CHAPTER – 3
MAHATMA GANDHIJI’S PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL WOMEN
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“India will be back when it came to woman’s rights — and her own behavior around them could be bizarre”

- Mahatma Gandhi

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter an attempt is made to emphasize on Mahatma Gandhiji’s perspective on the development of rural women through entrepreneurship and even to understand Gandhi’s views on women in the context of social, economic and political issues. Assuming, thinking, inscription or discussing anything about Mahatma Gandhi is a thrilling experience to any patriot. Mahatma Gandhi the GREAT, is acknowledged as the father of our nation and a great political emancipation of the nation. He lay down the effort for the liberation of all the oppressed and suppressed sections of society. One of the remarkable outcomes of his life-work has been the stirring of women, which made them shelter their deep-rooted sense of inferiority and rise to dignity and self-esteem. He alleged that “When woman, whom we all call Abala¹, becomes Sabala, then all those who are helpless will become powerful”. Women, urban and rural, educated and uneducated, Indian and foreign, were fascinated to Gandhi’s ideas and activities. While some like Sarojini Naidu, Lakshmi Menon, Sushila Nayyar and Rajkumari Amrita Kaur ascended to prominence. There were thousands of unobserved and unseen heroines of India who learnt the meaning of liberation from Gandhi and unscreened all their talent and energy to the struggle for independence. According to the Mahatma, “social reforms are essential for the restructuring of the societal values. Social values are so far dominated the perception of Indian women”². Although, he had great reverence for the traditions of the country, he also realized that certain
customs and traditions of the Indian society were adverse to the spirit of development of the women of the nation.

Gandhi’s political ideologies, stalwartly anchored in humanitarian values, were an indication of his spiritual self. His personal philosophies of life shaped to a great extent his political strategies, with which he determined the direction of travelling Indian on the path to freedom. For Gandhi, politics was not an exclusive category but it was very much a part of one’s holistic spiritual approach towards life in general. Therefore politics could not be divorced from social factors. “Every primary school student should learn political science, to revolutionize the nation which is commonly instigated in the developed countries”. To Gandhi, social emancipation was as critical as political emancipation. Gandhi throughout his life waged a campaign for the upgradation of the socially downtrodden, making significant contributions for the enhancement of the status of women in India. Women under his auspices took a milestone step towards re-establishing their identity in the society. Gandhi’s inspiring ideologies boosted their morale and helped them to rediscover their self esteem. Not only there was a general awakening among the women but under Gandhi’s leadership, they entered into the national mainstream, taking parts in the National Movements.

3.2 Glimpse of Indian Rural Society

Gandhi appreciated way of life of the rural society in India but not at the cost of loss of individual self-esteem. His realistic and vibrant advice was “It is good to swim in the waters of tradition but to sink in them is a suicide”. He never vacillated to criticize the evils which had absorbed the Indian society and attempted to mobilize public opinion in opposition to such evils. He comprehended that there were deep-rooted customs hindering the development of women and woman’s freedom from such shackles was necessary for the liberation of the nation. ‘Half the world is woman, educating a woman means
educating a family’. These two popular sayings underscore the critical and timeless roles women play in society$^4$. Women are known to play incredible and soul-saving roles, mostly indiscreetly, in difficult times including during wars and natural disasters.

Gandhi observes a woman ‘as strong reservoir of energy’, which could be put to use to bring light to the dark corners of the nation. In his opinion, “It is worth considering carefully in what way the country can avail itself of the services of hundreds of widows of rural India, young and old”. As Gandhi respected widows who dedicated themselves to the service of humanity, he had great regard for women who chose the path of staying single to serve society and the Nation. Gandhi believes that, not every Indian girl is born to marry. There are many girls willing to dedicate themselves to service instead of servicing one man. Gandhi had visualized a great role for women in eradicating the evil of communalism. His appeal to women was to refuse to cook and to starve them in protest so long as their men “Do not wash their hand of these dirty communal squabbles”. Gandhi expected great things from women in the areas of work concerning purity of life, removal of untouchability, proliferation of khadi, communal harmony and Swadeshi. His logic was simple: “If Kaikeyi could obtain all that she wanted from Dashrath by dent of Duragraha that could not achieve with the help of Satyagraha. Gandhi’s own experience of Kasturba’s resistance to acceptance of untouchables as members of the family perhaps made him aware of the role that women can play in the removal of untouchability.

3.3 Gandhi’s Perspective on Women

There was a noticeable disappearance of Gandhi’s perception of women from that of other reformers. The position taken by other social reformers and leaders, prior to Gandhi created a susceptible image of the Indian women. With the emergence of Gandhi, a new conception of women gradually gained
supremacy. For Gandhi, women were not mere toys in the hands of men, neither their competitors. Men and women are essentially endowed with the same spirit and therefore have similar problems. Women are at par with men, one complementing each other. In Gandhi’s views, women can never be considered to be the weaker sex. In fact, women for Gandhi were embodiments of virtues like knowledge, humility, tolerance, sacrifice and faith. These qualities were essential prerequisites for captivated the asset of Satyagraha. The competence of enduring endless suffering can be witnessed only in the women, according to the Mahatma. The doctrine of ahimsa as preached by Gandhi integrated the virtue of suffering as is evident in the woman. Therefore, Gandhi visualized a critical role for women in establishing non-violence. Gandhi invoked the instances of ancient role models who were epitomes of Indian womanhood, like Sita, Damayanti and Savitri, to demonstrate that Indian women could never be delicate. Women have equal mental abilities as that of men and an equal right to freedom. To sum up in Gandhi’s words; “The wife is not the husband’s slave but his companion and his help-mate and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows as free as the husband to choose her own path”.

