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Gandhian Perspectives On Rural Development: An Analytical Study.

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Abstract

Rural development occupy for economic improvement of people as well as social change. The primary goal is to reduce poverty, better livelihood opportunities, essential services and infrastructure facilities through introducing programmes of wage and self-employment. So, Gandhian perspectives on rural development deals with Growth of Rural Industrialization, Economic Approach, Social Integrity, Sustainability, Simplicity and Self-control, Upgrading the living standard of the rural people etc. For him, rural development is based on the villagers. That is why Villagers can secure in Villages only if the cottage industries are developed. Moreover, development of agriculture as well as overall rural development with decentralization, equality and stability is possible with the manifestation of Gandhian economic thought. According to his opinion, decentralized economy means economy based on agriculture and rural industries. Gandhian economic system also relied on the self-sustenance of villages.

Key words: - Economic Approach, Sustainability, Simplicity, Self-Sustenance, Rural Industrialization etc.

1.1.1 Introduction: -

Gandhi considered villages as soul of India. But in reality, villages are most exploited. Because with perishing rural industries, dependency increased on agriculture. And this resulted into destruction of both villages and agriculture. Thus, a golden history of Indian industries came to an end. Here, the process of destruction of villages began. As the small rural industries unable to compete with the large industries. Slowly close down and this resulted into mass-migration from rural to urban areas. Consequently, machines were used as a means to exploit the masses.¹ The ideal of Gandhi that is equal distribution cannot be realized. He therefore worked out for equitable distribution.² Here the Marxian definition “to each according to his need” was considered by Gandhi as the real definition of economic equality.³

Rural industries are very important from various other dimensions also, viz., eradication of poverty, unemployment, stable economic development, optimum use of natural resources etc. It's also important for overall village and agricultural growth, controlling inflation, export-oriented growth, societal development, solving problems of centralization and pollution etc. Also the problem of over production and depression.⁴ So, in 1930, Gandhi wrote in Harijan Bandhu as, “The basic aim behind rural industrialization is to satisfy our daily requirement by the product manufactured in villages. It may happen that primarily we have to pay more than reasonable price and in exchange we get comparatively inferior product.

But if we take interest in these products and help their producer to improve the product then surely the product will be better.”⁵ Gandhi's thought for development and administration of various rural industries was both strategic and effective. If applied his thought would result in simultaneous equality, stability and balanced economic growth. Thus, we can have combined growth of agriculture and industries, cities and villages, small industries and large scale industries etc. Villagers can even develop non-agro sector in rural area by going for rural industrialization.

¹ Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 20

² Mahatma Gandhi, Young India, 17.3.1927, p. 86

³ Mahatma Gandhi, Harijan, 31.3.1946, p. 63

⁴ Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 23

⁵ Mahatma Gandhi, HB, 25-11-1930, p. 293

Thus, rural people can also solve the present problem of intra-rural and rural-urban migration. Development of rural industries in all villages of all States would serve as a means to check the problems like high density of population, poor housing, unemployment etc. For him, decentralization thought can increase productivity level among villagers by making it more competitive. Villagers can also reap benefits of globalization by making Indian industries highly productive. By exporting villagers home-made products all over the globe.⁶

Gandhi was not against machines but was against those machines which generate unemployment. In 1930, he wrote in Harijan Bandhu as, “We should not go to use unlive machines against live human machine spread over seven lakhs Indian villages. When machines make the work of a labour easy and help him, then it is called right use of machines. But today, we are using them in such a manner that to give more and more wealth in a few hands and not to worry for crores of hungry people.”⁷ So E. F. Schumacher stated that the industry is the pace-setter of the modern life.⁸

Gandhi was opposed to the heavy industrialization, deforestation and depletion of natural resources, pollution and ecological imbalanced.⁹ As a consequence, rural industrialization is not a problem of mere location of industries or of providing supplementary industries to the board masses. It implies a widely decentralized growth of industries with as high as employment potential. And it should be compatible with an efficient technique and requirement of the process of development.

