When Gandhi arrived on Indian political scene from South Africa, Gokhale advised him to tour the whole of India to feel the pulse of the Nation. During this tour, he came across abject poverty, deprivation, hunger, disease and caste ridden society. He immediately understood that without emancipation of these teeming millions both political and economic, no swaraj could be achieved and hence developed his idea of Gram-Swaraj i.e., developing Indian nation through rural development. In this chapter an attempt has been made to look into the concept of rural development as advocated by Gandhi within the sphere of his general economic thought and value parameters. Actually, it is difficult to segregate the various postulates of Gandhi as rural, economic, social, political etc. etc., since he has taken the whole life as one and his approach is holistic and integrated one.

Gandhi neither believed in intellectual jargons nor in intricate complexities of life. He was a born actionist and believed in firm action and execution of what he thought. He was a simple soul and explained the complexities of life in a very simple way. For Gandhi life was one entity. Therefore, his thought in one sphere covers other spheres of life. Seeing the whole of India, poverty and village were synonymous with India, as far as Gandhi was concerned. If he was delivering a speech on education or explaining the concept of Khadi or Swadeshi or vehemently preaching trusteeship or 'bread labour' talking about sanitation, untouchability and communal tension, he never forgot to mention his prime concern i.e. village and poor. Village and poor were the soul of India and no development, whatsoever, is possible unless the two are alleviated.
It is precisely his great concern which made him an ardent advocate of rural development in all its manifestations. For Gandhi, attainment of an ideal social order, based on his eternal gospel of truth and non-violence, would be a possibility only through 'Gram Swaraj'.

Gandhi started from analysing the causes of poverty owing to the British Rule. Like Dada Bhai Naoroji, Marx, R.C.Dutt, Gandhi too, was of the firm opinion that poverty was a British Legacy in India and thus the principal cause of rural under-development. While pleading guilty during the great trial of 1922, he stated, "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 agricultural resources. These cottage industries, so vital for India's existence, have been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witnesses. Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that the government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. 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 unequaled in history".

His whole conception of rural development revolved around the development of villages and poor to attain a just social order. The postulates of Swadeshi, Khadi, trusteeship, bread labour (truth and non-violence being constant value parameters), non-exploitation, non-possession and equality were also rooted in the structure of our society, the religious and social faiths of people. In order to build up a just and equitable social order the development of villages is a necessity. Gandhi was not an advocate of the glorification of poverty but he was all for leveling the society. In the words of J.D.Sethi, "He called economic poverty a moral collapse of the affluent. Affluence co-existing with poverty is an absolute theft."^2

The conception of Gandhi about village was neither narrow nor he intended to preach for keeping intact the old village devoid of sanitation, having old rotten houses, etc. Rather he visualized villages as productivity centres, applying adaptable technologies and having skilful workers and excellent environment. He wrote to Jawahar Lal Nehru on October 5, 1945, "While I appreciate modern thought, I find that an ancient thing considered in the light of this thought looks so sweet. You will not be able to understand me if you think that I am talking about the villages of today. My ideal village still exists only in my imagination ‘...’. In this village of my dreams the villager will not be dull - he will be all awareness. He will not live like an animal in filth and darkness. Men and women will live in freedom, prepared to face the whole world. There will be no plague, no cholera and no smallpox. Nobody will be allowed to be idle or to wallow in luxury. Every one will have to do body labour. Granting all this, I can still envisage a number of things that will have to be organized on a large scale. Perhaps there will even be railways and also post and telegraph offices. I do not know what things there will be or will not be. Nor am I

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bothered about it. If I can make sure of the essential things, other things will follow in due course. But if I give up the essential things, I give up everything. His idea was not relief oriented but he wished to build up the whole Indian economic and political structure on rural foundations.

The above statement of Gandhi points to the basic human needs which are fundamental to sustain life and living on this earth. This gives poorest of the poor to acquire productive capabilities. Unless these basic human needs are fulfilled, the process of development will tilt in favour of those few who have assets and better endowed than others. Not only it will deprive millions to be part of development process, it will also bring unrest in the world. Since the bulk of these millions live in rural areas, therefore, the structural reforms must start from there and once this platform is ready, the storeys of development can be erected. So, for him, conceptually, rural development is the basis of all development process. He does not believe in first creating inequality and then distribute development but he believed in equitable process of development from its very inception. He did not conceptualize rural development at one place but his ideas about village development and various aspects essential for taking up such developments such as village sanitation, mechanization, rural industrialization application and adoption of techniques, cooperation, decentralization of power etc. have village as the basic concern around which developmental parameters revolves around.