3.4 Gandhi’s Perspective on Role of Women for the Country

According to Gandhi, the role of women in the political, economic and social emancipation of the country is of foremost important. Gandhi had enormous faith in the capability of women to carry on a non violent campaign. Under his guidance and leadership, women shouldered critical responsibilities in India’s struggle for freedom. Women held public meetings, organized picketing of shops selling foreign alcohol and articles, sold khadi and actively participated in National Movements. They bravely faced the baton of the police and even went behind the bars. Gandhi’s urge to women to join India’s struggle for independence was instrumental in transforming the outlook of women.
Through their participation in Indian struggle for freedom, women of India broke down the shackles of oppression that had relegated them to a secondary position from time immemorial.

3.5 Gandhi’s Perspective on Women Self-reliance

Gandhi visualized a compassionate society, free from exploitation and in justice, built by both men and women. Gandhi, however, maintained that the spheres of work for woman and man were different. “Woman is passive, he is active. Woman is essentially mistress of the house. Man is the breadwinner. Woman is the keeper and dispenser of the bread. Woman is the custodian in every sense of the term”. Gandhi was of the firm opinion that if women have to work outside the home, they should do so without disturbing it. They can take up some work, which would supplement the income of the family and spinning, according to him, was perhaps the best work they could undertake. Spinning and weaving for women were “The first lesson in the school of industry”. The spinning wheel can be the “Widow’s loving companion”, of livelihood for the deprived family and a means to add the income of the family of —pie middle class and for the well-to-do women, it would be a means to relate their lives to those country’s poor women. Though women had no direct control over money-making matters, they were the managers of homes. Gandhi was swift to grasp this fact. So, to popularize the message of Swadeshi, a cardinal economic principle for him, he demanded the support of women. In his opinion, the Swadeshi promise cannot be kept without the help of women. “Men alone will be intelligent to do nothing in the matter. They have no control over the children that is the woman’s sphere. To look after children, to dress them, is the mother’s duty and, therefore, it is essential that women should be enthusiastic with the spirit of Swadeshi.
3.6 Gandhi’s Perspective on the Strength of the Women

According to Gandhi, woman as powerful, crucial, multi-task-oriented personalities are well appropriate for the competitive world of gigantic business. Women have been managing important portfolios, be it on the political scenario or economic development. In the present day the World is considering such examples in plenty. Progressively women are having the final say in the boardroom, they head corporations and women entrepreneurs have evolved a new style of leadership. Female has more nerve cells in certain areas, women reposition data faster due to larger corpus collusum, making it easier for increased flexibility and multi-tasking, ‘Gray matter’ — the part that allows thinking is 55.4% in women and 50.8% in men. This reveals that women are endowed with natural advantages that aid in creating, developing and fostering relationships. Not restricting herself to merely fostering relationships with her family, friends and society, a successful woman uses this proficiency to build and maintain a flourishing business enterprise. Woman translates her natural advantages into effective networking, excellent communication skills and empathetic behavior. Her mastery over multi-tasking influences her to initiate action with direction and integrate it with management and organizational skills. A successful woman entrepreneur has the attitude and the inner drive to change her dream, her vision into reality. Most successful women entrepreneurs possess the following traits: A successful woman entrepreneur is extremely ambitious, has an inner urge or drive to transform an idea into reality. According to Mahatma a woman provides cost-effective quality services to her clients. With minimized cost of operations, woman is able to drive her team to maximize profits and reap its benefits. Woman has the ability to work with all levels of people. Woman is keen on maintaining relationships and communicates clearly and effectively. This helps her to negotiate even sensitive issues easily. Woman is empathetic to people around her and possess good networking skills that help her to expand contacts and make use of opportunities. Cautious of not becoming a workaholic, a successful woman
entrepreneur is good at balancing diverse aspects of life. A successful woman entrepreneur is willing to share her success with the society. Woman is committed to help others and enjoys doing it. It is no wonder that millions of aspiring woman entrepreneurs admire ‘Oprah Winfrey’ for her entrepreneurial skills, business achievements and commitment to philanthropy. Though Gandhi gave the traditional role a new dynamism, he had undaunted faith in the chastity and transparency of woman. He was sure that the “Dazzling purity” of a woman could disarm even the most beastly of men. In his opinion, an ideal woman would rather give up her life than her purity. Construction of the woman in such terms seems to be at times too idealistic in contemporary times. Gandhi sympathizes with women but he does not want to disappointment them all the time, neither does he want them to be irresponsible, pleasure-loving beings. In Gandhi’s philosophy, the women of India found a new identity. His words and deeds have inspired thousands of women and will continue to do so, in their struggle against injustice and inequality. Gandhi viewed marriage as a sacrament imposing discipline on both the partners, not a license for physical union and emphasized spiritual union in marriage. He insisted on monogamous marriages and put forward a plea for inter communal marriages between caste Hindus and Harijans. He called prostitution “Moral Leprosy” and despised the fact that the beast in man has made the detestable crime a lucrative profession. He appealed to prostitutes to give up their “Unworthy Profession” and become “Sanyasinis” of India.