In this regards, Bertrand Russell wrote in his book “The Prospects of Industrial Civilization” as, “What is called Civilization may be defined as the pursuit of objects not biologically necessary for survival.”¹⁰ The industrial civilization is a disease as it is all evil. Gandhi measured the industrial civilization in terms of the human welfare and stated that people should not suffer exploitation on account of this. Modern civilization does not take morality into consideration. As Bertrand Russell stated quantity is valued more than quality and

⁶ Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 27

⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, Harijan Bandhu, 15-9-30, p. 194

⁸ E. F. Schumacher, small is beautiful, p. 18

⁹ Gummadi Verraju, 2009. Gandhian Philosophy – Its Relevance Today, p. 3

¹⁰ Bertrand Russell, The Prospects of Industrial Civilization, p. 39

mechanism is more valued than its uses. Though Russell stated like this but Gandhi boldly opposed the modern industrial civilization.

Under factories Act, 1948 are known as rural industries or cottage industries. Here ownership and management is limited up to one family. This act implies limitation of place, area, population and capital. There are chances of changes in this concept with change in situation. Thus, industries that is carrying on production with less capital and simple technology is known as rural industries. Even Chinese travelers had taken note of the same during their visit to India. The rural industries can solve the problems of poverty, unemployment, inequality, exploitation, centralization etc. And help the country to achieve a balanced economic development.¹¹

1.1.2 Objectives Of Research Study: -

Important objectives of this Research Study are to study Gandhian Perspectives on:

- 1) Economic approach, Agriculture and Rural Industries.
- 2) Relevance of Gandhian Thought on Rural Industrialization.

1.1.3 Research Methodology: -

We used mainly two types of methods i.e. descriptive and analytical method. Also data have collected from two main sources. Those are –

- 1) Primary data
- 2) Secondary data

Primary data have collected from various books, especially in relation to the topic. Secondary data have collected from various journals, Government reports, publications etc.

1.1.4 Economic Approach: -

Rural development was the central point of the Gandhian economic thought. Gandhi said in 1944 as, “Economic equality is the base of nation’s independence.”¹² To work with economic equality means to redress the conflict between labour and capital, i.e., to reduce the level of centralization of capital in a few hands. There exists a deep chasm between rich and poor. So, for him, it is not possible to establish the government based on non-violence. Consequently, he wrote in Young India in 1920 as, “We want to organize

¹¹ Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 47

¹² Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 11

our national power not only by adopting best methods of production but also by the best methods of both, production and distribution.”

Gandhi wanted to utilize resources for sustainable development. He also opposed the thought of over-exploiting resources for rapid growth. He was against the blind following of Western pattern in Indian economy. In his own words, “Village is the heart of India.

If villages perishes, India perishes.” Picture of an ideal village was very clear in his mind. He has presented his view on economy in different papers and speeches. By analyzing India’s social economy and culture which are known as Gandhian economic thought or Gandhian economic system.

Gandhi’s focus lies on agriculture and village development, growth of decentralized cottage industry, Swadeshi movement, self-dependence, feeling of trusteeship, truth, honesty etc. Several Indian as well as foreign economists like Gunnar Myrdal are all-praise for Gandhian economic thought as a panacea for all the underdeveloped countries of the world. When the world is giving special attention to Gandhian economic thought, India itself is adopting totally different approach to utter surprise.

Gandhi also recommended citizens of India to use rural products. He said, “All should make it a point of honour to use only village articles, whenever available. Given the demand, there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied by the villages. When we become village-minded, we shall not want imitations from the west or machine-made products.”¹³ Thus, Gandhi opined that economic independence is possible only with the help of villages. He was saying that development of village is necessary for the growth of India.

1.1.5 Gandhian Model Of Industrialization: -

Gandhi’s model of industrialization was rural industries. That is based on limited capital, local raw material, short gestation period and easy marketing. He favoured the Khadi and Village industries model. The industries should be small in size, simple in organization, capital saving, non-violent and non-exploitative. They use locally available resources. The industries are eco-friendly and human-friendly with an advantage of short gestation period. It has decentralized the structure and adequate income and employment generating capacity.

¹³ Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 7

He wanted production by masses in their homes.¹⁴

Gandhi favoured the use of machines as long as it helped in the eradication of poverty and unemployment. He did not mind using electricity or even atomic energy for the spinning wheel. He also accepted the importance of shipbuilding. He did not deny the importance of large scale industries in essential spheres like basic and capital goods. But they should be complementary to small industries. Also it should be owned by the state. He was aware of the fact that the nature is being destroyed by unlimited industrialization. And massive urbanization which are thought necessary for development. He felt that any attempt to introduce mass production, is endemic and self-defeating. It increases the problems of unequal distribution. It also creates the problem of urbanization.

Gandhian model of small industry-oriented industrialization was based on the self-employed small producer. That producing for people's basic requirements and not for the pursuit of wealth. He was aware of the difficulties and dangers of alienating millions of small producers from the means of production. He therefore, argued that the participation of his vast force in economic development. And exploration outside the bounds of Western or Soviet models.¹⁵

1.3.6 Relevance Of Gandhian Thought On Rural Industrialization: -

First of all what is "relevance" of Gandhian thought on rural industrialization? We need to define it very clearly. If we define it in words then we can say – "If we analyze today's situation, problem and position than we can say that we had concentrated more on the development of big industries in urban area only, which is quite inverse to that of Gandhian thought. And all these problems can be solved only by implementing Gandhian thought on rural industrialization."¹⁶

Present relevance can be defined as usefulness in terms of country's present positions, problems and future prospects. Gandhi had presented his thoughts regarding rural industrialization in context of Indian situation and problem for achieving balanced and equal growth with stability. Today these problems deserve a more serious attention than before. Gandhian thoughts for rural industrialization are very relevant, important and guiding in today's environment. In this regards, many followers of Gandhian thought wrote in the following way -

¹⁴ SCP Panel of Experts, 2021. Gandhi's Economic Thoughts, p. 48

¹⁵ SCP Panel of Experts, 2021. Gandhi's Economic Thoughts, pp. 47-48

¹⁶ Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 26

J. C. Kumarappa has studied that how Gandhian thought can be properly understood. As well as implemented too. For him, 76,590 acres of land is required for every population of one lakh, 32 per cent of the total land, can be supported by irrigation. The village panchayat can also support in production and distribution. He also favoured decentralization of the production system of food, cloth, housing, education etc. by inclusion localized.¹⁷

K. K. Sen has also studied various aspects of rural industrialization. After defining rural industrialization, he defined its role and importance in India as well as its various aspects in his book. After discussing meaning, importance, need and scope of rural industrialization, he has discussed five types of rural industry. It also included government's policies, plans and programme for rural industries.¹⁸

B. Sudhakar Rao has studied certain important aspects of the rural industrialization. He analyzed agricultural sector in village and said that employment level is increasing in secondary and tertiary sectors. Increase in non-agricultural income could be brought by encouraging growth Of non-agro sector in villages. He tried to focus on issue of Human Resource Development in rural industries. And analyzed employment opportunity in handloom industry.¹⁹

I.S. Sundaram analyzed strategies of rural industrialization. After reviewing government programmes, he suggested to speed up the process of rural industrialization. He also gave a detailed report with regard to the strategies needed for rural industrialization.²⁰

¹⁷ J. C. Kumarappa, (a) Clive to Keynes, Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1930, (b) Public Finance and our Poverty, Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1930 (c) Gandhian Economic Thought, Vora & Co., Bombay, 1951 (d) An Over-all plan for Rural Development, Vardha, 1947.

¹⁸ K. K. Sen (a) Rural Industrialization in India, Sultan Chand & Sons, New Delhi, 1984, (b) Rural Industrialization in India, S. Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1991.

¹⁹ B. Sudhakar Rao, "Institutional Finance Availability and Problems to Trainees and Other Rural Artisans", NIRD, Hyderabad, pp. 92-94, (b) "Role of Middleman in Rural Traders" NIRD, Hyderabad, pp. 88-89, (c) "Manpower Development for Rural Industries", NIRD, Hyderabad, pp. 55, 69.

²⁰ I. S. Sundaram, 1990. "Appropriate Strategy for Rural Industrialization", Khadi Gramodyog, 36, no. 17, pp. 456, 462.

1.1.7 Agriculture And Rural Industries: -

We have to develop our agriculture and rural industries for the over-all development of villages. Agriculture satisfies our basic needs and it proves raw material for industries. He said that agricultural growth is possible by building dams, using natural fertilizers, providing irrigation facility, distributing high quality seeds by co-operative societies, by undertaking agricultural research etc. He said that agricultural development model is based on old farming techniques.²¹

Gandhi felt pride in our ancient cultural image. Discarding Western culture as a thorough mismatch for us, he inspired people to help re-build our ancient cultural image by developing rural culture. He assigned a high degree of necessity to preservice, maintenance, development and study of one's own rural history.

As well as literature, culture, libraries, museums etc. which in turn can play important role in reviving our ancient rural culture.²²

Gandhi said that we must establish Gram Panchayat. As well as co-operative society and village welfare committee for developing rural India. To turn the dream of "Gram-Swaraj" into a reality.

1.1.8 Sustainability: -

Sustainability requires the positive rate of investment in future with limited resources. A positive rate of return in crop cultivation is to maintaining sustainability in rural agriculture. A Positive rate of return indicates more profitability from crop cultivation. We know that the development of agriculture is the gate of rural development. It is also an inclusive development of the country. Here the sustainability in the field of agriculture refers a positive reasonable investment in future too. Without reducing the present consumption and investment.

The rate of agricultural production and productivity help to maintain sustainability. Thus when the farmers are unable to obtain a positive rate of return i.e. receipt over cost of production. It's not possible of them to maintain sustainability. It is therefore a matter of concern about the deteriorating economic condition of the farmers. So, a positive rate of return is the main root of sustainability and inclusive growth. Again the inclusive growth refers to viability of even smallest and most marginal rural. Viability in this regards, says that farm family must be in a position to generate a total net income. That is sufficient to meet the

²¹ Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 110

²² Ibid., p. 111

expenses of the household. And invest in future too. Consequently, inclusive growth through rural agriculture may bring sustainability in rural agriculture of the farmers as well as vitality.²³

We have to maintain the key aspects for sustainable development.²⁴ Those are –

- a) Inter-generational equity: This emphasizes that we should minimize any adverse impacts on environment that is to be preserved for our future generation.
- b) Intra-generational equity: This emphasizes that the development process should seek to minimize the wealth gaps within and between nations.
- c) Following the approach of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle etc.
- d) Promoting environmental education and awareness.
- e) Utilizing resources as per carrying capacity for maintaining the quality of life.

1.1.9 Independent And Self-Sustained Rural System: -

Gandhi favoured independent and self-sustained rural system. He said, “Independence must begin at the bottom...It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs. The government at the village will be conducted by the Panchayat.” He considered the Panchayat system as a prerequisite for rural development. Because Panchayat will be working for the growth of people at the ground level. He stressed the controlled and rational use of natural resources. Small farmers, marginal farmers and labourers, haunted by numerous problems, mere led to ruination. As village became poor, country also sank into the mire of poverty.²⁵

Gandhi realized that social life will be dominated by violence if social aim is predominated by economic motive.²⁶

²³ Sushanta Kumar Kashyap (Ed.), 2015. PIONEERING NORTH EAST – DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES, p. 94

²⁴ Ibid., p. 156

²⁵ Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 10

²⁶ J. S. Mathur (ed.), Economic Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, Introduction, p. xxxv.

He stood against the modern industrialization and aimed at economic regeneration of India in a decentralized pattern. So, he believed that economic productivity, environment protection, maintenance of resources, defense and social justice should go together with growth. Exploitation of resources beyond limit is hazardous. A person should rather believe in simple living and high thinking, simplicity brings happiness. So, he puts emphasis on self-reliance and self-sustainment. In this regards, Albert Einstein once said about Gandhi that no one in future generation would believe that such a great person would have ever born in this world.

Gandhi knew that Western thoughts are not in keeping with the social and economic pre-suppositions of the country. There is scarcity of basic items and the culture of consumerism is on high. India is now emerging as one of the corrupted debtors of the world. In this situation, Gandhi's thoughts of self-reliance, Swadeshi and Self-sustainment are conspicuously relevant. In 1947, one year before leaving this planet, he expressed his wish about India and Indians in the following words as

"Independent India as perceived by me, will have all Indians friendship. There need be no millionaires and no poor, all would belong to the State for the State beloved to them. I will die in the act of realizing this dream."²⁷

1.1.10 Conclusion: -

After following details leave no doubt about the relevance of Gandhian thinking on rural industries in present times. If we are able to develop rural industries based on Gandhian pattern, we can surely achieve a stable and develop nation, free of the problems of inequality. We can have thus a tearless national development with the help of rural industrialization. Study of rural industries also reveals the fact that we can generate more employment opportunity with lesser capital by rural industrialization.

We have seen that Gandhi's economic thought is relevant not only for India but for the whole world. Different countries of the world especially the developing ones are taking different steps to develop their rural industries. Not only underdeveloped nations but developed nations are also facing many problems like concentration of wealth, over-production, materialism etc. It is suggested by many economists, politicians and scholars that Gandhian Philosophy has great instrumental value in this regard.

²⁷ Asha Patel, 2005. Gandhian Vision of Rural Development, p. 13

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