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Mahatma Gandhi's View of Rural Development

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❖ Introduction:

Mahatma Gandhi famously noted that India lives in its villages. If the village perishes, India will perish too. This truism about the social, economic and political development of rural areas is valid even today. Since a majority of our population lives in the villages, it is important that people in rural areas should have the same quality of life as is enjoyed by people living in suburban and urban areas for the balanced growth of the nation.

Further there are cascading affects of poverty, unemployment, poor and inadequate infrastructure health, sanitation and nutrition facilities in rural areas and urban centers causing slums and consequential social and economic tensions being manifested in economic deprivation and urban poverty. This causes major imbalances in the society, thus hampering development. Hence rural development, which is concerned with economic growth and social justice, improvement in the living standard of the rural people by providing adequate and quality food health social services and minimum basic needs, becomes essential. For which various government and non-government organizations are striving for development in rural areas.

❖ Gandhi's Views Of Rural Development & Government & Non-Government Organizations:

India lives in villages. Naturally the development of the country depends on the development of villages. All the goods and services necessary for the village members should be grown within the village. In a word, every village should be a self-contained republic. If every village distributes its surplus produce to the poor villagers then there will not be the problem of poverty and starvation in the rural areas. Only this can help eradicating poverty and thus people can be happy and self-reliant. Agricultural sector alone cannot solve the problem of rural poverty and unemployment. That's why Gandhi gives stress on the growth of the rural industries like khadi, handlooms, sericulture and handicrafts. He opines that large-scale industries make people lazy and help concentration of wealth in the hands of few. On the contrary, rural industries are based on family labor and required less amount of capital. Raw materials are also collected from local markets and the goods thus produced are sold in the local markets.

With regards to Gandhi's views, today various government and non-government schemes are playing an important role in developing rural areas keeping in view self-help-group which is a main source of women empowerment.

❖ Gandhi's Views on Self-sufficient Village Economy:

- Gandhi holds the view of the maximization of social welfare and for this he gives prime importance to the welfare of the individuals by reducing inequalities in income and wealth. According to Gandhi every person should be provided with bare minimum necessities i.e. food, shelter, and clothing, for which Panchayat-Raj was introduced after 73rd Amendment and developed concept of decentralization of power.
- Concentration of wealth to a few groups of people certainly will shatter the dream of a society which will be socialist in nature. Gandhi is in favor of the self-sufficient village economy where the villages will be the independent economic units. Self-Help-Groups are the best example of which.
- In agriculture that techniques will be adopted, which will not deplete the soil and pollute the environment? For this farmers should use eco-friendly production technique by using lesser and lesser amount of fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. To fulfill this dream of Gandhi, today Agricultural department of India is promoting Vermicompost Fertilizers. Also government is introducing the programme of Water-Shed in villages. In villages like Ralegansidhi and Hivarebazar concept of water-shed has been implemented successfully because of which they are considered as Ideal Village.
- He prefers well irrigation instead of large hydro-electric projects since this will lead to exploitation. As regards the ownership of land holding, Gandhi is against the zamindari system and ownership of land should go to the actual tillers of the soil. He also viewed that there should be communal ownership of land for balanced cultivation and the surplus land, if any must be distributed to the rest of the village communities. Group farming is the best of this.

In India large-scale industries have been concentrated in a few big cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmadabad, Jamshedpur etc. Rural areas are without big industries. Concentration of these industries in few cities has led to a number of problems.

The major problem is the problem of overpopulation in the industrialized areas. With this there arises pollution in the air and water. In addition, large-scale industries promoted monopolistic trends and unequal distribution of income.

Rural industries, on the other hand, help decentralization of economic activities and a large proportion of income generated in these industries gets distributed among the workers and among a very large number of people. Gandhi is not in favor of large-scale industries in the sense that these industries are not related to a vast population living in rural areas.

Thus industrialization, according to Gandhi, does not help the growth of the personality; contrarily it helps only the material progress of a few. So according to Gandhi our handicrafts, handlooms, sericulture should be developed, as they are the capital-intensive, displaces labor and naturally augments employment and under-employment. This

Gandhian view
poverty and

❖ Conclusions

Gandhi's vision for a self-sufficient village economy is a country. It is a country where skilled or unskilled labor is not engaged in large-scale industrial production. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy and underemployment is avoided. Self-help groups are the backbone of the village economy. These groups are self-organized and self-operative. They are located at the village level. These groups engage in various economic activities. The watershed concept is a relation among villages. All these groups are a loser and they are a benign atmosphere in which their development takes place in the form of "Moc"

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Gandhian view of self-sufficient village economy is also relevant in the context of reducing poverty and unemployment in rural India.

❖ Conclusion:

Gandhi is of the view that full employment of human resources is the basic need of a country. It is true that national income will increase if each and every persons (whether skilled or unskilled) is employed fully. This cannot be possible only with the development of large-scale industries because of their labor-saving nature.

Agricultural sector too cannot solve the problem of unemployment or underemployment due to its seasonal nature. Therefore mechanization and large scale production cannot provide the solution to the problem of poverty and unemployment.

Self-sufficient village economy is an alternative solution and in this context the role of institutions in the rural sector like the village Panchayat and rural multipurpose co-operative can play a vital role. We cite here an example of multipurpose co-operative society located at Ralegansiddhi and Hivarebazar village of Maharashtra.

These villages have set an example in the sphere of performing society welfare activities. The concept of Self-Sufficient Villages has been developed in reality because of Watershed, Gram Sabhas, Anti Alcoholism and Tanta mukti as a result of harmonious relation among members.

All the welfare activities are so designed, identified and implemented that nobody is a loser and that everybody living in the villages emerges gainer. The society is able to create a benign atmosphere all around and members legitimately feel that it is their society upon which their development depends and the concept of Ram Rajya comes into existence in the form of "Modern Ideal Village".

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