3.7 Gandhian perspective on Rural Women

Gandhi has contained service of women in the constructive programme, for though Satyagraha has mechanically brought India’s women out from their obscurity, as nothing else could have in such an unbelievably short space of time. Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which woman had no hand. In a plan of life
based on non-violence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his. According to Prof. Madhukishwar, “Gandhi’s terminology, in its exaggerated idealization of women as “Sisters of mercy and Mothers of entire humanity” reveals the bias of a benevolent patriarch”. There is something in his ideas that is essentially radical. He did not see women as helpless objects of reform. Gandhi connected the moral with the political, the social and the economic, presenting an eclectic view of life. For him the means had to be identified with the ends; similarly, he did not differentiate between the private and the public world of women. He also enhanced the dignity of woman’s housework, advising his men followers to take to spinning and to do ordinary works in everyday life. He himself imbibed so many of a woman’s qualities that he became ‘mother’ to many. Gandhi saw that the low status of women was the result of prejudices arid adverse traditions, which were centuries old. It was difficult to get women interested in the larger problems of life and society because they knew nothing of them, having never been allowed to breathe the fresh air of freedom. The only factor that would enable women to come out of this situation was the determination and strength of the women themselves. Though men should help in the cause of women, ultimately women will have to determine their destinies.

3.8 Gandhian Perspective on Women Education

According to Gandhi, education for women was the need of the moment that would ensure their moral development and make them capable of occupying the same platform as that of men. Life sketches and memories of women freedom-fighters give us glimpses of their crusade against injustice and inequality. Consider women as specific target group for all developmental programmes. Better educational facilities and schemes should be extended to women folk from government part. Adequate training Programme on management skills to be provided to women community. Training in
entrepreneurial attitudes should start at the high school level through well-designed courses which build confidence through behavioral games. He was not the first to address woman’s education in India; the great cultural renaissance, had already reached a high peak in the past. Smt. Gargi, Smt. Mitreye etc are the Vedic experts in the Vedic period. Woman to him was neither man’s plaything, nor his competitor, struggling to be like him. Therefore,” he argues that education will help to rethink better”. Ultimately, woman will have to determine with authority what woman needs. He argues that, fundamentally men and women are one; their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot be in this world without the other’s energetic assistance.

3.9  Gandhi’s Views & Work for the Revival of Village Industries

Gandhi’s idea in a nutshell, we should restrict our purchases to the articles which villages manufacture. Foreigner’s manufactures may be crude. We must try to induce them to improve their workmanship and not dismiss them because foreign articles or even articles produced in cities that is, big factories, are superior. In other words, we should evoke the artistic talent of the villager. We need not be frightened by the thought whether we shall ever succeed in such an effort. Within our own times we can recall instances where we have not been baffled by the difficulty of our tasks when we have known that they were essential for the nation’s progress. If, therefore, we as individuals believe that revivification of India’s villages is a necessity of our existence, if we believe that thereby only can we root out untouchability and feel one with all, no matter to what community or religion they may belong, we must mentally go back to the villages and treat them as our pattern, instead of putting the city life before them for imitation. If this is the correct attitude, then, naturally, we begin with ourselves and thus use, say, handmade paper instead of
mill-made, use village reed wherever possible, instead of the fountain pen or the
penholder, ink made in the villages instead of the big factories, etc. There is
hardly anything of daily use in the home which the villagers have not made
before and cannot make even now\textsuperscript{18}. If we perform the mental trick and fix our
gaze upon them, we immediately put millions of rupees into the pockets of the
villagers whereas at the present moment we are exploiting the villagers without
making any return worth the name.

3.10 Village Swaraj

Gandhi advocates “My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete
republic, independent of its neighbors for its wants and yet interdependent for
many others in which dependence is a necessity”. Thus every village’s first
concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth (spinning
and tailoring). It should have a reserve for its cattle (milk production piggery,
poultry forming and the like), recreation and playground for adults and
children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops,
thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a
village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring
clean supply. This can be done through controlled wells and tanks\textsuperscript{19}. Education
will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity
will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we
have today with their graded untouchability\textsuperscript{18}. Non-violence with its technique
of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village
community. There will be an obligatory service of village guards who will be
preferred by rotation from the register maintained by the village. Any village
can become such a republic today without much interference, even from the
present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the
exaction of the village revenue. My purpose is to present an outline of village
government. Here is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The
individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. The individual and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that the individual will suffer death in the defense of his and his village’s honor.

3.11 Gandhi on Khadi and Village Industry

If Indian civilization is to make its full contribution to the building up of a stable world order, it is this vast mass of humanity that has to be made to live again. We have to tackle the triple malady which holds our villages fast in its grip: (i) want of corporate sanitation; (ii) deficient diet; (iii) inactivity. Villagers are not interested in their own welfare. They don’t appreciate modern sanitary methods. They don’t want to exert themselves beyond scratching their farms or doing such labour as they are used to. These difficulties are real and serious. But they must not confuse us. We must have an unquenchable faith in our mission. We must be patient with the people. We are ourselves novices in village work. We have to deal with a chronic disease. Patience and perseverance, if we have them, we can overcome mountains of difficulties. We are like nurses who may not leave their patients because they are reported to have not curable disease. Villages have suffered long from neglect by those who have had the benefit of education. They have chosen the city life. The village movement is an attempt to establish healthy contact with the villages by inducing those who are fired with the spirit of service to settle in them and find self-expression in the service of villagers.

