CHAPTER – 3
GANDHI’S VIEWS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

On return from South Africa, Gandhi entered the political scene in India in 1915. Gopal Krishan Gokhale, his political guru, advised him to maintain complete silence and undertake a tour of the whole of India to get the feel of the economic, political and social conditions obtaining in the rural area, as well as to feel the pulse of the nation. Gandhi agreed. He toured extensively. During his visits to various places, Gandhi came across abject poverty, deprivation, hunger, disease and caste- ridden denominations of society. He immediately came to the conclusion that Swaraj had no meaning to the poor and unemployed people; no Swaraj could be achieved without emancipation of those teeming millions, who were poor, both politically and economically. It is in this situation that he developed his idea of Gram – Swaraj, i.e. development of Indian nation through rural development.

Gandhi’s various views on all aspects of human life cannot be segregated or classified into rural, economic, social, political, religious, moral etc. because he has taken the whole human life as a unit and his approach is holistic and integrated. Gandhi expressed his views in a simple language and straightforward or direct manner. He did not believe in intellectual jargons; he also did not delve into intricate complexities of life. He was a man of action, right from his birth. He experimented and learned. He believed in action with conviction and execution of his ideas or views. He was a simple soul and explained the complexities of life in simple way. For Gandhi, life was one entity. His thought in one sphere covers other spheres of life too. After having seen practically the whole of India, to him, poverty and village were synonymous with India. It so happened that if he delivered a speech on education or explained the concept of Khadi or Swadeshi or preached
Trusteeship or emphasized Bread Labour, talked about Sanitation, Untouchability or Communal Tension, he never forgot to mention in the same speech his prime concern, i.e. village and the poor. He held firm view that village and the poor were the soul of India and there was no possibility of any development, whatsoever, unless these two are alleviated. These views of Gandhi represented his great concern and this concern made him an ardent advocate of rural development in all its manifestations. To Gandhi, Gram Swaraj was the key for attainment of an ideal social order, based on his eternal gospel of truth and non-violence.

Gandhi’s views on small village units, which will be self-reliant with social relationships amongst the villagers, were appreciated by the intellectuals of his time. Gandhi was aware that ancient Greek city states and village republics of India provided specimens of all round development of rich and puissant life. Nehru also held similar views. He said that the system of village self-government was the foundation of the Aryan Polity, and that it was this that gave it strength. His view was that so jealous were the village assemblies of their liberties that it was laid down that no soldier was to enter a village except with a royal permit. Nehru said, “Gradually, the Aryans evolved their village system in India. These villages were almost independent and were governed by the elected Panchayats. A number of villages or small towns were joined together under a raja or chief, who was sometimes elected and sometimes hereditary.”1

Regarding Gandhi’s views on Village Swaraj, the picture of Village Swaraj as conceived by Gandhi is not the resurrection of the old Village Panchayats but the fresh formation of independent village units of Swaraj in the context of the present day world. Village Swaraj is the practical embodiment of non-violence in the spheres of politics, economic, social. According to Gandhi, ideal society is a stateless democracy, the state of

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enlightened anarchy where social life has become so perfect that it is self-regulated. In the ideal state, there is no political power because there is no state. Gandhi believed that perfect realization of an ideal is impossible. However, he said, the ideal is like Euclid’s line that is one without breadth but no one has so far been able to draw it and never will. All the same, it is only by keeping the ideal line in mind that we have made progress in geometry. In the political field, Gandhi gave us village Swaraj nearing the conception of his ideal of stateless democracy. He considers that government is best which governs the least. According to the communist philosophy, the final phase is the withering away of the state. Gandhi said that in the totalitarian State of Russia, there is concentration of all power in the State. It is difficult, Gandhi said, to believe at any time that the State there will wither away. Gandhi was a practical idealist; he realized the practical usefulness of the ideal of stateless democracy, and presented village Swaraj, which is not the ‘withering away of the state’ but ‘scattering of the state’. Thus, village Swaraj is the ideal planning of village Swaraj of Gandhi’s conception. He says that village workers will organize the villages so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting, through agriculture and handicrafts, will educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene and will take all measures to prevent ill-health and disease among them and will organize the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of Nai Talims. 

Gandhi proposed to work from bottom upwards. He, therefore, says, “Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a Republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from

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without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. According to
Gandhi, as is the individual so is the universe. Village Swaraj will thus be the
mirror of the spirit of Swaraj, which individuals constituting it will manifest in
their daily life. Therefore, the village worker will have to focus his attention
first on the true education. That education should be a harmonious
development of three H’s – Head, Heart and Hand. Nai Talim is the fruit of
Gandhi’s Tapasya. Gandhi was an incarnation of the harmonious whole of the
three H’s. The spirit of non-violence permeates the entire scheme of Nai
Talim, which aims to make all round development of the child in body, mind
and spirit through handicraft. With the capital equipment of the true education
on Nai Talim lines, these citizens will be great assets in the construction of
Village Swaraj.

Village Swaraj is the fruit of life-long search by Gandhi who, having
identified his heart with the starving millions of India, has suggested this
Talisman as an infallible remedy for the ills of India, nay, of the whole world,
in whose history the peasantry has always been every where exploited and has
been on starvation level. In a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru dated 5-10-1945,
Gandhi wrote: “I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and
through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized
that the people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in
palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live in peace with each other in
towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both
violence and untruth. I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be
nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realize truth and non-violence
only in the simplicity of village life and this simplicity can best be found in the
Charkha and all that the Charkha Connotes. I must not fear if the world today is
going the wrong way. It may be, that India too will go that way and like the

3 The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 85 (Delhi: Publications
Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of
India), 1967, p. 79.
proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounden duty up to my last breath to try to protect India and through India the entire world from such a doom. The essence of what I have said is that man should rest content with what are his real needs and become self-sufficient. If he does not have this control, he cannot save himself. After all, the world is made up of individuals just as it is the drops that constitute the ocean. This is a well-known truth."  

On the meaning of Swaraj, Gandhi said, "The word Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which ‘independence’ often means". He further said, "By Swaraj I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native-born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having registered their names as voters. Real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority".  

Gandhi said, “My Swaraj is to keep intact the genius of our civilization. I want to write many new things but they must all be written on the Indian slate. I would gladly borrow from the west when I can return the amount with decent interest. Swaraj can be maintained, only where there is majority of loyal patriotic people to whom the good of the nation is paramount, above all other considerations whatever including their personal profit. Swaraj means government by the many. Where the many are immoral or selfish, their government can spell anarchy and nothing else."  

5 Young India, 19-3-1931, p. 38.
8 Ibid., 28-7-1921, p.238.
He further said, “The Swaraj of my dream recognizes no race or religious distinctions. Nor is it to be the monopoly of the lettered persons, nor yet of moneyed men. Swaraj is to be for all, including the farmer, but emphatically including the maimed, the blind, the starving toiling millions.”

He further said, “The Swaraj of my dream is the poor man’s Swaraj. The necessaries of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the moneyed men. But that does not mean that they should have palaces like theirs. They are not necessary for happiness. You or I would be lost in them. But you ought to get all the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys. I have not the slightest doubt that Swaraj is not Poorna Swaraj until these amenities are guaranteed to you under it”.

About ideal society, Gandhi said “A picture of a casteless and classless society, in which there are no vertical divisions but only horizontal; no high, no low; all service has equal status and carries equal wages; those who have more would use their advantage not for themselves but as a trust to serve others who have less; the motivating factor in the choice of vocations is not personal advancement but self-expression and self-realization through the service of society. It is fascinating world of cottage crafts, and intensive small-scale farming co-operatives, a world in which there is no room for communalism or caste. It is the world of Swadeshi in which the economic frontiers are drawn closer but the bounds of individual freedom are enlarged to the maximum limit; everybody is responsible for his immediate environment and all are responsible for society. Rights and duties are regulated by the principle of interdependence, and reciprocity; there is no conflict between the part and the whole; no danger of nationalism becoming narrow, selfish or

9 Ibid., 1-5-1930, p.149.
10 Ibid., 26-3-1931, pp.46-47.
aggressive or internationalism becoming an abstraction where the concrete is lost in a nebulous haze of vague generalities”.11

Gandhi also said, “There will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drinks or drugs. There will be the same respect for women as vouchsafed to men and the chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded. Where every woman except one’s wife, will be treated by men of all religions, as mother, sister or daughter according to her age. Where there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths. They will be all proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread labourers. I hope everyone who listens to me or reads these lines will forgive me if stretched on my bed and basking in the sun, inhaling life-giving sunshine, I allow myself to indulge in this ecstasy”.12

Gandhi said about the exploitation of villagers thus, “The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen – the city-dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Everyone must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one’s children and adequate medical relief”.13