He visualized village as the basic unit of development of economic and political activity. To quote him, "A village unit as conceived by me is as strong as the strongest. My imaginary village consists of 1,000 souls. Such a unit can give a good

3. CWMG, Vol. 81, p. 320.
account of itself if it is well organized on a basis of self sufficiency".4

He was thus aware of the economic viability of schemes which would be initiated during the course of time. This unit of decentralized authority, as envisaged by Gandhi i.e. 'viable village', is essential to be determined on the basis of population, from the point of view of viability of schemes, effective programme adoption and execution for rapid social development. Such a size will provide inbuilt market mechanism near to the centre of production for local goods and quick returns to poor. Not only in economic terms but he, emphatically advocated and dreamed this kind of model of political autonomy as a tool of effective decentralization of authority for social transformation. The recent amendment in our Constitution (1991)5 giving more administrative, judicial and political powers to panchayats is an example of late awakening. Social and quality development of society desires economic, social and political independence which is not possible unless each basic unit achieves that and also achieves self-sufficiency as far as possible. Such viable economic units must have political and administrative authority. He was an 'individualist' thinker and visioned absolute economic and political independent individual living in social harmony within the overall circumference of national identity. Decentralization of authority is a pre-requisite of independence and individual sufficiency will culminate into collective sufficiency. Such a political and administrative decentralization shall form the basis of sustained and integrated rural development structure of Indian nation.

4. Ibid., Vol. 85, p. 79.

5. Constitution Amendment, 73.
Elaborating his superstructure of rural development, he said, "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be republic of panchyat 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 on-slaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world... "In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of oceanic circle of which they are integral units"... At another place he elaborated "When our villages are fully developed there will be no dearth in them of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In short, there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the villages. Today the villages are barren and desolate and are like dung-heaps. Tomorrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden where dwell highly intelligent folk whom no one can deceive or exploit. The reconstruction of the villages along these lines should begin right now. That might necessitate some modification of the scheme. The reconstruction of the villages should not be organised on a temporary but on a permanent basis"... While addressing the students at Vidyamandir training school at Wardha be asked them

6. CWMG, Vol.85, p. 79.
to drive away illiteracy from these villages '... Cast off the cloak of foreign thoughts and ideals, and identify yourselves with the villagers'.

He desired to exploit the inventive skills of the villages. Said he "We will by concentrating on the villages see that the inventive skill that an intensive learning of the craft will stimulate will subserve the needs of the villager as a whole". Thus he wanted to "resuscitate the villages, to spearhead a "silent social revolution". Removal of illiteracy and intensive learning of crafts were the keys to this revolution. These were the symbols to bring awareness, remove ignorance persisting since centuries as well to give productive work to idle hands to increase income of rural people.

Gandhi did not visualize static conditions in the villages. He was aware that wheel of development must move forward but the process of development must not create imbalances, "I have not pictured a poverty-stricken India containing ignorant millions. I have pictured to myself an India continually progressing along the lines best suited to her genius. I do not however picture it as a third class or even a first class copy of the dying civilization of the West. If my dream is fulfilled and everyone of the seven lakhs of villages becomes a well-living republic in which there are no illiterates, in which no one is idle for want of work, in which everyone is usefully occupied and has nourishing food, well-ventilated dwellings and sufficient Khadi for covering the body, and in which all the villagers know and observe the laws of hygiene and sanitation such a state must

9. Ibid., p. 139.
10. Ibid., p. 169.
have varied and increasing needs, which it must supply unless it would stagnate."11

The above analysis of the village from the works of Gandhi elaborately explained the concept of rural reconstruction in all its manifestations, which now needs no explanation in intricate words. So Gandhian concept of rural development was multidimensional encompassing the total development of man with stress on quality of development. With this conception of rural society, national reconstruction was envisaged by Gandhi. He initiated some earlier works of rural reconstruction at Champaran in 1917. He took up his constructive programme at Sevagram (1920) and at Wardha (1938). He came out with an elaborate programme of constructive programme and termed it as 'an instrument of permanent value'.12

Gandhi first wrote constructive programme in 1941 and revised it in 1945.13 Although he tried to cover and extend the scope of constructive programme as much as he could, yet mentioned he, that the programme is 'illustrative' and not 'exhaustive' and 'the reader will see several new important additions.

Gandhi regarded constructive programmes as the truthful and non-violent way of winning "Poorna Swaraj"14. The concept of Poorna Swaraj was woven around the concept of Gram Swaraj i.e.

12. Ibid., 17-12-1938, p. 382.
establishment of ideal village society. Though there are no compiled thoughts of Gandhi as such but he made references after references in dealing with his concept of ideal village swaraj and village society based on healthy human relationship. Such a process of integrated rural development will help in establishing an egalitarian society. To a crucial question by Nehru for ensuring "man's mental, economic, political and moral development; Gandhi replied that, in doing so, every individual should have equal right and opportunity. He further wrote to Nehru, "Man is not born to live in jungle, he is born to live in society. If we are to make sure that one person does not ride on another's back, the unit should be an ideal village or a social order group which will be self-sufficient, but the members of which will be interdependent. This conception will bring about a change in human relationship all over the world."