3.12 Gandhian Thoughts and Present Rural India – Artisans

This aims to provide financial assistance to 200 of the ‘A plus’ and ‘A’ category Khadi institutions of which 50 institutions would be those which are managed exclusively by beneficiaries belonging to Scheduled Castes.
(SCs)/Scheduled Tribes (STs) in a Public Private partnership mode. It will enable replacement of old/obsolete charkhas and looms with new charkhas/looms so as to realize increased value addition for Khadi products, muslin Khadi, setting up common facility centers, need based dyeing and printing facilities besides ensuring better wages to artisans along with skill up gradation. The Scheme has been approved in July 2008.

**3.13 Khadi Reform Development Package**

The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance is arranging external financial aid from ‘Asian Development Bank’ amounting to US $150 million over a period of three years for implementing the comprehensive ‘Khadi Reform Programme’ worked out in consultation with ADB and KVIC. It is predictable that first share of US $20 million would be received during the year 2008-09. The proposed Khadi Reforms Programme (KRP) involves the following specific interventions/measures: It will be initiated in 300 selected Khadi institutions willing to undertake the recognized reforms. These institutions will not be entitled to any financial assistance under the Schemes of KVIC, such as ‘Enhancing of Productivity and ‘Competitiveness of Khadi Industry and Artisans’, ‘Product Development’, ‘Design Intervention and Packaging (PRODIP) scheme’, ‘Rural Industries Service Centre (RISC) scheme’ and the like. These 300 institutions will be selected keeping the needs of regional balance, women empowerment, geographical spread and inclusion of unenthusiastic areas. Institutional reforms contain, inter alia, providing 50% representation in the ‘Management’ to Khadi spinners/weavers so that surpluses expected to be generated from the reforms percolate to the women folk. These 300 institutions will subject their accounts to comprehensive audit before becoming eligible for assistance. Performance benchmarks will be separately prescribed. KVIC will develop and register ‘Khadi Mark’ which will be licensed to producers/marketers under a licensing arrangement in support of the
genuineness of Khadi\textsuperscript{23}. Khadi products will be freed from the cost chart regime and market forces will determine the sale price which is expected to generate increased realizations for ‘niche’ products like Muslin, silk Khadi and so on.

Package for Developing Infrastructure of Khadi Institutions Including Nursing Fund for pathetic Institutions is the renamed Scheme i.e., “Strengthening of infrastructure of existing weak Khadi institutions and assistance for marketing infrastructure” is being introduced by the Ministry shortly envisaging renovation of selected 30 Khadi sales outlets and providing assistance for strengthening of infrastructure or existing 100 weak selected institutions. A token provision of Rs.1.00 crore has been kept in the Business Entrepreneurs 2008-09 of which Rs.0.10 crore has been earmarked for NER.

Khadi is a controversial subject. Here Gandhiji wanted to show what every Congressman and for that matter every Indian, can do to advance the cause of Khadi. It connotes the beginning of economic freedom arid equality of all in the country. “The proof of the pudding is in the eating”. Let everyone try and he or woman will find out for herself the truth of what I am saying. Khadi must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale Swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the needs of life in India through the labour and intellect of the villagers.

### 3.14 Industrialized in the Modern Sense

India does not need to be industrialized in the contemporary sense of the term. It has 7,50,000 villages scattered over the vast area 1,900 miles long 1,500 broad. The people are rooted to the soil and the vast majorities are living a hand to mouth life. Whatever may be said to the contrary, having traveled throughout the length and breadth of the land with the eyes open and having mixed with millions are living in enforced idleness for the last four month in a year. Agriculture does not need revolutionary changes. The Indians peasant requires a supplementary industry. The most natural is the introduction of the
spinning wheel not the handloom the latter cannot be included introduced in every home whereas the farmer can and it used to be so even a century ago. It was driven out not by economic pressure but by force deliberately used as can be proved from authentic records. The restoration therefore of the spinning wheel solves the economic problem of India at a stroke.

3.15 Samagra Gramaseva

A Samagra Gramaseva must know everybody living in the village and render them such service as he can. That does not mean that the worker will be able to do everything single-handed. He will show them the way of helping themselves and procure for them such help and materials as they require. He will train up his own helpers. He will so win over the women folk that they will seek and follow his advice. Supposing I go and settle down in a village with a Ghani (village oil press) 17, I won’t be an ordinary Ghanchi (oil pusher, who runs an oil mill is a Ghanchi,) earning 15-20 rupees a month. I will be a Mahatma Ghanchi woman folk. I have used the word ‘Mahatma ‘ in fun but what I mean to say is that as a Ghanchi I will become a model for the women folk to follow. Woman will be Ghanchi women folk who know the Gita and the Quran. I will be learned enough to teach their children. I may not be able to do so for lack of time. The villagers will come to me and ask me: “Please make preparations for our children’s education”. I will tell them: “I can find you a teacher but you will have to bear the expenses”. They will be prepared to do so most willingly. I will teach them spinning and when they come and ask me for the services of a weaver, I will find them a weaver on the same terms as I found them a teacher. The weaver will teach them how to weave their own cloth. I will indoctrinate in them the importance of hygiene and cleanliness and when they come and ask me for a sweeper, I will tell them: “I will be your sweeper and I will train you all in the job”. This is my conception of women folk Samagra Gramaseva. You may tell me that I will never find a Ghanchi of this
description in this age. Then I will say that we cannot hope to improve our
villages in this age. He has money but his strength does not lie in his currency.
Real strength lies in knowledge. True knowledge gives an ethical standing and
moral potency. Everyone seeks the advice of such a woman.

