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CONCLUSION

The Gandhi Ashram at Tiruchengode has successfully attained the matured age of seventy-seven. Longevity may not always be a virtue in a man but it is in an Institution. It proves the Institution’s usefulness.

The Ashram is a voluntary body. The impulse behind it was and is unforced. No agency of the Government compelled the Ashram to do what it is doing. An inner urge in one man – C. Rajagopalachari and the generous support of his friends brought the Ashram into being.

The Ashram stood from its inception for change and renewal - social and economic change. It defied caste taboos and untouchability, when such defiance was dangerous to a man’s social position and even to his life. By providing jobs, to rural women the Ashram has contributed to raise the dignity of the rural poor. Rajaji chose seventy seven years ago, to serve poor rural women, that too in the driest pocket of TamilNadu.

One of the main focal points of the Gandhi Ashram was the empowerment of rural women and creation of self- sufficiency for rural poor, when it was started seventy seven years ago. Even though India has achieved great strides in Industrial Development, Science and Technology, still a lot need
to be done in most of the dry villages. Under this context one can realize the importance of Institution like Gandhi Ashram in village economy.

The Ashram utilises local raw materials and local people in its business. The activities of the Ashram have triggered lot of other local economic activities by which it has created more employment opportunities. The usage of the Neem seeds as raw material by the Ashram is praiseworthy. The present trend in pesticides use is Eco-friendly in nature. The usage of Neem seeds is best suited in this regard. The Neem seeds in the surrounding areas of the Ashram were going waste. But the Ashram made the rural people to collect the same and used those seeds for the production of Non – edible oil, toilet soap etc. Of the 4000 workers of the Ashram 3700 are women. In addition to helping them to earn their livelihood, the Ashram helps them to send their children to school so that the children will not be forced to work as child labour. The Ashram is also running a child care unit for the babies of the women working over there. In this way it is ahead of many corporate bodies, which are yet to realise that such facilities are essential to help their women employees to work in peace. The Ashram has also employed blind women and entrusted them with unskilled work. All these activities make the Gandhi Ashram very relevant as a vibrant Economic Institution even today.

1. www.rgashram.com
The Puduppalyam village in Namakkal district was a very dry area and the people were also illiterate. Unable to lead a life there the people were exploited by the moneylenders. Many had also started to migrate to Ceylon. At that time Rajaji established the Ashram and by providing them work had prevented such migration and made them lead a happy life in their own homes.

In recent times people coming to towns and living in slums, pose a problem to the Government, which suffers from financial crunch and unable to meet the basic requirements of accommodation and sanitation. This huge problem can be solved only by making them live in their homes and provide them work as it is done by the Ashram.

The rejuvenation of rural India through agriculture and rural industries remained the action plan during the freedom movement. But immediately after Independence the strategy changed to one of rapid industrialization. The impact of all the Five-Year Plans on the rural economy of India is before us. The poor have remained poor and the gulf between the “haves” and the “have-nots” has only widened, inspite of the best intentions of the planners.

The twin objectives of the Five-Year Plans, namely, rapid industrial growth, and distributive justices, remained unfulfilled because of the inbuilt

conflict between the two. Rapid industrialisation led to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, leaving the rest to somehow survive as meagre income earning labourers. What India needs is not mass production but production by the masses. The only rational and effective means of distributing purchasing power is to provide productive employment to all.

In order to assess the performance of the Gandhi Ashram, the latest six years data 1995 – 2001 were collected from the Annual Reports and Statistical Analysis were made on that basis. The following are the important outcome of the analysis:

Cotton production value had declined in the Second Triennium period and the Annual Average Growth Rate and Compound Growth Rate values showed negative trend. This may be due to poor sales, competition and non-availability of Government funds.

The silk yarn production had tremendously increased in the Second Triennium period. This may be due to increasing demand for silk saris, rebates and discounts announced during festival seasons and Government subsidy's policies.

The polyester yarn production remained stable for the entire study period.

Khadi production had declined in the Second Triennium period.

Khadi silk production had increased which may be due to higher demand for Khadi silk in the market.

Polyester Khadi production Triennium value was more in the Second period when compared with the First period. This may be mainly due to the product diversification of the Ashram and increased demand for the Khadi polyester.

The spinning wages trend index number value was high during 1996-97 with 133.54 and was low during the year 1999-2000 which was 96.28.

Weaving wages trend in the Second Triennium period had increased mainly due to the increase in Khadi production.

Khadi sales value had increased during the Second Triennium period. This may be mainly due to rebate and discount, Government subsidy and effective sales through Khadi Bhandars.

There was a decline in bar soap and toilet soap production value during the Second Triennium period. This may be mainly due to the stoppage of the orders of the soaps from defence services and stiff competition through popular brands in the market. Like production value sales value also had declined in the Second Triennium period.

The production trend of the Non-Edible Oil and cake, which is used as raw materials for soap production, was more in the Second Triennium period when compared with the First Triennium period.
Regarding Gingelly Oil cake production the highest percentage change was recorded during the year 1998-99 and the lowest during the year 2000 – 2001.

The soap nut powder production value showed an increasing trend. Agarbathi production value had declined during the Second Triennium period. Both the Annual Average Growth Rate and Compound Growth Rate value showed negative trend.

The hand made paper production value in the Second Triennium period had increased. This may be mainly due to increase in sales, Eco – friendly in nature and reasonable selling price.

There was a positive correlation between soap production and sales. The calculated correlation value was 0.904.

Likewise there was positive correlation between total Khadi production and sales. The calculated correlation value is 0.966.

Though the habit of buying Khadi is quite predominant among the people they have to be induced to do so by offering rebate. The Central Government and the State Government are allowing rebate for a limited period of ninety days, and there happens to be undue delay in the reimbursement of rebate.

In the new millennium it is essential to train the youth in a proper way to earn their livelihood. The Central Government, the State Government and the
Voluntary Organisation must encourage and train the youth in a proper way so that they can earn their livelihood in a peaceful manner. The importance of dignity of labour, simple living and high thinking must be explained.

The success of the Gandhi Ashram all through the years has proved that Gandhian ideas of economic development are not the outmoded concepts but are essentially rational and scientific concepts and in tune with modern economic themes regarding economic development of the developing countries like India. If the Gandhian ideas are linked up with the broad functioning of India’s economic planning, India can surely achieve the objectives of the plans.

If the Five Year Plans of the country is prepared and implemented in the light of the Gandhian concepts giving appropriate priorities to the sectors relevant for developing the standard of living of the masses along with other allied sectors, resolution of the existing socio-economic problems will come nearer to the approach and the Nation along with all its glamorous achievements will be able to solve the basic problems of poverty, mass unemployment and inequality in the distribution of income and wealth which was the dream of the, “Father of the Nation” for Independent India. Gandhian ideas were relevant during his lifetime, continue to be relevant today and shall remain so far many decades to follow.

In this context the Gandhi Ashram is inseparably linked with the prayerful toil of a remarkable man. Other parts of India may bear the imprint of
Rajaji’s writing, speaking, battling and prison – going. The Tiruchengode Gandhi Ashram alone has living signs of his physical service, of his perspiration offered to a people he loved.

The Ashram is at cross roads today. With technology taking the front seat of Industrial Development, the Ashram is in a unique position of taking the unskilled rural workers with it to the next century, while staying competitive in the market. It can be made possible only by adopting itself to newer technologies and impart skills to its workers at lower cost.