He further said, “The half a dozen modern cities are an excrescence and serve at the present moment the evil purpose of draining the life blood of the villagers. The cities with their insolent torts are a constant menace to the life and liberty of the villagers”.14 He also said, “It is the city man who is responsible for war all over the world, never the villagers”.15 He further said, “I regard the growth of cities as an evil thing, unfortunate for mankind and the

12 Harijan, 18-1-1948, p. 526.
13 Ibid., 31-3-1946, p. 63.
14 Young India 17-3-1927, p.86
world, unfortunate for England and certainly unfortunate for India. The British
have exploited India through its cities. The latter have exploited the villages.
The blood of the villages is the cement with which the edifice of the cities is
built. I want the blood that is today inflating the arteries of the cities to run
once again in the blood vessels of the villages”.16

Gandhi called cities boils or abscesses on the body politic. When asked
as to what should be done with these boils, Gandhi said, “If you ask a doctor
he will tell you what to do with a boil. It has to be cured either by lancing or
by application of plasters and poultices. Edward Carpenter called civilization a
malady, which needed a cure. The growth of big cities is only a symptom of
that malady. Being a nature curist, I am naturally in favour of nature’s way of
cure by a general purification of the system. If the hearts of the city dwellers
remain rooted in the villages, if they become truly village-minded, all other
things will automatically follow and the boil will quickly heal”.17

Gandhi was emphatic about the development of rural India; he said
that India lived in villages and rural development, to him, was development of
villages (Village Swaraj). He considered the development of villages as
essential for removing poverty and providing all opportunities to build
capacity and increase income, and establishing self-reliant village economy
based on close-knit social relationships. About villages he said, “To serve our
villages is to establish Swaraj. Everything else is but an idle dream.”18 He
further said, “If the village perishes, India will perish too. It will be no more
India. Her own mission in the world will get lost”.19 “We have to make a
choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself 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

16 Harijan, 23-6-1946, p. 198.
18 Young India, 26-12-1929, p.420.
19 Harijan, 29-8-1936, p.226.
goes. Exploiting of villages is itself organized violence; we will have to give the villages their proper place”.

The ideal village, according to Gandhi, will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. He said, “My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals.” He further said, “The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. This end can be achieved under decentralization. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with a non-violent structure of society.”

On basic principles of Village Swaraj, Gandhi said, “The supreme consideration is man.” He further said in this connection, “The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. I use the adjective moral as synonymous with spiritual. This end can be achieved under decentralization. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with a non-violent structure of society.”

Gandhi further said, “According to me, the economic constitution of India and for that matter of that of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. That economics is untrue which ignores or disregards moral values.”

On planning, Gandhi said, “Any plan which exploited the raw materials of a country and neglected the potentially more powerful manpower was lop-sided and could never tend to establish human equality. Real planning consisted in the best utilization of the whole manpower of India.”

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22 Harijan, 18-1-1942, p.5.
23 Ibid.
24 Young India, 15-11-1928, p. 381.
26 Harijan, 23-3-1947, p. 79.
Considering the above statements of Gandhi, as well as his views and opinions on all aspects of human life, including village life and the poverty prevalent in villages, we can formulate our views with perfect compatibility with his approach of truth and non-violence. All economists, social workers and patriots agree with him that India lives in villages, and if we want to preserve the rich cultural heritage of India, we have to carefully and consciously plan for the uplift of the villages where two stark realities are staring at our face; these are unemployment and poverty. About half of the nearly seven lakh villages of the country are tucked in difficult terrains; it is difficult to reach them and they have characteristics of poor socio-economic condition. India's successive Five-Year Plans had pointed agenda and strategies to develop the rural areas. Special mention can be made of the sixth plan in which strategy was worked out and directed towards attacking poverty, realizing that the various benefits of the general development programmes had not reached the right quarters or target population and the poverty persisted among the masses.

Gandhi envisaged Gram Swaraj; his view was not only resurrection of the old village panchayat but also to develop independent villages as fully democratic units, self-reliant and cohesive. While developing his thought of creating ideal Gram Swaraj, he had the development of Indian nation in view through overall rural development. He devoted his energy for conceptualizing village life and suggesting strategies for rural development, immediately after his arrival from South Africa. Gandhi was not a politician in the professional sense; he had not made politics as a career. He, therefore, explained his ideas in a very simple way, without much of articulation. Gandhi was not an armchair thinker; he was practical man and his wisdom was born out of experiments with truth and non-violence. It is because of such practical wisdom that he could not think about a particular aspect of society in a compartmental way; his views concerning one aspect of human life necessarily related to other aspects of human life as well. Gandhi was
convinced that India could not develop without uplifting the villages and the poor. And both of these were inextricably inter-twined in agriculture, which was and continues to be a way of life. Gandhi, accordingly, looked at the whole life as a unit and, therefore, developed holistic and integrated approach. He was convinced that it would be possible to attain an ideal social order through Gram Swaraj on the basis of his eternal gospel of truth and non-violence. He had the conviction that man is not born to live in isolation; he is a social animal. While remaining independent, he cannot give up interdependence; it is a natural instinct in him to remain related to other human beings, even to animals and birds, rather to the entire environment. Lack of communication means death to this social animal called man. It is this conviction, which leads Gandhi to speak of the village community as a collection, which must continue to strive for a self-contained system. He is strong advocate of integrated rural development because, according to him, any one aspect taken up in isolation would not be sufficient and may even create new kinds of problems.

Gandhi’s model of economic development can be described as a model of social equilibrium. A society, which is too poor materially, must progress toward this ideal by attempting to improve its material conditions. Conversely, a society, which has superfluous wealth, must renounce some of it in order to attain that stage. This social equilibrium can be attained through individual and social reformation, through various physical, mental and social rules, and improvement in the material progress through cottage industry, spinning wheel (Charkha) and village improvement. Hence, for Gandhi, economic development is a complex web of moral, social and material relationships. Moral basis of this development lies in truth, non-violence, abstinence, non-possession, non-stealing, truthfulness, swadeshi, bread labour, toleration of faiths, vegetarianism, nature cure and simplicity of life. Social level means equality of women, removal of untouchability, prohibition, education, communal harmony, equilibrium between city and villages. Materially
speaking, development lies in increasing wealth through village and cottage industries, decentralization of economic production and redistribution of wealth between labour and capital trusteeship.27

To understand Gandhi’s economic model in perspective, it is imperative to study in details the following ideas of Gandhi, namely Swadeshi (home made things), Bread labour. Non-possession (Aparigraha), Trusteeship, Non-exploitation, Decentralization, Austerity and Equality.28

Gandhi’s concept of “Swadeshi” was related to the development of individual and society. Poor individual’s need is fulfilled by utilizing own resources. It is also based on Gandhi’s concept of limited wants, as he believed that economic progress should satisfy the needs of every one and not their greed. Socially speaking, it has the capacity to utilize the local surroundings and resources to meet the needs of all the people. It is also based on the harmonious and non-violent relations between each unit of nature and hence creating an economy of permanence.

In the words of Gandhi, “My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital want, 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. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation, and playground for adults and children 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. The law of non-violence rules him (individual) and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village’s honour. To model such a village may be the work of a lifetime. Any lover of true democracy and

28 Sethi, J.D., Gandhism Betrayed, Indian Express, (Oct 6, 1982).
village life can take up a village, treat it as his world and sole work, and he will find good result”.  

Gandhi stated further, “Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surrounding to the exclusion of the more remote. If we follow the swadeshi doctrine, it would be your duty and mine to find out neighbours who can supply our wants and teach them to supply them where they do not know how to proceed, assuming that there are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages as are not locally producible once they are convinced that their religions demand that they should wear garments manufactured in India only and eat food only grown in India, decline to wear any other clothing or eat any other food. A true votary of swadeshi will not harbour ill will towards a foreigner and not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on the earth. Swedeshi is not a cult of hatred. It is doctrine of selfless service that has its root in his Ahimsa, i.e., love”.  

Like Dadabhai Naoroji, Karl Marx and R.C. Dutt, Gandhi was also perfectly in agreement with the social reformers and patriots that poverty in India, especially among the masses in the rural areas, was a legacy of the British Raj; this poverty was the principal cause why rural India was underdeveloped. Gandhi pleaded guilty during his historic trial of 1922; he stated during the trial, “I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. Before the British advent, India spun and wove in her millions of cottages just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre

29 Harijan, 26-7-1942, p. 238.
agricultural resources.” He further said with regard to cottage industries that, these cottage industries, which were so vital for India’s existence, had been ruined by the British in the most incredibly heartless manner and through inhuman processes; these conditions have been described by the English witnesses. The town-dwellers knew little how the semi-starved masses of India were slowly sinking to lifelessness due to the positive harm and absence of sympathy from the British. The poor knew very little that their miserable comfort represented brokerage they got for the work they did for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage were sucked from the masses. Also, they realized little that the government established by law in British India was carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No amount of sophistry and no skill of jugglery in manipulating figures could explain away the macabre evidence that the skeletons in many villages presented to the naked eye. Gandhi was convinced of the facts and spoke his heart out, “I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity is perhaps unequalled in history.”