3.16 Gandhi’s Perspective on Political Emancipation

Gandhi revolutionized not only Indian politics but also the whole
perception of life for women. In his words, “My contribution to the great
problem (of woman’s role in society) lies in my presenting for acceptance of
truth and ahimsa in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations I have
hugged the hope that in this, woman will be the unquestioned leader and,
having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority
complex. Woman’s entry into national politics through non-violent methods
brought incredible results. On the one hand, women became aware of their
interior strength and on the other, the process brought human and moral
rudiments into politics. Gandhi had fabulous faith in woman’s inherent
competence for non-violence. His experience of participation by women in
politics from his days in South Africa till the end of his life bears testimony to
the fact that they never failed his expectations\textsuperscript{26}. With Gandhi’s inspiration,
they took the struggle right into their homes and raised it to a moral level.
Women organized public meetings, advertised Khadi and prescribed literature.

Gandhi could observe woman as connected with service and not with
power. When a woman wrote to him in 1946 about the political scene and the
paucity of women in it, he wrote: “So long as considerations of caste and
community continue to weigh with us and rule our choice, women will be well-
advised to remain aloof and thereby build up their prestige. Women workers
should enroll women as voters, impart or have imparted to them practical
education, teach them to think independently, release them from the chains of
caste that bind them so as to bring about a change in them which will compel
men to realize woman’s strength and capacity for sacrifice and give her places of honor. His advice to women was to teach people in villages simple lessons of hygiene and sanitation. Seeking power would be, for them, “Reversion of Barbarity”\textsuperscript{27}. Gandhi believed that, “Women must have votes and an equal status. The problem does not end there. It only commences at the point where women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation”.

3.17 Gandhi’s Perspective on Economic Equality

In connection with ‘Economic Liberation’, Gandhi felt that men and women had different vicinity of work. In his opinion, women could take to economic activities to supplement the income of her families like spinning, which he believed to be a good option accessible to the women. In the social realm, Gandhi envisaged a critical role for women in doing away with the forces of communalism, caste system and untouchability. It can be said without an iota of doubt that Mahatma Gandhi was indeed one of the greatest advocates of woman’s liberty and all throughout his life toiled relentlessly to improve the status of women in his country. His faith in their gigantic capabilities found expression in his decisions to bestow leadership to them in various nationalistic endeavors\textsuperscript{9}. Working for economic equality is abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the leveling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation’s wealth on the one hand and the leveling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so-long as the wide gulf between the rich and the ravenous millions persist\textsuperscript{28}. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor 107aboring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the good.
3.18 Gandhi’s Perspective on Ideal Models

Gandhi often presented ideals before women, taken from Indian traditions, mythology and history. He often talked about Sita, Damayanti and Mirabai as great women. There is nothing new for a social reformer drawing stimulation from the tradition. What is new here is the fact that this innovate explanation of these characters gives a glimpse of the dynamic constituent in his thinking. He did not accept the negative elements of the Hindu tradition. He visualized the Indian women as new Sita, savitri and Damayanti, “pure, firm and self-controlled”. For Gandhi, Sita was not a weak and dependent creature but a strong woman conveying the message of Swadeshi, who only wore “Cloth Made in India” and thus kept her heart and body pure. Moreover, woman should confront the might of Ravana by sheer moral audacity and woman would not waste “A Single Moment” on pleasing Rama by ‘Physical Magnetism’. Implying thereby that a woman could assert herself in doing what woman considered right even if the husband thought otherwise. He saw Mirabai, as a symbol of courage that followed her chosen path by disregarding the social norms of the time. It is interesting to note that Gandhi does not advise a woman to be an ideal wife or ideal mother. Deviating from the traditional framework, he advises women to be sisters. Pointing out the greatness of a sister over a wife, he maintained that a sister is to the entire world, while a wife hands herself over to one man. Moreover, it is possible to become the world’s sister only by making Brahmacharya “A Natural Condition” and being “Fired by the Spirit of Service”\(^\text{29}\). Women have the potential to do immense service to the unfortunate, by doing this they can be “Sisters of Mercy”.

3.19 Gandhi’s Perspective on Workers

A true life lived amongst the people is in itself an object lesson that must produce its own effect upon immediate surroundings. The difficulty with the young is, perhaps that he has gone to the village merely to earn a living without
the spirit of service behind it. I admit that village life does not offer attractions to those who go there in search of money. Without the incentive of service village life would jar after the novelty has worn out. No young man having gone to a village may abandon the pursuit on the smallest amount contact with difficulty. Patient effort will show that villagers are not very different from city-dwellers and that they will respond to kindness and attention. It is no doubt true that one does not have in the villages the opportunity of contact with the great ones of the land. With the growth of village mentality the leaders will find it necessary to tour in the villages and establish a living touch with them\textsuperscript{30}.

3.20 Gandhi’s Perspective on Arts And Crafts

The villagers should build up such a high degree of skill that articles prepared by them should command a ready market outside. In other modern word “Indianisation in Globalization’. When our villages are fully developed, there will be no shortage in them of men and women with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In shout, there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the villages. Today the villages are dung heaps. Tomorrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden where highly intelligent folk whom no one can deceive or exploit inhabit\textsuperscript{30}. The reconstruction of the villages along these lines should set in motion right now. The reconstruction of the villages should not be prearranged on an impermanent but permanent basis.

