and market centers. A World Bank sector

policy paper on rural development mentioned.

Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of specific group of people, the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless. A national programme of rural development should include a mix of activities including prospects to raise agricultural output, create new employment, improve health and education, expand communications and improve housing.

Rural development is an important aspect of socio-economic development of a developing economy, it has two important aspects, economic development with close interaction between different sectors and sections and economic growth specially directed towards rural poor. The process of rural development is based on the principles of welfare considerations and productivity goals. Rural sector contributes to the economic development of the country by providing.

- 1) Product contribution in the forms of expanding flow of increased food supplies.
- 2) Factor contribution in the form of labour force, raw materials, foreign exchange by export of primary products.
- 3) Market contribution in the form of domestic market for the industrial products which is possible though a rapid increase in agriculture output and productivity resulting in high income generation of the rural population.



Great importance has been given in our plans to the development of rural sector in general and agricultural sector in particular to solve the problems of unemployment and poverty. 31 percent of plan outlay has been allocated to agriculture and irrigation in the first five year plan. Since then, the plan allotments to agricultural sector have remained 20 percent of plan outlay. Achieving self sufficiency in food is the major objective of the third five year plan. New Agricultural strategy was adopted in 1967-68 to increase agricultural productivity and production. Rural development has been accepted as the major objective of the sixth five year plan and Rs 30,000 crores were allotted to rural development in the eighth five year plan.

The Government of India has launched several programmes to eradicate poverty, unemployment and to raise agricultural production. Some of these were: Intensive Agricultural Development programme (IADP-1966), Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA-1969), Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Agency (MFALA 1971) Drought prone Area programme (DPAP-1970), Hill Area Development programme (HADP-1972), Command Area Development programme (CADP-1974), Special Live Stock production programme (SLDP-1975), Minimum Needs programme (MNP-1976), Food for work programme (FWP-1978), Integrated Rural Development programme (IRDP-1978), National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREP-1980), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee programme (RLEGP-1983), Jawaharlal Rozgar Yojana (JRY-1989), Prime Minister Rozgar Yojana PMRY 1993, Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY-

1999) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP-2006), Deen Dayal Upadhaya Grammen Koushal Yojana (DDUGKY-2014). As a result of our planned efforts we achieved self sufficiency in food production. There has been a decline in the percentage of

Population below poverty line. But there is no room for complacency. 21.9 percent of people are still suffering the problem of absolute poverty. 22 crores of people in rural areas and five crores of people in urban areas are suffering from the problem of absolute poverty.

Gandhi has rightly said, "The salvation of India lies in the development of cottage and small scale industries. It may be pointed out that according to the estimates of the third five year plan, the cost per person of self employment is on average Rs 1,000. In small scale sector it varies from Rs 5,000 to Rs 8,000 per person. The cost per person employed in machine tools industry is about Rs 25,000, in fertilizers it is Rs 40,000, in heavy electrical, Rs 50,000, in coal mining Rs 60,000 in heavy machine building plant and foundering forest plant each Rs 1,00,000 and in Iron and steel industry Rs 1,60,000. Our employment must, therefore, be on a scale which can afford employment based on cottage industries, small scale industries and agro based industries in the rural sector.

Great importance has been attached to the development of village and small scale industries in our plans. The second five year plan observed. Village and small scale industries in their different aspects are an integral and continuing element both in the economic structure and in the scheme of national



planning. The primary object to developing small scale industries is to extend work opportunities, raise income and standard of living and bring about more balanced and integrated rural economy. Inevitably, in rural areas, the traditional industries have to be given immediate consideration.

#### **5. Relevance of Gandhian Thought to the present society:**

When we think of the relevance of Gandhi in this computer age and technology, we must understand the relationship between man and nature, man and machine and man and society. According to Gandhi, nature has enough to provide for every body's need but not for every body's greed. Machine must be used to help a man in his work. The use of machine must cease just at the point when it ceases to help a man. There must be healthy and harmonious relations between man and man in the society.

The physical production of goods and services increased with the advancement of science and technology. Wealth of the country increased with the economic development. Along with positive aspects of development, many negative aspects have also increased. Lust for wealth, power and passions, corruption, crime, violence have also increased. Science, economics, politics have done something for the country. But we are losing our cultural and spiritual values of austerity, renunciation, non-violence, peaceful co-existence and absolute tolerance. After independence, we have been marching towards the goal of a developed country. India today is an highly industrialized nation producing engineering goods, electrical goods, electronic goods and computers.. We have also entered nuclear

and space clubs. However, there are many problems on debt side. We have economic problems of unemployment, poverty, inequalities and inflation. Problems of Corruption, Communalism, religious, fanaticism, regionalism, terrorism, violence have assumed serious proportions. In the light of these problems, we need to give greater emphasis on Gandhian thought in order to improve peace and prosperity in our country.

**6. Conclusion:** In the present context of socio-economic problems of our country, Gandhian thought is very much relevant. Gandhian path is the best way to solve our socio-economic problems. We can build better India with Gandhiji's moral values and mutual understanding. We need to progress further in rural sector in order to achieve self sufficiency, peace and prosperity in our country.

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