Gandhi was in no way an advocate of the glorification or otherwise of poverty; he favoured the leveling of the society. J.D. Sethi has reproduced the views of Gandhi on poverty thus: “Economic poverty is moral collapse of the affluent. Affluence co-existing with poverty is an absolute theft.”

Gandhi was against large scale and heavy industry, as it will create centralization of resources and exploitative conditions for workers. He was in favour of small scale, labour intensive, rural and self-sufficient industries. He propounded the theory of bread labour, which implied that much amount of physical labour, which is required from each person to produce the necessities of life. That much time must be spent by everybody in physical labour. This

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32 Young India, 10-6-1926, p.214.
34 Sethi, J.D., Gandhi on Poverty and Employment (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation), August 1986, p. 263.
will increase dignity of labour and will also not create social disharmony. His views are summarized as under:

(i) Gandhi believed that material development beyond a given minimum was in conflict with natural progress. In other words, he favoured material development so long as it was morally justified and to that extent it helped to remove poverty.

(ii) Economic equality is the economic aim of Gandhian non-violent social change. The trusteeship is the answer to it. In this way, the rich man is not dispossessed of his surplus wealth, but he is required to raise this wealth in the broader interest of the community and not in his personal interest.

(iii) Gandhi was opposed to any exploitation of the workers. He believed whenever a worker is paid less than the basic wage rate or the minimum living wage rate, he is said to be exploited.

(iv) Gandhi preferred the decentralization of small units of production to the concentration of large-scale units; and wanted decentralization to the homes of the masses, particularly in villages.

(v) Gandhi was equally emphatic that a minimum standard of living was necessary for the existence of an orderly society. By livelihood, he meant simple means of existence, food, clothing, shelter and education. His idea of development was not an increase in the number of millionaires but the absence of starvation. Hence, Gandhi always recommended austerity in life.

(vi) Finally, Gandhi favoured steps towards the development of egalitarian society. He advocated a system of distribution according to the needs of all the members of society. Even the rich and strong must help the poor and the weak in fulfilling the basic needs of the latter. The ideal function of society, according to Gandhi, must be aimed at providing social justice and reducing inequalities.
E.F. Schumacher, Norwegian scholar, also gave a non-violent economic model of development. He, like some early European scholars, Henderson and Capra, was among the earliest to appreciate Gandhi's views on a new economic system. On the basis of Gandhian ideas, he gave a blueprint of a new world order. He gave holistic approach. Amongst his numerous writings, his “Small is Beautiful” has been a highly acclaimed reading. Main tenets of his model are as follows:

- He was against the modern concept of growth, which is based on greed and selfishness of society.
- He was favourably disposed to “nature friendly” technologies and against any modern technological development, which harms the nature.
- Explaining the new technology, Schumacher considered his technology as “democratic self-help technology” and “pro-people technology”.
- Schumacher, like Gandhi, believed in the limits of wants and sharing of the excess/spare resources with others. He believed that man’s mad race for amassing wealth is against his regard for human values.

Finally, Schumacher was supporter of the world order based on social justice, as he was against any kind of exploitation of man and always pleaded for equality among human beings.

The Gandhian concept of village centres round a self-contained or self-reliant economy. Gandhi suggests this villagism or this self-sufficient economy as a peaceful negation of exploitation. ‘Exploitation’, he maintains, ‘is based on centralization’. Gandhi’s vision of India is nothing, but a picture of such decentralized republics throughout the country.

Gandhi has given a clear-cut definition of a village. His emphasis was on self-sufficiency. His view was that the village was to be self-sufficient in the matter of its vital requirements as unit. He said, “My idea of self-

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sufficiency is not a narrow one. There is no scope for selfishness and arrogance in my self-sufficiency.\(^{36}\)

No other person has a better understanding of rural development than Gandhi. Way back in 1936, Gandhi wrote in “Harijan”, “I have believed and repeated many times that India is to be found not in its few cities, but in its 7,00,000 villages. Furthermore, I would say that if the village perishes, India will perish too.”\(^{37}\)

Gandhi was in favour of Swaraj, which meant to him to civilize us, and to purify and stabilize our civilization. He has said that the very essence of our civilization is that we give a paramount place to morality in all our affairs, public or private. He went a step further and called for Poorna Swaraj by which he meant complete self government with independence in all aspects because it is as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much for the rich land owner as for the land less tiller of the soil, as much for the Hindus as for the Musalmans, as much for Parsis and Christians as for the Jains, Jews and Sikhs, irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status in life. Gandhi said that complete independence through truth and non-violence meant the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, colour or creed. He committed himself and expected all others to do so that the Swaraj of his dreams could be built on non-violence and truth. He stressed that we would have to give the villages their proper place in his scheme of things. He pointed out that it was not possible to build edifice of non-violence only on an industrial civilization; he was sure that it could be structured on the platform of self contained villages because the rural economy would be free from exploitation, and, according to him, exploitation was the mother of violence.

If Swaraj was not meant to civilize us, and to purify and stabilize our civilization, it would be nothing worth. The very essence of our civilization is

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\(^{36}\) Hindustan Standard, 6-12-1944.

\(^{37}\) Harijan, 4-4-1936, p. 63.
that we give a paramount place to morality in all our affairs, public or private.38

The basic unit of development, according to Gandhi, was village or small group of people who could be manageable. In his own words, “the unit of society should be a village or call it a manageable small group of people who would, in the ideal, be self-sufficient (in the matter of their vital requirements) as a unit and bound together in bonds of mutual cooperation and inter-dependence.”39

He further said that the concern of every village would be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its clothes.40 According to him, the central theme of Khaddar is to make every village self-supporting for its food and clothing. He said, “Self-sufficient Khadi will never succeed without cotton being grown by spinners themselves or practically in every village. It means decentralization of cotton cultivation so far at least as self-sufficient Khadi is concerned”.41 He further said, “Every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world”.42

Gandhi did not envisage the village structure as composed of innumerable villages in a pyramidal structure but he suggested the villages as ever widening circles. According to him, pyramid is anomalous structure in which the apex is sustained by the bottom. He said, “it is like an oceanic circle whose centre is to be the individual, always ready to perish for the village, and the village ready to perish for a circle of villages”.43

Gandhi entertained hope when he said, “The individual being pure, sacrifices himself for the family, the latter for the village, the village for the

40 Harijan, 26-7-1942, p. 238.
41 Ibid., 27-7-1935, p. 188.
42 Ibid., 28-7-1946, p. 236.
districts, the districts for the province, the province for the nation, the nation for all"; it was a hope in consonance and compatibility with his ideas of oceanical circle. About the relationship between the rural and urban areas, he opined that the rural and the urban areas have a complementary relationship. Both will exist for each other. At present, he said, these two areas are divided into two sectors representing two distinguished classes of people pitted against each other in their selfish interest.

Gandhi conceived of village as the result of post-modern perspective of "quality of life"; his concept of village was not based on the support of modern notion of development, which is urban-industrial in essence. This truth has been realized by the modern economic thinkers after witnessing the avoidable catastrophe that resulted from modern urban industrialism.

The village of Gandhi's vision is (i) source of raw material, (ii) a market place for the goods produced in the urban areas, (iii) an entity in itself both as production and consumption unit. Gandhi stated that his village cannot flourish under conditions (i) and (ii) stated just before. His opinion was that the third system is the only condition, which makes the villager a worthy citizen. In this context, Gandhi laid emphasis when he said, “A village unit as conceived by me is as strong as the strongest. My imaginary village consists of 100 souls. Such a unit can give good account of itself, if it is well organised on the basis of self-sufficiency”.

Gandhi gave his views on Panchayat Raj thus: “The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications.”