So crystallized Gandhi his conception of village Swaraj and economic production relations and social obligations, "My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity—Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then, if there is more land available it will grow useful money crops... the village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own water works ensuring water supply... education will be compulsory upto the final basic course. As far as possible, every activity will be conducted on the cooperative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of satyagraha and non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register.

15. CWMG, Vol 82, p. 72.
maintained by the village. The Government of the village will be conducted by the Panchyat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. They will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishment in the accepted sense, this panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office.16

He visualized in changing the very attitudes in this connection and he emphatically stressed 'rural minded'17 approach to achieve the end. This requires commitment and devotion of the highest order.

These broad generalizations, crystallized into his constructive programme. Gandhi while drafting his constructive programme of rural development took care of social, economic, political and moral aspects of development. His approach to constructive programme can be classified into five segments viz, economic, educational, social, environmental and political. The constructive programme, as revised has eighteen items with one more addition i.e. 'improvement of livestock'. These include (1) communal unity, (2) removal of untouchability, (3) prohibition, (4) khadi, (5) other village industries, (6) village sanitation, (7) new or basic education, (8) adult education, (9) women, (10) education in health and hygiene, (11) provincial languages, (12) national language, (13) economic equality, (14) kisans, (15) labour, (16) adivasis, (17) lepers, (18) students and mentioned to be included, (19) improvement of livestock.18

16. Harijan, 26-7-1942, p. 238.
17. Ibid., 4-11-39, p. 331.
Thus if we view, in the order as it appears, a classification will be helpful in understanding the indicators of constructive programme.

1. Social:- National interaction:- (Items 1, 2 & 3) 1. Communal Unity. 
   2. Removal of Untouchability. 
   3. Prohibition.

   (ii) Targeted Groups for Social (Items 9, 16, 17) 
   9. Women 
   17. Lepers.

2. Economic:- 4, 5, 13 & 19 
   5. Other village industries. 
   13. Economic equality 
   19. Improvement of livestock.

3. Educational:- 7, 8, 11, 12 
   7. New or basic education 
   8. Adult Education

   11. Provincial Language. 
   12. National Language

4. Environmental:- 6, 10 
   6. Village Sanitation 
   10. Education in Health and Hygiene.

5. Political:- 14, 15, 18 
   14. Kisans 
   15. Labour 
   18. Students


7. End:- Gram Swaraj.
The above classification amply exhibited the integrated conceptualization of rural development, as the foundation of total development of India, as envisaged by Gandhi. Many items overlap and they are necessary to achieve development in more than one sphere. The spheres are so interwoven that the process of development will collapse in absence of any one indicator. The organisation of Kisans, trade unions and students for political purposes may not be that important as that for economic and social upliftment as this brings collective bargaining to them and organize them politically and economically. The constructive programme is basically a constant programme which should be updated with social and technological changes and needs. It is not a static concept but a dynamic concept of rural development. The economic parameters contemplates an "economy of permanence" rather an "economy of predation".19

While communal unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition, development of regional language and national language, basic education organization of kisans, labour and students, adult education and such other parameters are constant for social and political reconstruction of Gandhian society; the other economic and environmental factors have a bearing on improving the economic lot of villagers for effective rural development. Clothed in these factors and the pillars of truth and non-violence, the Gandhian economic thought like khadi, swedeshi, trusteeship, other village industries alongwith cottage industries, improvement of livestock, village sanitation, education in health and hygiene and removal of illiteracy gives a clear picture of his concept of total and integrated rural development as the first structure of development of society. His concept of rural development was so integrated that it will

be disastrous to disintegrate the same into separate components. The Gandhian idea of rural development was so comprehensive that it is synonymous with national development.

The slogan of khadi, Swadeshi and spinning wheel have appeared in Gandhian writings again and again. The mass poverty in rural areas, the nearly negligible modern technical knowhow, the dearth of capital and the availability of labour and local raw material are some of the key factors influencing Gandhian ideology to propagate the use of Khadi and production of Swadeshi goods and articles. Gandhi wanted to give adequate work to idle poor masses who have no source to supplement their agricultural income. Wrote he, "The people of India are forced to remain idle at least four months in a year. People who are 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 for the fields, most emphatically, they have no other one".20

Gandhi, thus advocated the theory of protectionism so that the wheel of development must move with equal speed. He was against importing development. For him development must start from the smallest to reach the zenith but with self-help, own skills, own resources and with an attitude to promote and propagate own production. No country of the world developed on other's shoulders (except colonial powers).