3.21 Gandhi’s Perspective on Economic Reorganization

Gandhiji says, in my writing ‘Cent Percent Swedish,’ I have shown how some aspects of it can be tackled immediately with benefit to the starving millions both economically and hygienically. Human greed, which takes no account of the health or the wealth of the people who come under its heels, is responsible for the hideous rice-mills one sees in all the rice-producing tracts. If
public opinion was strong, it will make rice-mills impossibility by simply insisting on unpolished rice and appealing to the owner of rice-mills to stop a traffic that undermines the physical condition of entire inhabitants and robs the underprivileged of an honest means of livelihood.

3.22 Gandhi’s Perspective on Non-Violent Economy

You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization but it can be built on self-contained villages. Rural economy as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have, therefore, to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning wheel. We have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as her and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination. Today the cities dominate and drain the villages so that they are crumbling to ruin. My Khadi mentality tells me that cities must sub serve villages when that domination goes. Exploiting of villagers is itself organized violence\(^\text{31}\).

3.23 Gandhi’s Perspective on Food Reform

Since the economic reorganization of the villages has been commenced with food reform, it is necessary to find out the simplest and cheapest foods that would enable the villagers to regain the lost health. The addition of green leaves to their meals will enable the villagers to avoid many diseases from which they are now suffering. The villagers’ food is deficient in vitamins; many of them can be supplied by fresh green leaves. An eminent doctor told me a proper use of green leaves is calculated to transfigure the customary notions of food and much of what was today being supplied by mild may be supplied by green leaves.
3.24 Gandhi’s Perspective on Power Machinery

If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools, with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power-houses just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do. I regard the existence of power wheels for the grinding of corn in thousands of villages as the limit of our helplessness. I suppose India does not produce all the engines or grinding machines. The planting of such machinery and engines on a large scale in villages is also a sign of greed. Every such machinery puts thousands of hand-Chakkis out of work and takes away employment from thousand of housewives and artisans who make these Chakkis. Moreover, the process is infective and will spread to every village industry. The decay of the latter spells too the decay of art. If it meant replacement of old crafts by new ones (screen printing), one might not have much to say against it.

3.25 Gandhi’s Perspective on Large-Scale Production

Today Indian mills cannot spin enough for our wants and if they did, they will not keep down prices unless they were compelled. They are frankly money-makers and will not therefore regulate prices according to the needs of the nation. Hand-spinning is therefore designed to the put millions of rupees in the hands of poor villagers. Every agricultural country requires a supplementary industry to enable the peasants to utilize the spare hours. Such industry for India has always been spinning. Is it such a visionary ideal- an attempt to revive an ancient occupation whose destruction has brought on slavery, pauperism and disappearance of the inimitable artistic talents which was once all expressed in the wonderful fabric of India. We want to organize our national power not by adopting the best methods of production only but by the best method of both the production and distribution. What India needs is not the concentration of capital
in a few hands but its distribution so as to be within easy reach of the 71/2 lakhs of villages that make this continent 1900 miles long and 1500 miles broad. Multiplication of mills cannot solve the problem. They can only cause concentration of money and labour and thus make confusion worse confounded. India should wear no machine-made clothing whether it comes out of European mills or Indian mills (written in 1909).

Gandhiji says ‘I want the mill industry to prosper only. I do not want it to prosper at the expense of the country. The great mill industry may be claimed to be Indian industry. In spite of its ability to compete with Japan and Lancashire, it is an industry that exploits the masses and deepens their poverty in exact proportion to its success over Khadi’. In the modern craze for wholesale industrialization, my presentation has been questioned, if not brushed aside. It has been contended that the growing poverty of the masses, due to the progress of industrialization, is inevitable and should therefore be suffered. The difficulty lies in weaning the nation from the use of mill cloth. My purpose in this note was to give my definition of Indian industry in terms of the millions of villagers and my reason for that definition.

3.26 Gandhi’s Perspective on the Principle of Planning for India

Gandhiji mentioned the Government plan. He heartily endorsed the proposition that any plan which exploited the raw materials of a country and neglected the potentially more powerful man-power was lop-sided and could never tend to establish human equality. America was the most industrialized country in the world and yet it had not banished poverty and degradation. That was because it neglected the universal man-power and concentrated power in the hands of the few who amassed fortunes at the expense of the many. The result was that its industrialization had become a menace to its own poor and to the rest of the world. If India was to escape such disaster, it had to imitate what was best in America and the other Western countries and leave aside its
attractive looking but destructive economic policies. Therefore, real planning consisted in the best utilization of the whole man-power of India.

3.27 Gandhi’s Perspective on Decentralization and Non-violence

I suggest that, if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralize many things. Centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Simple homes from which there is nothing to take away require no policing; the palaces of the rich must have strong guards to protect them against dacoits. So must huge factories. Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, will equipped with military, naval and air forces. Remember also that your non-violence cannot operate effectively unless you have faith in the spinning wheel. I would ask you to read Hind Swaraj with my eyes and see therein the chapter on how to make India non-violent. You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization but it can be built on self-contained villages. Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate even hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process. You have, therefore, to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning wheel. The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. This end can be achieved under decentralization.

