

# GANDHI AND RURAL ECONOMY

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*“My idea of Gram Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants and yet independent for many others in which dependence is necessary”.*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

## **ABSTRACT:**

*Mahatma Gandhi and his economic ideas are relevant to economic process and in twenty first century. His vision to create Indian villages prosperous and progressive is feasible through economic process. His plan of Gram Swaraj aims at developing villages in a very manner, which retains and strengthens those parts of the village attribute that should be maintained and strong in positive sense, there are huge prospects and ways in which to create agriculture, village economy, farmer's life and rural areas prosperous are international trends of trade is unfold to villages. In to this point self sufficiency of village lifetime of seventy five take advantage of India's population thinks about the simplest resource is to discover the spiritual leader path of development.*

**Key Words- Gramswaraj, Rural Development.**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Gandhiji firmly believed that self-reliant villages form a sound basis for a just, equitable and non-violent order. This can be a guiding principle for all citizens, constructive workers and policy makers in India. After returning from South Africa Gandhiji developed his ideas on villages from his direct experiences. He was convinced that "If the villages perish, India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost." For him rebuilding of the nation could be achieved only by reconstructing villages. He himself initiated such efforts at certain places like Champaran (1917), Sevagram (1920) and Wardha (1938). With the passage of time, he visualised an elaborate programme of constructive work, which included economic self-reliance, social equality and decentralized political system. Gandhiji wanted to rebuild India from the lowest level with the poorest and the weakest. So he gave a call to the people to go back to villages for village reconstruction. He had visualized self-reliant villages, free from exploitation and fear, as an important part of the decentralized system. According to him, life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Now it is the time to listen to Gandhiji's voice carefully, which says, "We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have, in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilization. To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilization seems to me an impossibility."

The real India lies in the 7, 00,000 villages. If Indian civilization is to make its full contribution to the building up of a stable world order, it is thus vast mass of humanity that has to be made to live again. We have to tackle the triple malady which holds our villages fast in its grip: (i) want of corporate sanitation; (ii) deficient diet; (iii) inertia. They [villagers] are not interested in their own welfare. They don't appreciate modern sanitary methods. They don't want to exert themselves beyond scratching their farms or doing such labour as they are used to. These difficulties are real and serious. But they must not baffle us... We must have an unquenchable faith in our mission. We must be patient with the people. We are ourselves novices in village work. We have to deal with a chronic disease. Patience and perseverance, if we have them, overcome mountains of difficulties. We are like nurses who may not leave their patients because they are reported to have an incurable disease. Villages have suffered long from neglect by those who have had the benefit of education. They have chosen the city life. The village movement is an attempt to establish healthy contact with the villages by inducing those

who are fired with the spirit of service to settle in them and find self-expression in the service of villagers. Those who have settled in villages in the spirit of service are not dismayed by the difficulties facing them. They knew before they went that they would have to contend against many difficulties, including even sullenness on the part of villagers. Only those, therefore, who have faith in themselves and in their mission will serve the villagers and influence their lives.

What Gandhi really visualized can be economically termed as idealist. It attaches supreme importance to moral values and naturally gives them primacy over material conditions. This might be the reason why he took into account three main factors from a roster of hundreds when concentrating on the case of village economies. These few factors went on to become the skeleton of the so-called Gandhian Vision of Village Economy “ or the Gram (uh) Swaraj. Let us simplify the model (according to Gandhi) as  $E = \phi(S, S', K)$  [E = Economic Development (of villages) S = Swadeshee S' = Self-Sufficiency K = Khadee, a mascot]

**1. SWADHESHEE:** Swadeshee is the moral principle underlying a decentralized self-sufficient economic structure. According to Gandhi, “Swadeshee is that spirit in us which restrict us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. In economic terms, a strict adherence to Swadeshee doctrine paves the way to decentralized self-sufficient economy. Gandhi 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 Swadeshee guiding man's economic behaviour leads to the dependence of one sector (say consumers) on the other (producers). The consumers, for their requirements must buy from the local producers and thus support the local firms. Adherence to the principle of Swadeshee leads to a natural economic order and harmony. The decentralized economic units would thus bring about the optimal allocation of factors like local raw materials, human resource, as well as promote occupational equilibrium 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.