Gandhi felt the hunger of masses who are to be provided with work for winning bread. He wrote "To those who are hungry and unemployed, God can dare reveal himself only as work and wages as

the assurance of food". But he was against giving "free food to these poor people" who are capable of earning their livelihood provided they are given work. One must do "honest labour" to earn his livelihood. He was all for giving such work which can lead to productive self-employment on a regular basis to these people. Wrote Gandhi, "If I had my say I would close down all charitable institutions and alms-houses. Therefore, he was advocating opening of self-employment avenues based on local skills, technical knowhow and raw materials. Wrote he, "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 advocated to take up use, production and marketing of khadi at a large scale. He visualised how khadi vis-a-vis the adoption of spinning wheel can be made useful. While laying down some principles of swadeshi movement, he made the concept dynamic and did not prohibit improvement both in modernization of khadi through suitable technologies and improving quality of khadi. Some extracts of his principles such as, "All possible improvements should be effected in the spinning wheel and the handloom"... At present the main variety of cloth so produced is

22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 447.
24. Young India, 21-7-1920, p. 4.

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khadi, we should work to popularize it... Stores should be opened for selling hand spun yarn and hand woven cloth made from such yarn. indicate the concern of Gandhi. He was aware of the comparative advantage our rural people have in production of khadi and also he asked to make suitable modernisation in the production of khadi. He regarded swadeshi as 'Dharma' and 'Artha' and stressed its economic importance and vehemently asked the nation to adopt the slogan of swadeshi and to effectively implement it. Wrote he, "It means production and distribution of articles manufactured in one's own country. In its narrow and present form, it means the saving of 'sixty crore rupees annually' through the instrumentality of the peasant population. It, therefore, also means giving 72 per cent of the population a much-needed supplementary industry. Swadeshi is a constructive programme."

The use of spinning wheels has been prescribed by Gandhi in ATCC meeting held at Bezwada (Resolution I). He was of firm conviction that khadi, swadeshi and spinning wheel could provide alternate and supplementary employment to rural poor and it is through this way that rural masses can get income and there is no other way of eradicating India's poverty.

Viewed in the present context the concept of Gandhi shall have to be taken in a much broader perspective. If we analyse his writings he was not against diversifying the manufacture of cloth and use of technological advancements but their adoption should not displace human labour and must be based on local


26. Ibid., p. 32.

27. Young India, 14-1-1920, p. 3.

resources. His stress on promoting traditional village industries and other village industries is the key determinators of faster pace of rural development and poverty eradication. He advocated saving village industries. The traditional village industries of textiles, crushing cane (gur) and pounding rice needs to be promoted. He said, "Our clear duty is, therefore, to investigate the possibility of keeping in existence the village wheel, the village crusher and the village pounder and by advertising their products discovering their qualities... and discovering the methods of improving them... what is needed is protection of the village crafts and the workers behind them from the crushing competition of the power driven machinery... it will provide limitless work for the creative genius in the country". 29

Similar views were expressed by Gandhi while delivering a speech at Gandhi Seva Sangh in 1934 and said, "We must promote every useful industry that was existent a short while ago and the extinction of which has now resulted in unemployment". 30 He sought revival of the village industry to solve the pressing economic distress to give employment to idle hand. Without revival of village industries the 'progressive poverty' 31 and unemployment will be difficult to stop. Wrote he, "village economy cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as hand grinding, hand pounding, soap making, paper making, match making, tanning, oil pressing etc." 32 The other village industries cover cattle farming, diaring, farming and compost manure. The above stress is only illustrative and

29. Harijan, 10-8-1934, p. 204.
30. CWMG, VOL. 59, p. 411.
32. Gandhi, M.K., Constructive Programme its Meaning and Place op. cit., p. 18.
not exhaustive. With the passage of time the list of village industries will go on piling. It is towards this aspect that Gandhi draws the attention of all. This is taking the process of development viz. technologies, skills and resources to rural people who have immense labour potential and with adoption and diversification an even and more balanced process of development will take place.

In this context when Gandhi advocated use of labour instead of use of machine which displaces labour Gandhi was painted as a primitive agrarianist. He was labelled as against modernisation. It is amply exhibited now that Gandhi was not against application of technology but he advocated rational modernization without unemployment. The need is to take technology at the micro level so that it is adequately applied and adopted in rural sector to eradicate unemployment and under employment and this helps in alleviating poverty than to confine its use in few hands and few spheres to raise production. Access to the masses will reverse the process of production as more and more people will indulge in production process. This will raise their capacity to grab opportunities for further production. This is the appropriate way in which decentralized use of machine and technology will help in eradicating poverty. One needs to recollect the analysis of J.D. Sethi when he commented upon the modernization policies of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Wrote he, "Since modernisation is the central theme of Rajiv Gandhi's policies, the best one can do is to persuade him to get a check list of Mahatma Gandhi's scheme of modernisation in which the growth of man was faster than the advancement of machine." Rajiv was all for relaxing bans for importing technology. It is in this context precisely that Gandhian theory of technology be understood properly as profound misunderstanding is still prevailing about it basically by those who created a wrong 

impression of his conception. He was safeguarding human values by protecting the interests of poor section and this crystallized his theory in this context only. Thus Gandhi viewed village as the basic political and economic unit, inhabited by not poor, dirty, exploited and hopeless. Villages are clean places, having numerous opportunities of development, maximum autonomy, participation of people in political, social and economic development. Such a village is giving gainful, adequate and satisfying employment to all and each is involved in productive pursuits. If the basic framework and parameters are intact Gandhi seems not against using machines, technologies or even use of computer, radio, television but the same should be need-based fulfilling all basic necessities of life and employment to all.