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46 Harijan, 26-7-1942, p. 238.
Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office.47

Gandhi continued his insistence on his pattern of village in which his villagers would be conscious of quality and each one earned his bread by hard labour. About Body-Labour he said, “how can a man who does not do body labour have the right to eat”?48 He quoted the Bible and continued to give his views, “Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow”; after quoting this line from the Bible, he further said, “Sacrifices may be of many kinds.” One of them may well be Bread labour. If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then, there would be no cry of over-population, no disease, no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love for the common good. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high none low, no touchable and no untouchable.”49

He continued to opine that, “The hungry millions ask for one poem – invigorating food. They cannot be given it. They must earn it. And they can earn only by the sweat of their brow”.50

About his call, “back to village”, he said, “return to the villages means a definite, voluntary recognition of the duty of bread labour and all it connotes. But says the critic, “Millions of India’s children are today living in the villages and yet they are living a life of semi-starvation.” This, alas, is but too true. Fortunately, we know that theirs is not voluntary obedience. They would perhaps shirk body labour if they could, and even rush to the nearest city if they could be accommodated in it: Compulsory obedience to one’s father is the glory of sonship. Similarly, compulsory obedience to the law of

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47 Ibid.
48 Gandhi, M.K., From Yeravda Mandir, op. cit, p. 34.
49 Harijan, 29-6-1935, p. 156.
50 Young India, 13-10-1921, p. 326.
bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. And it is health which is real wealth, not pieces of silver and gold."51 "Return to the villages means a definite voluntary recognition of duty of Bread Labour and all it connotes."52

On Bread Labour, he said, "The great Nature has intended us to earn our bread in the sweat of our brow. Everyone, therefore, who idles away a single minute becomes to that extent a burden upon his neighbours, and to do so is to commit a breach of the very first lesson of Ahimsa. Ahimsa is nothing if not a well-balanced exquisite consideration for one's neighbour, and an idle man is wanting in that elementary consideration".53

The divine law, that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands, was first stressed by a Russian writer named T.M. Bondaref. Tolstoy advertised it and gave it wide publicity. In my view, the same principle has been set forth in the third chapter of the Gita, where we are told, that he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only mean bread labour.

Gandhi said, "Reason too leads to an identical conclusion. How can a man, who does not do body labour, have the right to eat? In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread', says the Bible. A millionaire cannot carry on for long, and will soon get tired of his life, if he rolls in his bed all day long, and is even helped to his food. He, therefore, induces hunger by exercise and helps himself to the food he eats. If everyone, whether rich or poor, has thus to take exercise in some shape or form, why should it not assume the form of productive, i.e. bread labour? No one asks the cultivator to take breathing exercise or to work his muscles. And more than nine-tenth of humanity lives by tilling the soil. How much happier, healthier and more peaceful would the

51 Harijan, 29-6-1935, p. 156.
52 Ibid, 29-6-1935, p. 156.
53 Young India, 11-4-1929, pp.114-115.
world become, if the remaining tenth followed the example of the overwhelming majority, at least to the extent of labouring enough for their food!

There is a world-wide conflict between capital and labour, and the poor envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated; the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest.

Bread labour is a veritable blessing to one who would observe non-violence, worship Truth and make the observance of Brahmacharya a natural act. This labour can truly be related to agriculture alone. But at present at any rate, everybody is not in a position to take to it. A person can therefore spin or weave, or take to carpentry or smithy, instead of tilling the soil, always regarding agriculture, however, to be the ideal. Every one must be his own scavenger. Evacuation is as necessary as eating: and the best thing would be for every one to dispose of his own waste. If this is impossible, each family should see to its own scavenging.

I have felt for years, that there must be something radically wrong, where scavenging has been made the concern of a separate class in society. We have no historical record of the man who first assigned the lowest status to this essential sanitary service. Whoever he was, he by no means did us a good. We should from our very childhood, have the idea impressed upon our minds that we are all scavengers, and the easiest way of doing so is, for every one who has realized thus, to commence bread-labour as a scavenger. Scavenging, thus intelligently taken up, will help to a true appreciation of the equality of man”.

Gandhi again said, “The true source of rights is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights, they escape us like a will-o’-the-wisp. The more we pursue them, the farther they fly. The same teaching has been

embodied by Krishna in the immortal words: ‘Action alone is thine. Leave thou the fruit severely alone. Action is duty: fruit is the right.’

He also said, “Every man has an equal right to the necessaries of life even as birds and beasts have. And since every right carries with it a corresponding duty and the corresponding remedy for resisting any attack upon it, it is merely a matter of finding out the corresponding duties and remedies to vindicate the elementary fundamental equality. The corresponding duty is to labour with my limbs and the corresponding remedy is to non-co-operate with him who deprives me of the fruit of my labour.”

He further elaborated, “If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of over-population, no disease and no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice.”

Begging for food by a healthy person is clear evidence of avoiding compulsory bread labour. Gandhi disapproves of it. Therefore, on Beggary, Gandhi said, “My Ahimsa would not tolerate the idea of giving a free meal to a healthy person who has not worked for it in some honest way, and if I had the power, I would stop every sadavrata where free meals are given. It has degraded the nation and it has encouraged laziness, idleness, hypocrisy and even crime. Such misplaced charity adds nothing to the wealth of the country, whether material or spiritual, and gives a false sense of meritoriousness to the donor. How nice and wise it would be if the donor were to open institutions where they would give meals under healthy, clean surroundings to men and women who would work for them. I personally think that the spinning wheel or any of the processes that cotton has to go through will be an ideal occupation. But if they will not have that, they may choose any other work;

55 Young India, 8-1-1925, pp. 15-16.
56 Ibid., 26-3-1931, p.49.
57 Harijan, 29-6-1935, p. 156.
only the rule should be “No labour, no meal”.

On beggary, his view was, “I do feel that whilst it is bad to encourage begging, I will not send away a beggar without offering him work and food. If he does not work, I shall let him go without food. Those who are physically disabled like the halt and the maimed have got to be supported by the State. There is, however, a lot of fraud going on under cover of pretended blindness or even genuine blindness. So many blind have become rich because of ill-gotten gains. It would be a good thing if they were taken to an asylum, rather than be exposed to this temptation”.

About Indian Villager, Gandhi said, “In the case of Indian Villager, an age-old culture is hidden under an encrustment of crudeness. Take away the encrustation, remove his chronic poverty and his illiteracy and you have the finest specimen of what a cultured, cultivated, free citizen should be.”

He further said about Indian villager thus: “We have to teach them how to economize time, health and money. Lionel Curtis described our villages as dung-heaps. We have to turn them into model villages. Our village-folk do not get fresh air though they are surrounded by fresh air; they don’t get fresh food though they are surrounded by the freshest foods. I am talking like a missionary in this matter of food, because my mission is to make villages a thing of beauty.”

He also emphasized and said, “We have to tackle the triple malady which holds our villages fast in its grip: (i) want of corporate sanitation; (ii) deficient diet; (iii) inertia. They 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 baffle 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

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58 Young India, 13-8-1925, p. 282.
chronic disease. Patience and perseverance, if we have them, overcome mountains of difficulties. We are like nurses who may not leave their patients because they are reported to have an incurable disease."  

On the relevance and quality of education to villagers, he said, "The greatest education in the villages consists in the villagers being taught or induced to work methodically and profitably all the year round whether it be on the land or at industries connected with the villages". He further said, "All instruction must be linked with some basic craft. The teacher must learn the craft and correlate his knowledge to the craft, so that he will impart all that knowledge to his pupils through the medium of the particular craft that he chooses."  

On the innate nature of villagers, "I make bold to say that in spite of the crudeness, which one sees among the villagers, class considered, in all that is good in human nature, they compare favourably with any villagers in the world. This testimony is borne out by the majority of travelers who from the time of Huen Tsang down to the present times have recorded their impressions. The innate culture that the villages of India show, the art which one sees in the homes of the poor, the restraint with which the villagers conduct themselves, are surely due to the religion that has bound them together from time immemorial."  