3.28 Gandhi’s Perspective on Co-operation

Replying to a question, Gandhiji said that he had no disbelief that the system of co-operation was far more essential for the agriculturists than for the mat-weavers. The land, as he maintained, belonged to the State; therefore, it yielded the largest return when it was worked co-operatively. Let it be remembered that co-operation should be based on strict non-violence. There was no such thing as success of violent co-operation. Hitler was a forcible
example of the latter. He also talked vainly of co-operation which was forced upon the people and everyone knew where Germany had been led as a result. Gandhiji concluded by saying that it would be a sad thing if India also tried to build up the new society based upon co-operation by means of violence. Only when the change was effected through the persuasive power of non-violent non-co-operation, i.e. love, could the foundation of individuality be preserved and real, abiding progress be assured for the world. His notion of co-operation was that the land would be held in co-operation by the owners and tilled and cultivated also in co-operation. This would cause a saving of labour, capital, tools etc. The owners would work in co-operation and own capital, tools, animals, seeds etc. in co-operation. Co-operative farming of his conception would change the face of the land and expel poverty and idleness from their midst. All this was only possible if people became friends of one another and as one family. When that happy event took place there would be no ugly painful in the form of a communal problem.

3.29 Communal Unity

Everybody is agreed about the necessity of this unity. But everybody does not know that unity does not mean political unity which may be imposed.\textsuperscript{30} It means an unbreakable heart unity. The first thing essential for achieving such unity is for every Congressman, whatever his religion may be, to represent, in his own person Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Jew, etc., shortly, every Hindu and non-Hindu, he has to feel his identity with every one of the millions of the inhabitants of Hindustan. In order to realize this, every Congressman will cultivate personal friendship with persons representing faiths other than his own. He should have the same regard for the other faiths as he has for his own. There would be no disgraceful cry at the stations such as “Hindu water” and “Muslim water” or “Hindu tea” and “Muslim tea”. There would be no separate rooms or pots for Hindus and non-Hindus in schools and colleges, no communal schools, colleges and hospitals.
3.30 Gandhi’s Perspective on Other Village Industries

This stand on a different footing from Khadi: There is not much scope for voluntary labour in them. Each industry will take the labour of only a certain number of hands. These industries come in as a hand-maid to Khadi. They cannot exist without Khadi and Khadi will be robbed of its dignity without them. Village economy cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as Hand-Grinding, Hand-Pounding, Soap-Making, Paper-Making and Mat-Making, Tanning and Oil-Pressing, etc. If they are villagers or will settle down in villages, they will give these industries a new life and a new dress. All should make it a point of honor to use only village articles whenever and wherever available. Based on the demand there is no doubt that, most of our wants can be supplied from our villages. When we have become village-minded, we will not want replication of the West or machine-made products but we will develop a true national taste in keeping with the hallucination of an innovative India in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unidentified.

3.31 Gandhi’s Perspective on Village Sanitation

Divorce between intelligence and labour has resulted in criminal negligence of the villages. Often one would like to shut one’s eyes and stuff one’s nose; such is the surrounding dirt and offending smell. If the majority of Congressmen were derived from our villages, as they should be, they should be able to make our villages models of cleanliness in every sense of the word. They have never considered it their duty to identify themselves with the villagers in their daily lives. A sense of national or social sanitation is not a virtue among us. We may take a kind of a bath but we do not mind dirtying the well or the tank or the river by whose side or in which we perform ablutions. I regard this defect as a great vice which is responsible for the disgraceful state of our villages and the sacred banks of the sacred rivers and for the diseases that spring from insanitation.
3.32 Gandhi’s Perspective on New or Basic Education

This is a new subject. But the members of the Working Committee felt so much interested in it that they gave a charter to the organizers of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh which has been functioning since the Hari pura session. This is a big field of work for many Congressmen. This education is meant to transform village children into model villagers. It is principally designed for them. The inspiration for it has come from the villages. Congressmen who want to build up the structure of Swaraj from its very foundation dare not neglect the children. Foreign rule has unconsciously, though none the less surely, begun with the children in the field of education. Primary education is a farce designed without regard to the wants of the India of the villages and for that even of the cities. Basic education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. It develops both the body and the mind and keeps the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future in the realization of which he or woman begins to take his or her share from the very commencement of his or her career in school.

3.33 Gandhi’s Perspective on Adult Education

People have been satisfied with teaching illiterates to read and write. If I had charge of adult education, I should begin with opening the minds of the adult pupils to the greatness and vastness of their country. Hindustan is for him a geographical term. We have no notion of the ignorance prevailing in the villages. The villagers know nothing of foreign rule and its evils. What little knowledge they have picked up fills them with the awe the foreigner inspires. The result is the dread and hatred of the foreigner and his rule. They do not know how to get rid of it. They do not know that the foreigner’s presence is due to their own weaknesses and their ignorance of the power they possess to rid them of the foreign rule. My adult education means, therefore, first, true
political education of the adult by word of mouth. Seeing that this will be mapped out, it can be given without fear. I imagine that it is too late in the day for authority to interfere with this type of education; but if there is interference, there must be a fight for this elementary right without which there can be no Swaraj. Of course, in all I have written, openness has been assumed. Non-violence abhors fear and, therefore, secrecy. Side by side with the education by the mouth will be the literary education.

3.34 Gandhi’s Perspective on Education in Health and Hygiene

Having given a place to village sanitation, the question may be asked why give a separate place to education in health and hygiene? It might have been bracketed with sanitation but I did not wish to interfere with the items. Mention of mere sanitation is not enough to contain health and hygiene. The art of keeping one’s health and the knowledge of hygiene is by itself a separate subject of study and corresponding practice. In a well-ordered society the citizens know and observe the laws of health and hygiene. It is established beyond doubt that ignorance and neglect of the laws of health and hygiene are responsible for the majority of diseases to which mankind is heir. The very high death rate among us is no doubt due largely to our gnawing poverty but it could be mitigated if the people were properly educated about health and hygiene. A healthy mind in a healthy body is self-evident truth. Mens Sana in Corpore Sana is perhaps the first law for humanity. There is an inevitable connection between mind and body. If we were in possession of healthy minds, we would shed all violence and, naturally obeying the laws of health, we would have healthy bodies without an effort. I hope, therefore that no Congressman will disregard this item of the constructive programme. The fundamental laws of health and hygiene are simple and easily learnt. The difficulty is about their observance. Here are some: 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.