Gandhi himself wrote, "The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition, and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others". 34.

His elaborate concept of rural development, apart from villagers, in general draws our attention to specified sections of rural masses such as adivasis, lepers, and of course untouchables. These targeted sections i.e. adivasis (not generally schedule tribes) and untouchables (scheduled castes) who are capable of producing productive assets must be drawn into mainstream of life. This, in fact, constitutes the major section of our utterly poor classes living in extreme poverty. They even

do not possess the only and basic rural endowment, i.e. land. Under the integrated rural development programme these classes along with other rural poor form largely the targeted groups. Gandhi went a step ahead by drawing attention to lepers by which inference can easily be drawn that he refers to people who can't do work, such as infirm old, diseased, disabled persons. But so far, any body is capable of doing work must be given work or he must work to sustain his livings. Obligation to work is essential under Gandhian principles. This has very far-reaching implication on our economic and social system. Every nation has its peculiar characteristics and without understanding these special parameters no social or economic theories can bear desired fruits. Gandhi understood the basic Indian social pattern, class structure, economic deficiencies and inherited mentalities. Apart from a handful of population and area, India was and is rural nd without developing rural sector no development worth the name is possible in India. The key to India's development lies in its vast rural sector and if India could bring prosperity to its 75 per cent ruralities, India automatically reaches a stage of quality development as well as take off stage which can breed development, further and further.

The other important class towards which Gandhi referred is 'women' which constitutes about 48.14 per cent of our population and they are capable of working equal to men. In our villages, women are engaged in useful productive work. From agriculture to handicrafts and other village work, the village economy is, to a great extent sustained on the capable shoulders of women-folk. Women can play a great role in rural development and their talents and skills must be properly utilized.

Apart from social, economic, educational and moral aspects, Gandhi paid great attention to environmental aspects. He was very particular about sanitation, health and hygiene, drinking water in the villages. Recently environmental aspects are being viewed quite seriously in the sphere of rural development. The
level of cleanliness, access to pure drinking water, availability of health facilities both for men and animals and other such infrastructures are all strong indicators of development.

Such facilities are an integral part of the process of rural development and must accompany the development along with more and more awareness and consciousness among the rural masses. Environmental and health indicators tend to improve the quality of development and these factors are essential for improving the productive capacity of rural people.

This has been highlighted by the World Development Report 1990. Under the two-part strategy of rural development, first, for the pattern of growth which provides opportunities, the second is more important which increases the capacity of the poor to take advantage of these opportunities. 

In his constructive programme for rural reconstruction, Gandhi gave utmost importance to its implementation part. For him implementation of the programme would be directly responsible for the success of the programme. So much so that Gandhi wanted only those people on rolls of Congress register who could work as 'servants of the nation'.

He sees village level workers as the main pillars to make constructive programme a success and it is they who should act as the custodians of village development. The foundation of rural development will be based on the solid work of worker. A worker should not be power hungry and he should remain apolitical i.e. away from power politics. He should work courageously and 'intelligently' 'with local help' as far as possible. Gandhi made references after references in 'Young India' and 'Harijan'

about them and listed the qualities of an ideal village worker. He prescribed "Eleven Vows" viz., "non-violence, truth, non-stealing, brahmacharya, non-possession, body-labour, control of the palate, fearlessness, equal respect for all religions, swadeshi (restricting oneself to the use and service of one's nearest surroundings in preference to those more remote) and spirit of unexclusive brotherhood."  

To find such dedicated workers is perhaps the very hard problem even faced during that period when craze to serve the nation was at its zenith. He was not unaware of the problem. "The question ultimately revolves itself into this: Have we for this task workers enough of the requisite purity, self-sacrifice, industry and intelligence?"

Thus the whole thrust of the constructive programme was to reconstruct the social order and build a nation for taking up round rural development since India is predominantly a rural nation. It not only emphasises on political freedom but social and moral regeneration on the pillars of truth and non-violence, mutual trust and human relation and upliftment of villages by providing them means of production and giving them productive employment.

Many international and national writers and organisations have drawn the attention of the world towards human aspects of economic theories and stress that both technology and economics must have greater concern for human beings.

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38. Ibid.

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Dr. E. F. Schumacher advocated "production by the masses instead of "Mass production" as the basis of economic policy. He also advocated, a technology with a human face and study of economics, "as its people mattered in its thesis "Towards a re-definition of development".  

The above view of a modern economist Prof. Schumacher validates Gandhi in deep perspective and justifies his prime concern for development of the poorest of the poor.

The whole spectrum of Gandhian thinking right from the start of his "ashram which he founded at kochrab on May 25, 1915" (Satyagraha Ashram) as the first practical experience for his constructive programme and subsequent programmes of the Champaran experience, to the establishment of sevagram at Wardha, all were gravely concerned about rural unemployment and rural poverty and endeavored to enrich rural life as a whole. Thus, Gandhi can be said to have conceived the concept of integrated rural development much prior to our development plans.

It is the deep knowledge of Gandhi about the poverty, ignorance, unemployment, social, political and economic degradation of our rural society, which he has seen with his own


naked eye, that enabled him to give such an integrated equitable and balanced concept of rural development covering almost all spheres of human activity.

It is pertinent to briefly mention about some of the projects taken on Gandhian thinking and to judge their results. This will give us an insight to view very objectively the practicability of Gandhian model and how to rationalize Gandhian model if necessary. It may also help in examining whether one can achieve results with modifications on modern lines within the basic framework of Gandhian values.

Vedchhi project was initiated on Gandhian movement in 1924 in Surat District of Gujarat State to improve the conditions of adivasis. The conditions in Vedichhi were deplorable. People were very poor, had small land holdings, illiterate and habitual drunkers. It was started as a Khadi centre and subsequently a school was opened there. Later on, many a relief such as land tenancy etc. was made available to the peasants. Slowly it brought economic benefits and improved social infrastructure there. It brought massive benefits to the adivasis.42

After independence many changes occurred in the organizational set-up of Vedchhi organisation and it depended more on Government aid for its educational and other activities.

It no more retained its ashram character as its volunteers became government or panchayat officials. It also left political activity and with this went its motto of establishing a Gandhian society. Despite its becoming apolitical, it certainly brought economic and social gains to rural people.

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As an offshoot of Gandhian movement, the Vedchhi Intensive Area Scheme (VISA) was started in the valid taluka of Surat District in Gujarat State. This intensive area scheme was sponsored by the Khadi and Village Industry Commission and was taken up in 1954 not as a government sponsored scheme but as a mission.43

This was a programme started by a group of five workers but only one remained active (Allubhai). It was found that VISA rested on the personal shoulders of Allubhai, and the other members remained pasture.44 These periphery workers who were working at the grassroots levels were not considered for formulating the schemes but only involved in executing the schemes. In the above context it is worthy to note, that 'The VISA could no longer rely on personal morality and individual commitment alone. They needed specifically laid down rules and regulations for regulating work behaviour, because people can not work only on the basis of moral commitment. At least some economic incentive and security is needed to sustain the interest and commitment of workers.45

The VISA had developed an approach of planned development for the re-construction of rural society. The draft of the plans was formulated by outside experts. Neither the intermediary leaders, nor the workers on the periphery, nor village level leaders participated in the preparation of these plans.46

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44. Ibid., p. 124,
45. Ibid., p. 128-129
46. Ibid., p. 129.

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The above indicates the departure from Gandhian ideals. It is evident that voluntary workers need to be substituted by paid workers as this concept is not workable. The Gandhian principle still stands. Such workers even if paid like any worker or employee must be imparted with sufficient motivation so that they continue to work. What Gandhi meant was dedication. This dedication can be retained in any employee as national character. The passage of time and working conditions do not demolish or negate the ideal of Gandhi.

The other front where VISA failed was of mobilizing local financial resources as it depended mainly on outside help. But there was nothing wrong in it. What Gandhi emphasized was to educate people constantly to help themselves. Although “education was a major instrument of social change” as adopted by VISA, the pattern of education was on set lines as in other government institutions. This was because VISA’s educational needs were funded by government and therefore, it was obligatory for VISA to adopt educational pattern as in the Government.

On the economic front VISA initiated many a programme but even its programmes benefited better off farmers. No noteworthy gains accrued to small and marginal farmers and landless labourers. It, therefore, started Antyodaya in 1975 and covered 4000 to 5000 Antyodaya households. It helped in introducing technological inputs, improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, electric and diesel pumps. All this helped in changing the crop pattern. But the gains were not as it should have been. It also undertook small scale industries such as khadi, spinning, soap, handmade paper oil pressing, printing press but that failed to provide enough remuneration. The “papad rolling” was successful as it was entirely “market oriented and followed the techniques of modern marketing and management. It ensured an income of Rs 7.35 per day” which was above the prescribed minimum agriculture
It shows that local schemes based on marketability can be successful. We have read that Gandhi, too, had placed great emphasis on finding markets for rural local production.

Although other economic activities did not contribute much, it did wipe out stagnation from the area which was quite prevalent earlier.

Despite VISA's limited success in the economic field it did leave an impact on the social side such as bringing awareness among villagers and also making them conscious of the opportunities of development. It also made official machinery more responsive to their needs. But it failed to give any direction towards creation of Sarvodaya Samaj.