He further said, "The Kisan or the peasant, whether as a landless labourer or a labouring proprietor, comes first. He is the salt of the earth, which rightly belongs or should belong to him, not to the absentee landlord or Zamindar. But in the non-violent way the labourer cannot forcibly eject the absentee landlord. He has so to work as to make it impossible for the landlord to exploit him. Closest co-operation amongst the peasants is absolutely necessary. To this end, special organizing bodies or committees should be

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62 Ibid., 16-5-1936, p. 111.
63 Ibid., 6-3-1937, p. 29.
65 Ibid.
formed where there are none and those already in existence should be reformed where necessary. The kisans are for the most part illiterate. Both adults and young persons of school-going age should be educated. This applies to men and women. Where they are landless labourers their wages should be brought to a level that would ensure a decent living which should mean balanced food, dwelling houses and clothing, which should satisfy health requirements.\textsuperscript{66}

On according pride of place to kisan, he said, “If I have my say, our Governor-General and our Premier would be drawn from the kisans. In my childhood I had learnt in the school books that the kisans are heirs to the kingdom of the earth. This applies to those who labour on the land and eat from what they produce. Such kisans to be worthy of high offices might be illiterate, provided they have robust common sense, great personal bravery, unimpeachable integrity and patriotism above suspicion. As real producers of wealth, they are verily the masters while we have enslaved them. It has been suggested to me that the higher secretariat posts should also be manned by Kisans. I would endorse this suggestion provided they are suitable and have knowledge of the work expected of them. When Kisans of this type are forthcoming I would publicly ask ministers and others to make room for them.”\textsuperscript{67}

Administering warning to the Landlords, he said, “To the landlords, I say that if what is said against them is true, I would warn them that their days are numbered. They could no longer continue as lords and masters. They have a bright future if they become the trustees of the poor Kisans. He has in mind not trustees in name but in reality. Such trustees would take nothing for themselves that their labour and care did not entitle them to. Then they would

\textsuperscript{66} The Bombay Chronicle, 28-10-1944.
\textsuperscript{67} Harijan, 8-2-1948, p.21.
find that no law would be able to touch them. The Kisans would be their friends". 68

He said about the way of thinking in Indian traditional cultural context on the philosophy of socialism thus, “Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: ‘All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can therefore unmake it.’ Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language, it means the State, i.e. the people. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it.” 69

Gandhi was in favour of Collective Cow Farming. He said, “The most important question for consideration was whether cow farming should be in the hands of individuals or done collectively. I myself had no hesitation in saying that she could never be saved by individual farming. Her salvation, and with her that of buffalo, could only be brought about by collective endeavour.” 70 He further said, “I am sure that co-operative effort can help us in a large measure. The following comparison may be helpful:

1) Under the collective system no farmer can keep cattle in his house as he does today. They foul the air, dirty the surroundings. There is neither intelligence nor humanitarianism in living with animals. Man was not meant to do so. The space taken up by the cattle today would be spared to the farmer and his family, if the collective system were adopted.

2) As the number of cattle increases, life becomes impossible for the farmer in his home. Hence, he is obliged to sell the calves and kill the male buffaloes or else turn them out to starve and die. This inhumanity would be averted, if the care of cattle were undertaken on a co-operative basis.

68 Ibid., 4-5-1947, p. 134.
69 Ibid., 2-1-1937, p. 375.
70 Ibid., 15-2-1942, p. 39.
3) Collective cattle farming would ensure the supply of veterinary treatment to animals when they are ill. No ordinary farmer can afford this on his own.

4) Similarly, one selected bull can be easily kept for the need of several cows under the collective system. This is impossible otherwise except for charity.

5) Common grazing ground or land for exercising the animals will be easily available under the co-operative system, whereas today generally there is nothing of the kind for individual farmers.

6) The expense on fodder will be comparatively far less under the collective system.

7) The sale of milk at good prices will be greatly facilitated, and there will be no need or temptation for the farmer to adulterate it as he does as an individual.

8) It is impossible to carry out tests of the fitness of every head of cattle individually, but this could easily be done for the cattle of a whole village and would thus make it easier to improve the breed.

9) The foregoing advantages should be sufficient argument in favour of co-operative farming. The strongest argument in its favour is that the individualistic system has been the means of making our own conditions as well as that of our cattle pitiable. We can only save ourselves and them by making this essential change.”

About Co-operative Farming, Gandhi said, “My notion of co-operation is 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 my conception would change the face of the land and banish poverty and idleness from their midst. All this is only possible if people become friends of one another and as

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71 Ibid.
one family. When that happy event takes place there would be no ugly sore in the form of a communal problem.”

Gandhi visualized society where wealth was held as a trust. He said with conviction about his theory of trusteeship in his own words thus: “My theory of ‘trusteeship’ is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories, it has the sanction of the philosophy and religion behind it. That possessors of wealth have not acted up to the theory does not prove its falsity; it proves the weakness of the wealthy. No other theory is compatible with non-violence. In the non-violent method, the wrong-doer compasses his own end, if he does not undo the wrong. For, either through non-violent non-cooperation, he is made to see the error, or he finds himself completely isolated.”

Gandhi supported the labour’s right to strike, if nothing solved their problem and the above opinion of Gandhi established his conviction in his village society. He says that the capitalist holds his property as a trustee of society and the labour works to its full capacity and, still, if absolutely necessary and avoidable, the labour would join strike, which has to be based on non-violence and truth.

Gandhi said, “Pandit Nehru wants industrialization, because he thinks that if is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them”. He also said, “As I look at Russia where the apotheosis of industrialization has been reached, the life there does not appeal to me. To use the language of the Bible, ‘what shall it avail a man if he gains the whole world and lose his soul?’ In modern terms, it is beneath human dignity to lose one’s individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full-blooded, fully developed member of

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72 Ibid, 9-3-1947, p. 59.
73 Ibid., 16-12-1939, p. 376.
society. The villages must become self-sufficient. I see no other solution if one 
has to work in terms of Ahimsa. Now I have that conviction."\(^{74}\)

Therefore, on industrializing India, he gave his opinion, "I would
indeed, in my sense of the term like to industrialize India. The village 
community should be revived. Indian villages produced and supplied to the 
Indian towns and cities all their wants. India became impoverished when our 
cities became foreign market, and began to drain the villages dry by dumping 
cheap and shoddy goods from foreign land, I am industrializing the village in a 
different way."\(^{75}\)

Gandhi was against mill-industry. He said, "The workers in the mills 
of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of the women working in the 
mills is shocking. When there were no mills, these women were not starving. 
If the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become own unhappy 
land. It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better 
for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth than to 
multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth we only waste our money; 
but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price 
of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped, and I call in 
support of my statement the very mill-hands as witnesses. And those who have 
amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men. 
It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller would be better than the 
American Rockefeller. Impoverished India can become free, but it will be hard 
for any India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom. I fear we 
shall have to admit that moneyed men support British rule; their interest is 
bound up with its stability. Money renders a man helpless. The other thing 
which is equally harmful is sexual vice. Both are poison. A snake-bite is a 
lesser poison than these two, because the former merely destroys the body but

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 28-1-1939, p. 439. 
\(^{75}\) Ibid., 27-2-1937, p. 18.
the latter destroy body, mind and soul. We need not, therefore, be pleased with the prospect of the growth of the mill-industry.”

Gandhi believed that his village plan for resurgence had a pride of place for Khadi. Gandhi said, “I feel convinced that the revival of hand spinning and hand weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India. The millions must have a simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago, and if the millions are to be saved from starvation they must be enabled to reintroduce spinning in their homes and every village must repossess its own weaver.”

He said, “Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries, which can support Khadi in return for the health and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, 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 must be touched at all points.”

He further said, “The revival of village industries is but an extension of the Khadi effort. Hand-spun cloth, handmade paper, hand-pounded rice, home made bread and jam, are not uncommon in the West. Only there they do not have one-hundredth of the importance they have in India. For, with us, their revival means life, their destruction means death, to the villagers, as he who runs may see. Whatever the machine age may do, it will never give employment to the millions whom the wholesale introduction of power machinery must displace.”

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77 Young India, 11-7-1920, p. 4.
78 Harijan, 16-11-1934, p. 317.
All of us should be convinced that the Charkha is the symbol of non-violent economic self-sufficiency. Gandhi said about weaving as occupation among the untouchable thus, "Indeed, in some places, there are to be found weavers who are classed as untouchables on account of their occupation. They are mostly weavers of coarsest Khadi without any pattern. This class was fast dying out when Khadi came to the rescue and there was created a demand for their coarse manufacture. It was then discovered that there were numerous Harijan families that even subsisted on spinning. Thus Khadi is doubly the poor man's staff of life. It helps the poorest, including the Harijans, who are the most helpless among the poorest. They are so because many occupations which are available to the others are not available to the Harijans." On Charkha, Gandhi said, "The disease of the masses is not want of money so much as it is want of work. Labour is money. He who provides dignified labour for the millions in their cottages, provides food and clothing, or which is the same thing, money. The Charkha provides such labour. Till a better substitute is found, it must, therefore, hold the field." He emphasized the importance of Charkha in removing idleness. He said, "Idleness is the great cause, the root of all evil, and if that root can be destroyed, most of the evils can be remedied without further effort. A nation that is starving has little hope or imitative left in it. It becomes indifferent to filth and disease. It says of all reforms, 'to what good?' That winter of despair can only be turned into the 'sun-shine of hope' for the millions only through the life-giving wheel, the Charkha."

He further said, "The Charkha has served the poor Muslims and Hindus in almost an equal measure. Nearly five crores of rupees have been put into the pockets of these lakhs of village artisans without fuss and toming.