3.35 Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)

Small and Medium Enterprises has launched a new credit linked subsidy programme called Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme for women folk (PMEGP) on 61st anniversary of Indian Independence by merging the two schemes that were in operation till 31.03.2008 namely Prime Minister’s Rojgar Yojana 15(PMRY) and Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP) for generation of employment opportunities through establishment of micro enterprises in rural as well as urban areas. PMEGP will be a central sector scheme to be administered by the Ministry of MSME. The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Agro and Rural Industries (ARI) sector has been involved in integrating policy formulation and co-coordinating implementation programmes, schemes, etc. in a focused manner, for the development of agro and rural industries based on local raw materials and skills, for creating more employment opportunities essentially in the rural non-farm sector. The Ministry operates mainly in the Khadi and Village Industries and Coir Sectors through the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) and the Coir Board (CB) respectively and coordinates the implementation of various schemes launched by the Government in the Sector including the latest employment generation programme,
3.36 National Awards

National awards are the incentives and encouragement to motivate the women entrepreneurs in India. The Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh presented National Awards to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in New Delhi on 30 August, 2008. The Awards were in three categories: a) Outstanding Entrepreneurs of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Khadi and Village Industries and Coir Industries; b) Special awards to Women and SC/ST Entrepreneurs and c) Banks for excellence in Micro and Small Enterprises Lending. Total 80 Entrepreneurs got awards in various categories. 27 including ten women entrepreneurs received awards from the Prime Minister, while Shri Mahabir Prasad Union Minister for Micro, Small and medium Enterprises presented awards to the rest of the awardees. Besides, 50 entrepreneurs have been given away Special Recognition Awards in a State Level Function. PMEGP improves upon the subsidy levels and cost limits of projects compared to those available so far under PMRY and ensures that the attractiveness of REGP is not diluted in any way while simultaneously strengthening the selection process, implementation and monitoring mechanism.

3.37 Providing Urban Facilities in the Rural Area (PURA)

Influenced by the Gandhian philosophy, the farmer President of India, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam has told that “A developed India by 2020 or even earlier, is not a dream. It need not even be a mere vision in the minds of many Indians. It is a mission we can all take up – and succeed”. The President, Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, urges everyone to dream, he had coined the acronym PURA which is one of his own. PURA is a strip of habitation about 500 meters (half a kilometer) wide on either side of a ring road linking a loop of villages. Hence, every point in PURA will be within walking distance from open farms on one side and a modern road transport system on the other. Places of work will
normally be within walking distance. It will have broad uncrowned streets; gracious pathways. PURA will restore the joy of walking. In that case, virtually every village will be within five k.m. of one ring road or another. That many PURAs will offer so much dwelling space that no family need suffer from lack of shelter. Slums in cities and huts in villages will disappear. He also stressed for inclusive development of India, which contains socio-economic and cultural development of villages simultaneously. Hence he came up with the dream project of PURA. It differs from the conventional ideas of economic expansion of rural areas in many ways-a comprehensive and composite rural development, government investment at urban levels in rural programmes, reverse rural-urban movement, the prerequisite quality infrastructure, supportive modern industry and investment in social and commercial service and private enterprise initiative. “Providing connectivity to village complexes is an urgent need to bridge the urban-rural divide, generate employment and enhance rural prosperity. The integrated methods, which will bring prosperity to rural India is through ‘PURA’,” Kalam says. More than two-thirds of India’s population lives in rural areas. We need to give a new thrust to their all-round development through a mega mission for their empowerment. PURA envisages provision of physical, electronic and knowledge connectivity and economic connectivity to the rural clusters with a minimum mass leading to economic connectivity. The model should enable proper selection of village clusters and deployment of the youth in different areas of rural development to construct this programme a reality.

3.38 Conclusion

There are a few personalities in the world treated as ‘MAHATMAS’. ’Mahatma Gandhiji is one among them. His ideology is a universal truth. Sir M. Vishweshwarayya said that “Industrialize or perish” but Mahatma Gandhiji said “Gramaswarj or Perish” the Gramaswarj concept is again renamed as Pura
by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam the former President of India. Mahatma Gandhi’s Thesis was written on behalf of the Congress or the people of India but for those who believe in the concept of globalization. Gandhiji says that, whole globe is family who extend the love and affection and fraternity with humanity. It is the outcome of conversations he had with some co-workers in Sevagram, the people of Sevagram felt they want of something from my pen indicating the connection between constructive programme and Civil disobedience and how the former might be worked. It does not purport to be exhaustive but it is sufficiently indicative of the way the programme should be worked. Let not the reader make the mistake of laughing at any of my ideology as being part of the movement for Independence. Many people do many things, big and small, without connecting them with non-violence or Independence. It is a part of Sevagram and Gramaswaraj. Similarly, the charkha in the hands of a poor widow brings an insignificant piece to her. It is the office which gives the charkha its dignity. It is the office assigned to the constructive programme which gives it an irresistible prestige and power to her as well as the humanity.

References


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CHAPTER – 4

POLICY FRAMEWORK SUPPORTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA