MICRO LEVEL PLANNING
CHAPTER III

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Gandhian Approach To grass-root Planning and development

Gandhiji considered village as the basic unit of the political system having perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. His idea of village republic is based on the direct participation of the villagers in planning and implementing the development programmes of their villages. Experts in Rural Development say people learn how to promote their development by actually participating in the process of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. When micro level planning is envisaged the above said Gandhian approach to rural development has to be taken note of and put into practice in the real sense. The bottom-up style has not been properly understood. Preparation of development plans for relatively small areas, comparable to


the size of a panchayat, development block and districts may be defined as micro level planning. This bottom-up approach has to be based on the people's involvement or participation in planning and implementation of development programmes. Broadly speaking participation means a share in decision making by all those who are influenced or affected by the decision. This may be practicable in the real sense of the term at the village level. The real participation makes the individual more responsible and play an effective role in the development of the village community. Moreover integrating all aspects of development - social, economic, health, education, cultural and spiritual - may become easy at the village level. That is why Gandhiji called for Samagra seva (Integrated Service). This was the beginning of the concept of Integration in the history of rural development in India.

4. Ibid., p. 62.
Integrated Rural Development and A few other Approaches

After Gandhi, in India and in other Asian and African countries attempts are being made through different approaches for the development of the rural areas. In India a number of programmes such as National Rural Employment Programme, Massive Agricultural Programme, Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, Drought Prone Area Programme, Command Area Development Programme, Special Livestock Production Programme, Food for Work Programme and Small farmers and marginal farmers development programmes were being implemented to develop the poor. Later all the above said piecemeal approaches have been synthesised in an approach called Integrated Rural Development.

The writings of Ragnar Nurkse and Hirschman helped for developing the strategy of Integrated Rural Development as a model. According to them it is possible to bring development by linking forward area with backward. If the rural areas are linked with urban centres the economic activities would be integrated and thereby maximum rate of


growth could be achieved. This strategy also, emphasised spatial integration by way of bringing together the communities of settlements for a balanced economic development. Scholars, experts and institutions in the field of rural development are very much contemplating and debating on the functional integration of the development departments and inter-dependence of villages in clusters. Mutual inter­dependence among the villages may be there. But one village should not exploit the other. The cities should not exploit the villages. If the above said strategy does not give room for exploitation then it will be more or less similar to Gandhian approach to rural development.

Gokhale Institute of Economics and Politics of Pune\(^9\) propounded that the human settlements should be linked up from the villages to the top growth centres so that the economic flow will be free, mobility will be easier and integration would be solid and substantial in all spheres to bring development. National Institute of Community Development (at present National Institute of Rural Development)

\(^9\) Gadgil and his close associates were responsible for the Institute and its approach to Rural Development. For their approach see; Gadgil., District Development Planning, Poona: Gokhale Institute of Economics and Politics, 1967.
advocated the same Principle of linking up the human settle-
ments in a different pattern. Horizontal linking up of the
villages themselves as clusters should be done so that they
can help each other mutually and the cluster of villages
can function as a viable economic unit.

A few other institutions and voluntary organisations
like Kundrakudi Village Planning from in Tamil Nadu have
also evolved their own model for rural development. While
dealing with the theories in functional organisations cen-
tral place theory is defined as that settlement which by
virtue of availability of certain facilities and services is
able to attract people from smaller settlements around it

•The Need For A New Approach

The above said approaches and theories yielded results.

Lalit K.Sen and his academic associates were involved in
the process of evolving a new model for rural develop-
ment in their Institute. For their model see:
Lalit K.Sen et.al.Growth Centres in Raichur - An Inte-
grated Rural Development Plan for a Distrit in Karnata-
ka, Hyderabad National Institute of Community Develop-
ment, 1975.

tions, 1971, p.5.
production in India through the Green Revolution\textsuperscript{12} has remoundously increased. Infrastructure facilities in the rural areas have improve to a greater extent except in the tribal areas. But the purchasing power of the masses has one down. The quality of rural education has not improved. The basic needs of human settlements have not been ful-
illed. Inequalities in income and wealth has increased\textsuperscript{13} the reason for the failures mainly lie in lack of people's articulation in planning and implementing development programmes and the stress on economic development alone. The missing link is the beneficiary. The beneficiary does not know either the long term objectives of planning or the real meaning for enhancing the quality of life. Social harmony and cultural life of India have been affected by the /eastern oriented planning approaches. Modern institutions and western technologies have failed to acknowledge the socio-cultural setting to a greater extent\textsuperscript{14}. In this context the Gandhian approach to rural development may be well

\textsuperscript{12} Aram M., Gandhian Perspective on Integrated Rural\textsuperscript{12} Development, Gandhi Gram: Gandhi Gram Rural Institute, 1983, p.8.

\textsuperscript{13} Maheschand Vinaykumar Puri, Regional Planning in India, New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1983, p.82.

\textsuperscript{14} Mishra R.P., (Ed) op.cit., p.330.
thought of to evolve a suitable and replicable model for the integrated development of the villages.

The Experience of Gandhi Gram Rural Institute

The Gandhigram Rural Institute has developed a model. The Institute was started with the object of providing higher education to the rural youths in tune with the principles and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. The students and staff of the Institute made an indepth study of the village problems, organise youth clubs and women's clubs and arranged for group discussions and cultural programmes to create an awareness among the villagers. They also joined the village Youths in carrying out the work projects such as desilting of irrigation tanks and constructing link roads and houses for the weaker sections.

During 1980-81, the Department of Extension of the Gandhigram Rural Institute felt the absence of the elected panchayats in the villages. Panchayat elections were not held in Tamilnadu from 1972 to 1985. There were no panchay-

at, block and district level people's representative bodies and committees to voice the grievances of the villagers. During this period a casual reference was made about the village planning set up in a group discussion in one of the service villages, and after a few weeks the first village planning committee was constituted. This is how the village planning committee has come into being in the service villages of Gandhigram Rural Institute.

The Village Planning Committees are constituted in the large village gatherings. The following qualifications have been considered necessary to become a member of the planning committee.

a) The Chairman and the Vice-chairman should not belong to any political party. There may be exceptions in rare cases when they are very much agreeable to all sections of the community.

b) The members of the planning committee must command respect from all sections of the society.

c) The members should conduct themselves, both in their private and public life, in such a way as to set an example to others to follow.

d) The members should have a thorough knowledge about the problems of the village. They may be in a position to suggest, to some extent, suitable measures to solve the problems of the village.

It is said that the planning committee essentially a planning body. So it would function as a guide, friend and philosopher to the panchayat.\(^\text{17}\)

The following are suggested as the functions of the planning committee.\(^\text{18}\)

a) Acquiring knowledge about planning by going through the newspapers, journals, listening to the radio and visiting areas developed due to proper planning.

b) Meeting the villagers individually to know their felt needs and problems.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p.7.

\(^{18}\) Markandan N. Ibid., p.7,
c) Conducting socio-economic survey of the village with the help of the panchayat and experts in conducting survey.

d) Once in a way arranging for a group discussion for analysing the problems for proper planning and evaluation.

e) Preparing a master plan for the all round development of the village with the help of the concerned experts.

f) Helping and guiding the panchayat to evaluate the plan implementation.

g) Studying and understanding the importance of planning at grass root level.

In the year 1981 Village Planning Committees were constituted in five service villages of the Gandhigram Rural Institute. In the next year in five more villages they were constituted. In the third year village planning committees were functioning in thirty villages in three panchayat unions. 'One-day' orientation programmes were arranged by the Centre for Research, Extension and Integrated Rural Development of the Gandhigram Rural Institute for the mem-
bers of the village planning committees. Apart from the orientation meetings annual plan formulation and review meetings were held twice a year. Such meetings were the joint meetings of the members of the village planning committees, development departments, nationalised banks and the staff of Gandhigram Rural Institute. During this period in 1982-83, the Institute started the M.Phil course in Micro Level Planning. Before the joint meeting the students of M.Phil Micro Level Planning course visited the villages and helped the members of the planning committees in preparing the draft annual plans. The draft annual plans were presented by the Secretaries of the village planning committees in the joint meetings. After discussion they were finalised. Plans were formulated to improve the conditions of the villages in the following development aspects.

a) Improving the economic conditions of the families living below the poverty line by getting assistance from the government and voluntary agencies.


b) Improving irrigation and other facilities to enhance the status of the farmers.

c) Improving the condition of the health and sanitation of the villages through medical assistance, family planning and construction of latrines and drainages.

d) Construction of additional school buildings, community centres, bridges and laying of link roads.

e) Implementation of women and child welfare programmes.

f) Construction of houses for scheduled caste families and for those who are badly in need of a shelter.

Review meetings were held in the middle of the year to assess the implementation of the planned programmes. The planning and review meetings were attended by District Collector and the development officials. The villagers were benefited to some extent through their planning committees. In a few villages many development programmes were implemented. The programmes were implemented with the help of the panchayat union, government departments and the Gandhi-gram Rural Institute. But the members of the village plan-

ning committee, youth club and women's club took the initiative and shoulder the responsibilities of meeting people and officials and mobilising resources for planning and implementing programmes. The Department of Extension of Gandhigram Rural Institute was keeping a constant touch to motivate them. In all the three panchayat unions in 18 villages planning committees have formulated annual plans and implemented them effectively.

Compared to the other villages the service villages of Gandhigram Rural Institute may be better in some respects. Among the six villages taken for this study three are having the village planning committees. The three village planning committee villages are compared to the three other villages of the same block where no planning committees are functioning. Three years' progress of the six villages from 1985 to 1988 has been recorded.

The impact of the micro level planning in the study villages where the planning committees are functioning has been analysed extensively in the next chapter.