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81 Harijan, 27-4-1934, p. 85.
82 Young India, 18-6-1925, p. 211.
83 Ibid, 27-8-1925, p. 299.
Hence I saw without hesitation that the Charkha must lead us to Swaraj in terms of the masses belonging to all faiths. The Charkha restores the villages to their rightful place and abolishes distinctions between high and low.\textsuperscript{84}

Gandhi extolled the virtues and value of Charkha when he said, “The spinning wheel is a symbol not of commercial war but of commercial peace. It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nations of the earth but of good-will and self-help. It will not need the protection of a navy threatening a world’s peace and exploiting its resources, but it needs the religious determination of millions to spin their yarn in their own homes as today they cook their food in their own homes. I may deserve the curses of posterity for many mistakes of omission and commission, but I am confident of earning its blessings for suggesting a revival of the Charkha. I stake my all on it. For every revolution of the wheel spins peace, goodwill and love”.\textsuperscript{85}

To Gandhi, Charkha was more than spinning wheel. He said, “The Charkha was there during Muslim rule also. Dacca was famous for its muslins. The Charkha then was a symbol of poverty and not of non-violence. The kings took forced labour from women and depressed classes. The same was later repeated by the East India Company (EIC). Kautilya mentions in his \textit{Arthashastra} the existence of such forced labour. For ages, the Charkha was thus a symbol of violence and the use of force and compulsion. The spinner got but a handful of grain or two small coins, while ladies of the court went about luxuriously clad in the finest of muslins, the product of exploited labour. As against this, I have presented the Charkha to you as a symbol of non-violence. There can be no Swaraj without the Charkha. It cannot be proved so long as you do not explain it to Congressmen. The Charkha and the Congress should become synonyms. The task of making the Charkha, which for centuries, had been a symbol of poverty, helplessness, injustice and forced labour, the symbol now of mighty non-violent strength, of the new social order

\textsuperscript{84} Harijan, 13-4-1940, p. 85.  
\textsuperscript{85} Young India, 8-12-1921, p. 406.
and of the new economy, has fallen on our shoulders. We have to change history. And I want to do it through you."  

Gandhi said on the pursuit of Charkha, “The pursuit of the Charkha must become the mainspring of manifold other activities like village industries, Nai Talim etc. If we are able to adopt the Charkha intelligently we can revive the entire economic life of our villages once more.”

Gandhi extolled the value of Khadi in the life of villagers but simultaneously talked about the significant role of village industries of sorts. He said, “Now I feel that Khadi alone cannot revive the villages. Village uplift is possible only when we rejuvenate village life as a whole, revive all village industries and make the entire village industrious.” He was convinced about the advantage of Khadi economy which entailed easy availability, easy operation, very modest capital investment, a solution to reduce unemployment, no adverse effect of the monsoons, a strategy to promote equitable distribution of wealth and above all, the cloth manufactured will be the cheapest possible for the villagers. Writings of Gandhi continuously echoed with the slogan of Khadi, swadeshi, spinning wheel, bread labour, equality, etc. Why Gandhi was strong advocate of khadi and propagated its use in all villages can be instantly understood in view of the mass poverty in the rural areas, negligible technical know-how in the modern sense, paucity of capital but availability of labour and local raw material, which are the key factors to shape the views of Gandhi in favour of swadeshi goods and articles. The anxiety of Gandhi was to provide supplementary income to the agriculturists and more employment to the poor masses in the rural areas. In this context, he wrote, “The people of India are forced to remain idle at least four months in a year. People who are

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87 Ibid, p.151.
88 Ibid., p. 154.
thus forced to remain idle cannot but be revived. For crores of people, the spinning wheel is the only occupation which can supplement their income."89

In the same manner as he accorded khadi an elevated status in village economy and social life, Gandhi had special place in his plan for rejuvenation of villages, for swadeshi, which he regarded as ‘Dharma’ and ‘Artha’ (economy). Gandhi said on the subject of Khadi thus, “Khadi is not an occupation or craft merely to earn a livelihood. None of us should harbour this idea".90 “Our reason for putting forward Khadi is that it is the only way to redeem the people from the disease of inertia and indifference, the only way to generate in them the strength for freedom. If other crafts are also thus revitalized, our villages could be made self-sufficient and self-reliant.”91

He put great stress upon the economic importance of swadeshi and asked the nation to adopt the slogan of swadeshi and also help in implementing it effectively. He wrote on the subject repeatedly and said that swadeshi meant the production and distribution of articles manufactured in one’s narrow and present farm and that it meant the saving of ‘sixty crores’ rupees every year through the efforts of the farming community and others in the rural areas. To Gandhi, swadeshi was a constructive programme; it provided the rural population the much-needed supplementary industry. About support to Village Craft, Gandhi said, “I have ruled out organized industries, not because they are not Swadeshi, but because they do not need special support. They can stand on their own legs and, in the present state of our awakening, can easily command a market”92 “In a nutshell, of the things we use, we should restrict our purchases to the articles which villages manufacture. Their manufactures may be crude. We must try to induce them to improve their workmanship, and not dismiss them because foreign articles or

90 Ibid., p. 184.
91 Ibid., p. 185.
92 Harijan, 28-9-1934, p.259.
even articles produced in cities that is big factories, are superior. In other words, we should evoke the artistic talent of the villager.”

Gandhi’s approach to rural development centered round not only poverty and unemployment but also touched all aspects of human life in the rural India including the spiritual. Therefore, Gandhi’s solutions should not be taken a piece-meal. In all the views and opinions about Indian people, as well as human beings throughout the world, his views provide solution for any kind of conflict by resort to truth and non-violence. We have either to accept Gandhi in totality or not to adhere to his views at all. Gandhi had himself expressed that India lives in villages. He also said, “If the village perishes, India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost.” Again, “If India fails, Asia dies. It has aptly called the nursery of many blended cultures and civilizations. Let India be and remain the hope of all the exploited races of the earth, whether in Asia or any part of the world.”

Gandhi’s scheme of rural development is solidly based on foundation of hard and sincere work by everybody. He was categorical that a worker, engaged in rural development mission, should not be power hungry; he should consciously remain apolitical; he should remain away from power politics. He meant that the sincere worker engaged in rural uplift is doing a pious duty and, therefore, he should be above the factionalism of villages; any reward or gratitude for his work should be unnecessary for him. His work should be that of a brave solider, full of courage and zeal. The village workers will cooperate and embark upon the task of rural development by coordinating with the other agencies, if necessary and possible. The village reformer should work as a village scavenger, and train other people in the maintenance of proper sanitary conditions to ensure health care. Gandhi’s idea was to teach every one - health

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93 Ibid., 30-11-1934, p. 232.
94 Ibid., 29-8-1936, p. 226.
95 Ibid., 5-10-1947, P. 354.
education with emphasis on nature cure and other simple medicines such as castor oil, quinine etc. Gandhi’s villagers and village workers will be master craftsmen, master spinners and habitual users of Khadi clothes. His workers in the villages will be encouraging people to revive village industry and take them to perfection. The villagers will be engaged in crafts as per their interests and aptitude, to earn own livelihood, without being a burden on others. Gandhi’s worker in the village should be a model of industry, utilizing all the working hours at his disposal fully. Gandhi’s worker was supposed to maintain a diary to write daily the work completed everyday, for introspection and self-satisfaction. Gandhi prescribed a code for the village worker containing “Eleven Vows”, namely, “non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy (brahmcharya), non-possession, manual or body labour, control of the palate, fearlessness, equal respect for all religions, swadeshi (restricting oneself to the use and service of one’s nearest surrounding in preference to those more remote) and spirit of exclusive brotherhood”.6

Gandhi was of the firm view that the village sewaks (village level workers) should function as the main foundation blocks for the success of village development. However, it was a very difficult task to find out the dedicated workers for undertaking the gigantic task of rural development, as prescribed and described by Gandhi; even considering the period, when Gandhi expressed such views about locating a team of dedicated workers, and the time when craze to serve the nation was at its zenith. Gandhi’s ideal village is required to have (i) Orderliness in the structure, (ii) Orderly roads, lanes and drainage, (iii) Temple / Mosque kept beautifully clean, (iv) Dharamshala/Small dispensary, (v) Own water works, (vi) School, and education compulsory up to final basic course, (vii) Theatre and recreational facilities, (viii) Self-sufficiency in food and cloth, (ix) Money crops except

opium and tobacco, (x) Defence against wild animals/robbers and compulsory services of village guards, (xi) People practising non-violence and satyagraha technique, and (xii) Village panchayat exercising executive, legislative and judicial powers in combination.

Gandhi was of firm opinion that, “Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well equipped with military, naval and air forces.”\(^97\) He further said, “You can not 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.”\(^98\) In view of the opinion expressed by Gandhi, ‘viable village’ is essential for the development of rural areas, which is to be determined on the basis of population and keeping in view the viability of the scheme, formulation and implementation of effective programme for rapid social development. Gandhi’s view on such a size of village provides in-built market mechanism to function near to the centre of production for the local goods and to facilitate quick returns to the poor not only in terms of money but also in qualitative terms of providing a model of political autonomy as a tool of effective decentralization of authority for complete social transformation. Although Gandhi was an individualist thinker, and entertained a definite vision of absolute economic and political independent individual living in perfect social harmony within the overall circle of national identity yet he was careful to suggest decentralization of authority as a pre-requisite of independence and individual sufficiency to culminate into collective sufficiency of the village. His view was that such a political and administrative decentralization shall provide a viable basis to sustain an integrated rural development structure of Indian nation. He said, “Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be republic of panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and

\(^{97}\) Harijan, 30-12-1939, p. 391.  
\(^{98}\) Ibid., 04-11-1939, p.331.
Gandhi had a vision that his village would have everything worth having in life. He was disappointed to see the villages barren and desolate. Therefore, he was in a hurry to disseminate his message for immediate reconstruction of the villages along the lines suggested by him. He was ready to accept modification in his scheme, if necessary. On one point, he was not ready to make any compromise and that was reconstruction and development on permanent basis and not on temporary basis. He had a dream to see the villages resuscitated in order to spearhead a silent social revolution. Considering very closely the concept of Gandhi regarding rural development, it is certainly a multi-dimensional concept, which seeks to encompass the total development of man with unflinching stress on quality of development. He set some examples by initiating some basic works of rural development, first at Champaran in 1917 and then undertook a Constructive Programme at Sevagram in 1920 and subsequently at Wardha in 1938. He was a man of extra-ordinary ideas; he presented an elaborate programme of rural development in an entirely different design, which he termed as an instrument of permanent value.

Gandhi's action plan was impregnated with all novel ideas aimed at rebuilding every aspect of human life as integrated whole (economic, educational, social, political and cultural). He envisaged a rural society based on self-supporting, self-reliant and self-governing villages. Gandhi penned down the Constructive Programme first time in 1941; he revised it in 1945 on the basis of rethinking and after collecting views of various social reformers and patriots. His Constructed Programme was truthful and non-violent and was directed at winning complete independence “Poorna Swaraj”; his concept

of Pooran Swaraj was woven around his concept of gram Swaraj, which was the establishment of ideal village society.

Gandhi used to write to Nehru on matters of importance to India, villages and man as universal being. He once wrote to Nehru to emphasise upon the inter dependence as essential concept than independence of each individual from all others. He viewed that man is not born to live in jungle, he is born to live in society. He also said that if we are to make sure that one person does not ride on another's back, the unit for rural development should be an ideal village or a social order group which would be self-sufficient, but the members of which would be inter-dependent. He had the conviction that this conception would bring about a change in human relationships all over the world. He wrote, “My idea of Village Republic is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet inter-dependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity.”

Gandhi drafted his constructive rural development programme and kept in view the development of social, economic, political and moral aspects. The whole approach to this programme can be segmented into five parts, which are economic, educational, social, environmental and political. Gandhi did not leave any aspect of economic and social and moral man out of the purview of his constructive programme. He revised it in later years. As it stood revised, it contained 18 thrust areas with one addition, and that is improvement of livestock. The 18 subjects of thrust in his Constructive Programme include (i) communal unity, (ii) removal of untouchability, (iii) prohibition, (iv) khadi, (v) other village industries, (vi) village sanitation, (vii) new or basic education, which he called 'nai talim', (viii) adult education, (ix) women, (x) education in health and hygiene, (xi) provincial languages, (xii) national language, (xiii) economic equality, (xiv) kisans, (xv) labour, (xvi) adivasis, (xvii) lepers, (xviii) students, (xix) improvement of livestock (19th thrust area was added subsequently).

100 Harijan, 26-07-1942, p. 238.
The following are the pillars on which the famous Constructive Programme of Gandhi rests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Segment of Development</th>
<th>Relates to (serial no. of item out of 19 above)</th>
<th>Description of specific item included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>04, 19, 13</td>
<td>Production and use of khadi, Improvement of livestock, Socio-economic equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>05</td>
<td>Development of village industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>Adoption of basic education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>08, 12, 11</td>
<td>Adult education, National language, Provincial language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Communal unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>02</td>
<td>Removal of untouchability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>03</td>
<td>Prohibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>09, 09, 16</td>
<td>Women, Adivasis, Lepers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>Improving village sanitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Education in health and hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Organisation of peasant and labour with a view to securing their just rights to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Organisation of students and youth for social works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Kisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Truth and Non-violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>End</td>
<td></td>
<td>Panchayat Raj (Gram Swaraj) that is self-governing society at the village level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gandhi presented the above classification with lot of care and thought; these items formed the solid foundation for total development of India as envisaged by him. The Constructive Programme of Gandhi is not a one-time activity; it is basically a constant and never ending programme because
perfection is a vague and constantly changing term. The programme should, therefore, be updated, keeping in view technological changes and the changing needs of society. Gandhi gave dynamic concept of rural development. After perusing Gandhi's candid narration in the form of incessant writing, it is observed that the economic parameters contemplate 'economy of permanence' rather it is 'economy upgradation'. Non-violence is deliberately kept as central point to Gandhi's village economy of permanence, Gandhi ruled out centralization from his programme because he was of the opinion that centralization can be sustained with adequate force, and use of force or coercion or threat or fear is inconsistent with his concept of non-violent structure of society.

Gandhi gave the concept of rural development as a perfectly integrated programme. It will be injustice to Gandhi and village society, and disastrous to developmental efforts if the comprehensive rural development programme of Gandhi is disintegrated into several / separate parts. The latest thinking of development encompasses economic, political, social and human development aspects. The World Bank has developed Human Development Index (HDI) to evaluate various parameters, necessary for leading dignified and happy life, free from disease, want, deprivation etc. Keeping the modern view of development in mind, it goes to the credit of Gandhi that he gave such a comprehensive constructive programme of development that it appears synonymous with national development programmes of today (human development input included by the World Bank).

Gandhi's life was full of experiments, and on the basis of realities, as understood by him, he gave his radical views about reconstruction of society. It cannot be a charge against Gandhi, nor can his Constructive Programme be dubbed as utopia. All great thinkers have been radical; they were not in shackles of any codes. They were free thinkers and philosophical. Gandhi stood tall amongst his contemporary thinkers because his ideas were holistic and extremely comprehensive, and constructive. While he had regard for
traditional way of living, he also accepted fresh air to blow inside all human institutions to update everything that concerned human life in a village setting. Rivets Kenneth said “It is often said of radical thinkers that their critique is true enough but that they are weak on the constructive side. Seldom, perhaps is this an accurate verdict, and it is certainly false as far as Gandhi is concerned. The constructive side of his thought is mainly sound. The critical side is weak, but even this rests on an assessment of the impact of industrialization on India that is largely correct. Marx knew a great deal about the system he criticized but gave hardly any thought to the alternatives. Gandhi knew little about industrial society but he knew a great deal about India’s villages.”101

Rural Development programme has been put in practice earlier and is also being practiced at present in all countries of the world. India is no exception. The rural development programme under implementation is based on the doctrine of Jeremy Bentham who was utilitarian thinker of England; it prescribed, “The greatest good of the greatest number”. Gandhi gave his concept of rural development in a different manner: his doctrine of sarvodaya envisages the greatest good of all and not the greatest good of 51 per cent, which is at the cost of the rest 49 per cent.

Gandhi was in favour of self-help and mutual help, which is the basis of cooperative movement throughout the world. He said, “As far as possible, every activity will be conducted on the cooperative basis”. He further said, “The system of cooperation was far more necessary for the agriculturists than for the mat-weavers. The land belonged to the state; therefore, it yields the largest return when it was worked cooperatively. Let it be remembered that cooperation should be based on strict non-violence.”102

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102 Harijan, 26-7-1942, p. 238.
Emphasizing upon work for earning wages, he said, “To those who are hungry, unemployed, God can dare reveal Himself only as work, and wages as the assurance of food.”\(^{103}\) Gandhi was not in favour of giving free food to the poor people who were capable of earning their livelihood, being physically fit and strong, provided work was given to them and they did honest labour. Gandhi was also very clear when he said that such work should be given which could lead to productive self-employment on regular basis. He advocated strongly a programme of opening up avenues of self-employment based on local material, local skills and available technical know-how. He wrote in Young India thus: “I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India. The millions must have simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be enabled to reintroduce spinning in their homes, and every village must possess its own weaver.”\(^{104}\)

Gandhi held conviction that alternative and supplementary employment to the rural poor could be available by adopting khadi, following swadeshi and using spinning wheel. He repeatedly said that this way the rural masses could get income; he was very clear that there was no other way of eradicating poverty in India, especially in the villages. In 1934, Gandhi delivered speech at the Gandhi Sewa Sangh Meeting and his message was, “We must promote every useful industry that was existent a short while ago and the extinction of which has now resulted in unemployment”.\(^{105}\) He also said that without reviving the village industries, there was no possibility of removing the increasing poverty and unemployment. He was very clear when he said on this point, “village economy can not be complete without the


\(^{104}\) Young India, 21-7-1920, p. 4.

essential village industries such as hand grinding, hand pounding, soap making, paper making, match making, tanning, oil pressing, etc.\textsuperscript{106}

The other industries about which Gandhi gave his support covered cattle farming, dairying, farming and compost manure, apart from bee-keeping, ink-making, paper making, gud and khandsari, etc. He was in favour of needed protection to such village industries and other crafts also. He said, "What is needed is protection of the village crafts and the workers behind them from the crushing competition of the power driven machinery, whether it is worked in India or in foreign lands. It may be that Khadi, gud and unpolished rice have no intrinsic quality and that they should die. But, except for Khadi, not the slightest effort has been made, so far as I am aware, to know anything about the fate of the tens of thousands of villagers who were earning their livelihood through crushing cane and pounding rice."\textsuperscript{107}

Gandhi was sure that the survival of the village is possible only in a situation free from exploitation. He did not support mass scale industrialization, because it will necessarily lead to the unavoidable situation of passive or active exploitation of the villagers due to inevitable conditions of competition and marketing strategies. Gandhi, therefore, advised that we have to concentrate on the village as a unit, being self-contained and manufacturing only those items mainly which are used in the village. He suggested that modern machines may be used by the villages provided the basic character of village industry is maintained intact; he suggested use of modern machines and tools which the villages could afford to use for efficiency and not for creating unemployment, and not at all as instruments of exploitation.

Gandhi was very emphatic when he said that implementation of the Constructive Programme for rural reconstruction should be done according to the true spirit of the programme and with the dedicated work force, and under

\textsuperscript{107} Harijan 10-08-1934, p. 204
the able guidance of the honest social reformers whom he called village workers. Gandhi suggested that the programme implementation would be direct responsibility of those people only who could work as ‘servants of the nation’. He said, “the worker’s life will be in tune with the village life. He will not pose as a litterateur buried in his books, loathe to listen to details of humdrum life. On the contrary, the people, whenever they see him, will find him busy with his tools – spinning wheel, adze, spade, loom, etc. – and always responsive to their meanest inquiries. He will always insist on working for his bread. Remember that our weapons are spiritual. It is a force that works irresistibly, if imperceptively. Its progress is geometrical rather than arithmetical. It never ceases so long as there is a propeller behind. The background of all your activities has, therefore, to be spiritual. Hence the necessity for the strictest purity of conduct and character. You will not tell me that this is an impossible programme, that you have not the qualifications for it. That you have not fulfilled it so far should be no impediment in your way. If it appeals to your reason and your heart, you must not hesitate. Do not fight shy of the experiment. The experiment will itself provide the momentum for more and more effort.”

Gandhi drew pointed attention of those involved in rural development or those in charge of planning for rural development, to some specific sections of the masses in the rural areas called by common nouns as adivasis, lepers, untouchables, and tribals (ethnic groups). Gandhi gave special attention to these sub-groups of neglected or deprived sections of population, which are now included in the schedule to the constitution of free India and categorized as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Gandhi held the view that these castes and sub-castes are capable of producing productive assets and consumable products and suggested that definite sub-plans be formulated to draw them into the mainstream of life. He was serious in his approach because these sub-sections constitute major proportion of the poorest classes grinding

in extreme poverty. These are the people who do not possess any land, which is the basic endowment of those living in the rural areas. Under the integrated rural development programme, these classes are special target for development, along with other large target groups constituting the poor.

Gandhi was single in drawing attention to lepers who stand condemned by society due to their physical predicament; by doing so, Gandhi deliberately refers to those people in our society who can not do any work but they deserve to be looked after as human beings; such people are the infirm, the old, the diseased and the disabled. In his programme of rural development, Gandhi was concerned with not only rural poverty and unemployment but also equally concerned about untouchability, which he considered unpardonable crime and social evil; he wanted untouchability to be eradicated once for all: he called these socially degraded people as ‘Harijans’.

Gandhi had special regard for women. Therefore, he gave much attention towards women for their development. Gandhi was right at least with regard to the fact that 48 per cent of population consists of women and they are capable of turning over equal work with men. He had observed that in our villages, women are engaged in various kinds of useful productive work, which ranged from agriculture to handicrafts and other village work. His opinion was that the village economy is sustained on the capable shoulders of women because they take charge of odd and onerous jobs, too. He said, “Woman is described as man’s better half. As long as she has not the same rights as man, as long as the birth of a girl does not receive the same welcome as that of a boy, so long we should know that India is suffering from partial paralysis. Suppression of woman is a denial of ahimsa”. He said, “Woman is described as man’s better half. As long as she has not the same rights in law as man, as long as the birth of a girl does not receive the same welcome as that of a boy, so long we should know that India is suffering from partial paralysis. Suppression of woman is a denial of Ahimsa. Every village worker will, therefore, regard every woman as his mother, sister or daughter as the case...
may be, and look upon her with respect. Only such a worker will command the confidence of the village people.\textsuperscript{109}

Rural development to Gandhi was a comprehensive development programme. It is but natural, then, that he paid great attention also to environmental aspects. He accorded a pride of place in his Constructive Programme to sanitation, health and hygiene and availability of portable drinking water in the villages. These areas are currently included in the World Bank’s Human Development Index (HDI) and the quality of life is assessed on the basis of this index, country-wise, throughout the world. The level of cleanliness, access to pure drinking water, availability of health facilities for men and animals both, and availability of other related infrastructure, which is necessary for improvement and leading of happy and fair standard of life are all strong indicators of modern comprehensive development philosophy.

About all-round Village Service, Gandhi said, “A Samagra Gramasewak 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 villagers that they will seek and follow his advice. Supposing I go and settle down in a village with a ghani, I won’t be an ordinary ghanchi earning 15-20 rupees a month. I will be a Mahatma ghanchi. 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 villagers to follow. I will be a ghanchi who knows 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 arrangements for our children’s education.” I will tell them: “I can find you a teacher but you will have to bear the expenses.” And 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

\textsuperscript{109} Harijan, 18-08-1940, p. 252.
will find them a weaver on the same term, as I found them a teacher. And the weaver will teach them how to weave their own cloth. I will inculcate in them the importance of hygiene and sanitation 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 Samagra Gramaseva”.

Asked about what he would do if he were Minister in-charge of Revival of Villages, Gandhi said, on that role, as: “If I were the Minister, my first business as the Minister in charge of revival of the villages as the centre of all governmental activity, would be to find out from among the Permanent Service honest and incorruptible men capable for the work. I would put the best among them in touch with the All India Spinners’ Association (AISA) and the All India Village Industries Association (AIVIA), creations of the Congress, and bring in a scheme for giving the village-crafts the greatest encouragement. I would stipulate, there should be no compulsion on the villagers, that they must not slave for others and that they should be taught to help themselves and rely upon their own labour and skill for the production of articles of food, cloth and other necessaries. The same would thus have to be comprehensive”.

Gandhi’s thought contained the whole spectrum of human life. He observed and experienced rural life from close end, right from the starting of his ashram at Kochrab on May 25, 1915, which was called Satyagraha Ashram; it was the first practical experience of Gandhi for his Constructive Programme of rural reconstruction and development. He embarked upon other such programmes subsequently, which are known as the Champaran experience, Sevagram at Wardha etc. All these ashrams were the result of grave concern of Gandhi and his followers about rural unemployment and rural poverty along with various social problems in the rural area. Gandhi and his followers put in their best efforts to set examples towards enrichment of

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110 Ibid., 17-3-1946, p. 42.
rural life as a comprehensive programme of action. Judged from this aspect, Gandhi is the real architect of integrated rural development, much before the national planners conceived, formulated and implemented such comprehensive programmes in our country.

Gandhi’s experiments in rural reconstruction were full of special characteristics; these became movements because a large number of people from all sections of society became his followers. Besides, Gandhi had a charisma in his personality, by virtue of which he was held in awe and also respected by his followers and others. His movement contained new ideas and procedures, evolved continuously from practical experience, to deal with the existing problems on the basis of inspiration from the super-empirical “inner voice”. Gandhi’s charismatic movement, however, lost its sheen because the subsequent leaders could not attract the devotion and involvement of the people; the movements, therefore, became lack lustre and casual affairs with just lip service, after his death.