

Gandhian approach to rural development

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Abstract

The rural development means maximum production of Agriculture and allied activities in the rural areas, including development of rural industries and cottage industries. It gives more than employment opportunity in rural areas especially for the weaker section of the community so as to enable them to improve their socio – economic status. Gandhiji wanted to bring about rural reconstruction with scientific and spiritual values. He was successfully implemented 18 point programme. This article has discussed Gandhian perspective of 18 point constructive programme. This programme based on his experience and it was essential for rural development.

Keywords: Gandhian approach, rural development, economic status

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi idea to develop the India society was based on his understanding of the society and hence, based on the village system. He further believed that India will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts not in palaces. He was aware of the realities of the village life and knew the plight of half starved masses of India. His understanding of the plight of the people has been extremely well brought out in his writings, identifying his emphasis on removal of poverty over aesthetics. 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.

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. Let us discuss all these items one by one.

Communal Unity

Everybody is agreed about the significance of communal unity, which means an unbreakable heart unity. Thus it has a wider significance than political unity. For the attainment of communal unity, every social worker should aim at developing and encouraging the bond of love and regard among the Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian and Jew members and cultivate a unity based on such mutual love and regard. Gandhiji found that social stability of the country cannot be achieved without the social unity among different communities. The leaders of the communities have to play an important role in bringing about the harmony relationship between the communities. If they are united, the masses will naturally follow them. It is the duty of the leaders to refer the unresolved disputes to the Panchayat.

Removal of Untouchability

Untouchability is a social evil. According to Gandhiji, there should be perfect social equality among the people the society. No social superiority should be entertained by any individual or by a section of the society on the ground of birth or knowledge or religion or any other consideration. He has the

opinion that no one is born as untouchable and unequal. The practice of untouchability is a sin against God as the Harijans and non-Harijans are the children of the same God. Even we are also children of God. In 1932, Gandhiji introduced Harijan Sevak Sangh, a non-political association for their self-improvement. He suggested their economic self-reliance through the adoption of spinning and weaving. He advocated non-violence methods to be adopted by them for their self-employment and for proper realisation of their rights. Gandhiji wanted the caste Hindus to sacrifice and struggle for the all-round development of the Harijans, "The awakened Harijans should make serious attempts for self-improvement in all walks of life. In Gandhian concept of swaraj, none should be high or low but all are to be equal citizens and this Swaraj society is free from any social exploitation and domination.

Prohibition

Gandhiji considered drinks, intoxicating drugs and gambling as the social evils. He suggested the various measures to be undertaken to implement prohibition by the Government, Social Organizations and Social Workers. He realised the fact that the drinks and drugs is the root cause of many a social evil. The moral loss is greater than the financial loss; the physical disease may harm body but the drinks and drugs sap both the body and the soul.

Khadi

Khadi mentality means decentralization of production and distribution of the necessities of life. Gandhiji considered Khadi as an inevitable means for the all-round development of the Nation. He said in 1921, "Just as we cannot live without breathing and without eating, so it is impossible for us to attain economic independence and banish pauperism from this ancient land without reviving home-spinning. I hold the spinning wheel to be as much as a necessity in every household as the hearth. No other scheme that can be devised will ever solve the problem of the deepening poverty of the people.

In 1934 Gandhiji wrote in Harijan, "Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support Khadi 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, khadi could not make further progress. For, villagers to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points. The spinning wheels provides the people food, cloth and make them self-sufficient.

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 ideal 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.

New or Basic Education (Nai Talim)

Gandhiji developed the idea of Nai Talim, for the 'all round drawing of the best in child and man, body, mind and spirit'. According to him literacy in itself is no education, it is not the end of education. His philosophy of education was based on his experiments with physical, literary and moral training at the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa. The vocational training was given through carpentry, shoe-making, gardening etc. Literacy classes as well as spiritual training were conducted by him and others. He realized that the spirit of the children could not be trained through books alone. He was convinced that it is the life and character of the teacher which moulds the moral life of the students. He drew his conclusions and inferences from the experiences which he gained at the Tolstoy Farm and followed it in India. Thus the Gandhian scheme of education is meant to bring about a silent socio-economic and political revolution through the medium of village handicrafts. It removes unemployment through the vocational training and provides economic and social security to the people. It teaches dignity of labour and achieves class harmony.

Adult Education

According to Gandhiji, adult education should not end with bare acquaintance with the alphabet. The literary education of illiterate adults should go hand in hand with the spread of the knowledge which is useful to the villager in their daily life during the transitory stage towards complete literacy; the social workers shall engage themselves in adult education of the illiterate people. Arithmetic, Geography, History and other subjects should be taught with a special reference to the village life and the village needs. If the adult education were to be village need-based education, this will lead to the eradication of illiteracy from the country.