**2. SWARAAJ: SELF-SUFFICIENCY:** It is to be kept in consideration that Gandhi visualized the welfare schemes of the country after watching the British destroy it downright. It is but natural that Gandhi would believe that the poor is exploited by the rich, the village by the city and the undeveloped country by the developed ones due to lack of self-sufficiency. He suggested that villages should be self-sufficient and produce their own food, clothing and other articles needed for meeting their basic needs. He insisted on the promotion of village or cottage industries and handicrafts because they can provide employment. Gandhi said that it was not the British rule but the modern civilization nourished by them, which was the real cause of economic distress i.e., poverty and unemployment. He recommended co-operative farming and promoted spinners’ cooperatives, which would save both physical and human capital, improve quantity of output and provide employment to villagers”.

As Gandhi was against the large concentration of economic power among a couple of people, in his economic model he favours economic decentralization and thence villages become the fundamental economic units. His plan of Gram Swaraj (village self-rule) aims at developing villages in a very manner, which retains and strengthens those parts of the village attribute that should be maintained and strong. In keeping with the thought of Gram Swaraj, every village ought to be primarily self-reliant, creating provisions for all the wants of life- food, clothing, clean water, sanitation, housing, education and then on, as well as government and self-defence and every one socially helpful amenities needed by a community. His vision of freelance Asian country wasn't that of a nation state, however a confederation of autonomous, freelance folks living in village communities, derivation their right living from the merchandise of their homesteads. Most economic and political power- as well as the facility to come to a decision what may well be foreign into or exported from the village- would stay within the hands of the village assemblies. In keeping with the principle of Swadeshee, as propounded by Gandhi, economic dependence on external economic process may build the village communities vulnerable. A village should build a powerful economic base to satisfy most of its desires and every one members of the village community ought to offer priority to native merchandise and services. In alternative words, every village ought to be a model of India- an internet of loosely interconnected communities. Gandhi thought-about such villages therefore vital that he thought they ought to be the standing of “Village Republics”. Gandhi

believed that the village community ought to embody the spirit of the home- associate extension of the family instead of a set of competitive people. Gandhi's dream wasn't of private autonomy, not even family autonomy, however the self sufficiency of the village community. The British believed in centralized, industrial and mechanized modes of production. Gandhi turned this principle on its head and visualized a localized, home grown, hand crafted mode of production. By adopting the principle of production by the plenty, village communities would be ready to restore dignity to the work done by hands. In Gandhi's words; "not production however production by the masses". In fact, production is simply involved with the merchandise, whereas production by the plenty thinks about with the merchandise, the producers and therefore the method.

**3. KHADEE AND DECENTRALIZATION:** "Khadee is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support Khadee 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, Khadee could not make further progress. Gandhi firmly believed that village republics can be built only through decentralisation of social and political power. Khadee brought about the decentralization of production and distribution of the necessary variables in life. It played a significant role in the village economy of India. It gave the poor at least three things: cloth, work and self-confidence to articulate themselves. Khadee was not just a type of cloth. It was the symbol of a Swadeshee good, its production a representation of self-sufficiency and the optimal utilization showcased the Gandhian philosophy of decentralization. One can easily say that Khadee became the mascot of the Gandhi Model of economics.

Apart from the above three major topics Gandhiji believed some of the other topics which will cause Economic Development in Rural areas. Those are:

**Gainful employment for each individual:** His advocacy of the charkha was a way to promote gainful employment for an able-bodied individual. The charkha symbolised this view about how each person could earn their own livelihood and become self-reliant. The spinning wheel or 'charkha' soon became a symbol of Indian nationalism. It unified a diverse nation in various ways. He was a prominent advocate of dignity of labour and wanted to break down the boundaries between manual and mental work, rooted in the caste system.

**Limitation of wants:** Gandhi talked of the containment of wants and famously said, "Nature produces enough to meet the needs of all the people, but not enough to satisfy the greed of any man." His idea of limitation of wants was contrary to classical and contemporary theories of economics which focused on expanding the goods space and satisfying unlimited human wants. He suggested two measures. First, that everyone should get sufficient work to make ends meet and second, that means of production of necessities should be under the control of the masses.

**Well-being of the poorest in society:** "Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man you have seen, and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be any use to him." This encapsulated Gandhi's compassion for and views about the poorest of the poor of society. He believed that nobody would be left wanting if everyone used just as much as was needed by him.

The Gandhian Model of Sustainable Development is held that Gandhi's model of non-violent development satisfies the requisites of sustainable development. We are living part of Earth's life, owned and operated by the Earth. Our attitude towards the earth is defective and dangerous. Our deepest folly is the notion that we own it and can exploit it to our advantage. Gandhi's ideas are relevant for protecting the environment and to preserve the carrying capacity of Mother Earth. Gandhi emphasizes three aspects: economy, society and environment. He says, the present materialistic lifestyle has to be changed for sustainable development. Gandhian economics guides us towards a sustainable lifestyle. The Gandhian model suggests the following steps to attaining a sustainable lifestyle. i) Sustainable agriculture: We should give up chemical fertilizers and pesticides and substitute them with bio-manures and bio-pesticides. ii) Khadee and village industries are eco-friendly: They create employment and alleviate poverty. So we should promote Khadee and products of village industries. iii) Appropriate technologies: We should adopt technologies which are simple, and which our villagers are able to comprehend and operate themselves. The use of electricity should be avoided, or kept to the minimum. iv) Renewable energy sources: Coal and petroleum are non-renewable energy sources and are getting exhausted very fast. Solar energy is limitless and inexhaustible. We can harness solar energy for heating and lighting.

Water and wind energies can also be harnessed for producing electricity. v) Gandhian Sarvodaya Plan Gandhi was convinced that the salvation of the Indian economy depends on rural development. Rural development depends on agricultural development, which is the integration of both, the farm and non-farm activities of the village economy. He never accepted the inherent contradiction between economic development and human development. So he thought of integrating and establishing harmony between both the two, through sarvodaya. Having set the goal, he also worked out schemes for achieving it. For achieving the goal of non-violent socialism, Gandhi presented the sarvodaya plan. The sarvodaya plan provides the foundations, on which the economic organization of a nation striving for the ideals of socialism is to be built. Sarvodaya means all round wellbeing of all. He argues for the combination of purity of ends and nobility of means. Truth and non-violence are cardinal points in Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya plan. The objective of the sarvodaya plan is the establishment of sarvodaya social order on the principles of non-violence, truth, love, and cooperation. The sarvodaya plan includes: (a) economic equality and communal harmony, (b) full attention to the cultivators and the labourers, (c) all cultivators organizing their own committees, (d) all labourers forming their own unions, (e) education for all (technical or basic), (f) hand-spinning in every family Gandhi's sarvodaya is essentially a programme for the regeneration of the Indian villages. The revitalization of the village economy, among other things, includes measures such as the development of village and cottage industries, the improvement of village sanitation, protection from robbers and wild animals, the development of agriculture, conducting ail activities on co-operative basis, the constitution of village panchayats, self-sufficiency in basic requirements, the removal of illiteracy, and the abolition of the caste system. Special attention would be provided to the development of village industries, sanitation, and hygiene.

### Conclusion:

Gandhian approach to rural development strives to reconstruct village republics which would be non-violent, self-governed and self-sufficient so far as the basic necessities of rural population is concerned. Apart from creating a new socio-economic order, it attempts to transform man; otherwise the changes in the socio-economic order will be short-lived. It is but a matter of debate as to how useful is the Gandhi Model in modern day India. The relevance of the Mahatma's vision was put to test. It has been seen that India did put the principles of Gandhi to use in the initial stages, but its degree of impact gradually lessened with time. Newer crises arose. Furnished policies were formulated. In effect, the Gandhi Model took a backseat. As far as the sociological concepts like ahimsa are still relevant today, the concepts pinned to development of village economies were considered as inappropriate for the changing economic world. These had their side-effects. While discarding the Gandhian principles, the country gained new-world vision but lost equity. But given today's scenario, economic development has taken another route altogether.

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