Women

Gandhiji believed that the same soul resides in both man and woman and both of them have equal opportunities to develop their personality. They are inseparable pair and one cannot live without the other. Though both man and woman possess equal mental abilities, they differ in certain respects. Woman possesses greater degree of non-violence than man. As a mother, she exhibits greater degree of suffering, sacrifice and love. She is the mistress of the house, keeper and distributor of the bread in the house and takes greater interest in the management of the house. After completing her house work, she can take up

some constructive activities. As the future of the country is to be shaped by her children, the women should teach her children simplicity, faithfulness, non-violence, truth, fearlessness, dignity of labour and self-reliance. Such children will shape the destiny of the country on sound moral lines.

Education in Health and Hygiene

Gandhiji considered the fundamental laws of health and hygiene as follows: Think the purest thoughts and banish all idle and impure thoughts. Breathe the freshest air day and night. Establish a balance between bodily and mental work. Stand erect, sit erect and be neat and clean in every one of your acts, and let these be an expression of your inner condition. Eat to live for service of fellow men. Do not live for indulging yourselves. Hence your food must be just enough to keep your mind and body in good order. Man becomes what he eats. Your water, food and air must be clean and you will not be satisfied with mere personal cleanliness, but you will infect your surroundings with the same three-fold cleanliness that you will desire for yourselves.

Provincial Languages

According to Gandhiji, mother tongue is a natural means to develop the mind of the child. It is a mere superstition to believe that a particular language is incapable of expression of scientific ideas. He explained this point by giving the examples of Russia and Japan which have achieved all their scientific progress without English as their medium. Hence the Indian languages are to be properly developed; and the useful English books should be translated into regional languages for the sake of majority of the Nation.

Economic Equality

Economic equality means that everyone shall have sufficient and nutritious food to eat, proper shelter to live in, adequate khadi to wear, timely medical relief and necessary facilities for education. The ultimate aim of Gandhian concept of economic equality is equal pay for all. The Bhangi, the doctor, the lawyer, the teachers etc. would get the same wages for an honest day's work.

Kisans

Kisans form the bulk of India's population and are the backbone of this rural country. Majority of the India's population depend on agriculture and associated occupations such as cattle farming, dairying, poultry, piggery etc. In order to do this, they must acquire sufficient theoretical as well as practical knowledge about agriculture. According to him, the agriculture of a village should be planned in such a manner that each village shall be self-sufficient in its food requirements. If geographical conditions permit, the farmers should cultivate cotton required for the village. Gandhiji was in favour of farmer's organisations but which are to be directed to redress the grievances of the peasants. But it should not be used for low-level competitions for political gains of certain individuals

Labour

The land owners should not take more than their needs and should lead a simple life they should engage themselves in the upliftment of the poorer sections of the village and should become partners in the peaceful evolution of socio-economic

change. The landless labourers should get sufficient wages to provide their primary requirements such as food, clothing and shelter. To them, their labour is the capital. This capital should be given due recognition in the society. According to Gandhiji, "He who tills the land should own the land. The land owners should not think that the possession of land gives them any superiority over the tenants and the landless labourers. They should recognize that the tenants and the landless labourers possess the same soul which they possess. The land owners whose agricultural income is surplus should act as trustees for the benefit of the agricultural labourers and others."

Adivasies

Under his 18-point Constructive Programme, Gandhiji included the welfare of Adivasies also. He said, "Though they are the sixteenth number in this programme, they are not the least in point of importance. Our country is so vast and the races so varied that, the best of us cannot know all there is to know of men and their condition. As one discovers this for oneself, one realises how difficult it is to make good our claim to be one nation, unless every unit has a living consciousness of being one with every other"

Lepers

According to Gandhi, service to the lepers is service to the suffering humanity. He said, "India is perhaps a home of lepers next only to Central Africa. Yet they are as much a part of society as the tallest among us. But the tall absorb our attention though they are least in need of it. The lot of the lepers who are much in need of attention is studied neglect. I am tempted to call it heartless which it certainly is, in terms of non-violence." He visualised in swaraj state, no suffering man should go uncared. In this regard he said, "If India was pulsating with new life, if we were all in earnest about winning independence in the quickest manner possible by truthful and non-violent means, there would not be a leper or beggar in India uncared for and unaccounted for." For this, the social workers with a missionary zeal should take up the Projects for their welfare.

Students

Gandhiji wished that the students should possess the following qualities: i) They must have initiative, they must not be imitators, ii) They must possess freedom. However, they must exercise freedom with restraint and humility. iii) They should have purity of heart which ensures the purity in personal life. iv) They are brahmacharis, They must maintain self-control in thought, word and action and should preserve the vital energy. v) They should cultivate the sense of service to the community. vi) They must develop sense of dignity of labour. Gandhiji wished that the students should wear Khadi clothes and engage themselves in constructive programme. They will study the literature about spinning with all its economic, social, moral and political implications. During their vacation, they must conduct day and night schools for the illiterates. They could clean the Harijan Quarters, their children and give simple lessons in hygiene both to the young and the grown up. According to Gandhiji students must not take part in party politics. The students are to study, they are researchers but not politicians. It is not possible for the student to be active politicians and to be real students simultaneously. They can

study the programmes and ideologies of the various political parties and listen to their point of view. They should have & freedom of opinion and can openly sympathize with any party which they like. But they should not support political strikes and demonstration

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 realised 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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