Vinoba Bhave, formed Sarvodaya Smiti to undertake constructive work as envisaged by Gandhi for the establishment of Sarvodaya or Antayodya, as Vinoba called it. The Sarvodaya plan committee fixed a family (family size not defined) requirement at Rs 3000/- per year, as follows at 1955 price level:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Maintenance</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old age Ins.</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47. Ibid., p. 133.

The development works were to be taken up on Gandhian principles of all-round rural development and the goal was Gram Swaraj. Despite such high ideals the movement failed to live up to the desired level. It has been argued that there is a vast difference between myth and reality. As Sahashrabudhe put it, "The romantic idea has to pass through the fire of actuality," the goal of gram swaraj was too far away to be visible. The movement failed to bring even attitudinal changes of limiting or renouncing wants. The whole movement was based on benevolency of rich and affluent and this has led to the benefits going to "Upper castes and dominant groups." The community and cooperative feeling as envisaged by the movement was nowhere to be seen.

The experience of Gramdan movement of Kerala is also no exception. The content of the movement suffered both internally and externally. The inherent contradiction in thinking of Gramdan leaders and the isolation of production process of villages led to a paradoxical situation. The government aid made the programme as "one more government programme" and took away the principle of self help and self sufficiency.

All Firka Development scheme of Madras, the Sarvodaya scheme of Bombay, the Etawah Pilot Project of Uttar Pradesh and the Nilokeri Project in the then Punjab (now Haryana) which were backed by respective government efforts have already been backed by respective government efforts have already been

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discussed in Chapter II. All these programmes have Gandhian mentality and strategy as the basis of their conception and execution in the field of rural development.

Apart from the above efforts it is justifiable to mention excellent performance of some voluntary agencies which took village development work in Gujarat in 1979. This experience is an example of voluntary effort in which voluntary agencies, the banks and the government have participated. From "1.10.78 to 30.9.82, the total investment was Rs 18.86 crores in which Rs 4.62 crores were contributed by banks, Rs 4.67 crores by State government and Rs 9.37 crores by non-governmental voluntary agencies. The experience has shown that voluntary agencies can play a very creative and innovative role in motivating the rural people and supervise the distribution of the resources with a view to ensuring their proper utilization. They can also play a very useful role in matching projects to the local conditions and supply local knowhow of the various segments affecting productivity and marketing.

The above experiment comes very near to the ideals of Gandhi of self help, dedicated workers and role of voluntary work in the rural uplift.

The experience of 'KARMA' which was started in 1976 with the help of Pest Control (India) Pvt. Ltd. in village Ladivali in Maharashtra was very encouraging. This is an example where the villagers got interest-free loans, used high yielding variety seeds, pesticides, fertilizers and in just one season raised

their average paddy production by "2.5 times." They repaid their outstanding loans and increased their credit worthiness so much that commercial banks advanced loans to them on their own credit worthiness. These were the programmes undertaken by the people themselves. It (KARMA) worked in the field of establishing also a Balvadi and organized Kisan union for better medical facilities. It organized tribal development. There were no subsidies. It carried "extensive credit surveys" and prepared credit plans and got advances sanctioned to "72 farmers" and their recovery was "98 per cent." 

Its other important feature was that of marketing. The villages started cooperative shops which proved a tremendous success. KARMA was a very successful project of rural development and brought immense awareness, consciousness and confidence in the poor villagers. It showed that voluntary agencies can act as a catalyst of change in socio-economic field of rural development and can bring a desired change in the entire outlook of rural people by making them conscious that "God helps those who help themselves." The experience of KARMA amply shows that the strategy of rural development desires dedicated efforts and integrated action.

While finalizing his comments Desai noted, "The crux of integrated development of a village in the implementation of constructive programmes for enforcing prohibition" (the villagers were drunkards before KARMA took developmental activity), "bringing dry land under irrigation, rotation of crops, taking up of subsidiary occupations, social integration, cooperation, community feeling, villagers participation, application of new technology, sanitation, literacy, methodical and planned...

53. Ibid., p. 29.

54. Ibid., p. 31.
development, planned family and parenthood, youth involved in constructive work, eradication and untouchability and above all dedicated and selfless leadership.\textsuperscript{55}

A check list of these crucial observations indicate the correctness of Gandhian postulates which forms the basis of any rural development work. Gandhi never restricted the use or inclusion of any thing worthwhile in his constructive programme. One basic assumption of Gandhi must be understood in broader perspective that his postulates are not fixed pillars and they are subject to appropriate modifications with the change of time but his cardinal values are fixed. Truth-non-violence, trusteeship, hard labour etc. are the golden dictums for establishing a perfect social order. What Gandhi meant is to have high ideals and if society moves in that direction the process of development will not only be clean and faster but sustainable, long lasting and the process of social transformation will be peaceful.

The effort of KARMA showed that concerted efforts at microlevel are easy to administer and they plug leakages and give direct results.

Yet another experience of Etah is worth mentioning. Hindustan Lever Limited, a company established a milk product factory at Etah. Although the area was having excellent agricultural and animal husbandry potential, it had very bad infrastructural facilities. At one time the Company decided to close down the factory but on pressures it decided to retain it. The Company studied the conditions in the area and chalked out an integrated rural development programme as it was convinced that without overall socio-economic development of this rural area nothing could be successful. It noticed poor quality of cattle and low milk yield in the area. There was lack of finances,

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 34.
professional guidance, shortage or non-availability of necessary inputs and lack of marketing facilities. A start was made for the development of area by drawing up an integrated programme. The company put 5 supervisors permanently in the villages to care for major operational areas. Their fields were agriculture, animal husbandry, health services, training and developmental activities. Help of outside agencies was taken to improve the quality of the cattle. The long-term strategy was adopted with agriculture and animal husbandry as the basis and particular thrust given also to, "supportive programmes in the areas of health and infrastructural development". These supportive services were in-built into the development strategy. This programme was not subsidy or charity oriented but based on the principle of self-help, self reliance and on its continuation depended upon the efforts of beneficiaries in future. The other important feature was the cluster approach adopted in the programme. It was noted, "In concept, these clusters are intended to be model nuclei for growth centres, complete with infrastructural support, so that they may continue and sustain their own development. It was the intention of the HLL to organize village level societies in these clusters, so that, in the long term, the villages themselves might shoulder the responsibility for their own development activities."

The activities enlarged over time and extended to irrigation, biogas plants, wind and solar energy and cottage industries particularly, carpet-weaving and basket weaving.

With humble start from 6 villages, the activities extended to 50 villages and over next five years planned to cover 160 villages benefiting 1,60,000 villagers. By way of bringing "5000 hectare under seed multiplication "Rs 8.5 million" resulted as

56. Ibid., p. 39.

57. Ibid.
additional income to the farmers. The project envisaged to reclaim "2000 ha" by 1990 thus proposing another Rs 10 million additional income. Through improved irrigation aids, animal-powered pumps, better farming aids, rotation of crops and establishing a research and development centre (in 600 acres), the income per hectare was proposed to go up by another 10 per cent thus another Rs 27 million to farmers. Similarly, by improving the quality of cattle by various aids the supply of milk was proposed to go up by 21000 tonnes i.e. equivalent to Rs 42 million per year. All these cumulative gains when distributed to 1,60,000 rural people would give an increase of Rs 600/- in per capita income per year. Thus the efforts of HLL were tremendous in playing a catalyst role in helping the farmers and inducing them to improve their economic and social lot by themselves and bringing them out of the trap of poverty.

The efforts of people's action for development (India) PADI, which was launched by a campaign under the Food and agriculture organisation of the United Nations in 1960, was a registered society in India since 1973 with the objective, to try to persuade non-governmental agencies to assist in the implementation of projects for the enhancement of rural prosperity.

PADI so far assisted "375 projects incurred Rs 26.78 crores out of which 214 projects involving Rs 10.16 crores have been completed and 161 projects are still going on".

The idea of referring to these government and non-government efforts have many dimensions. It has been seen that these programmes has a definite Gandhian tinge of ideas behind them. It is true, that they failed to achieve a social order as

58. Ibid., p. 45.
59. Ibid., p. 48.

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envisaged by Gandhi but the concept of Gandhi for taking up rural development as a wholesome effort is almost established by these efforts. Financial help bereft of social motivation, desire to develop and dedicated effort will collapse. Government help will not solve any problem. Efforts shall have to be made by the villagers themselves. There is a need to develop more rural industries and other subsidiary occupations to raise income of villagers. The strategy of rural development should have the aim of social development as its integral part. The school, the hospital, veterinary dispensaries, village developmental activities, village roads, irrigation system etc. should all form one integral part of the process of development. It requires structural administrative re-orientation at the village level or a suitable level. This will be examined in detail while drawing up an argument between present strategy of IRDP and the Gandhian concept as detailed out in this chapter.

The analysis here amply determines that the problem of rural development is not only of gigantic proportions but equally complex and serious. The genesis of the problem must be identified in right perspective, as Gandhi did by his practical experience and the solutions must be found locally with local participation. Having discussed the Gandhian concept of rural reconstruction and some of the government and non-government efforts closely associated with Gandhian framework it is quite pertinent to have a critical examination of his strategy of rural development.

The concept of need based economy instead of want based economy originated from the plight of crores of rural people who are living in a state of deprivation. We are not discussing the religious and spiritual way of salvation of soul as conceived by Gandhi but his economic and social postulates which were evolved out of true Indian conditions. The means of production and what to produce is so much dependent upon the elite desire and demand that the unorganized farmers have no say in it. This has created great imbalances in our economy. As has been discussed
extensively in earlier chapters, the gospel of faster rate of growth failed to alleviate poverty and poverty and disparities have, in fact, increased alongside growth. This is the most baffling paradox and it points out that developmental policies need to be restructured where development of man should be the stress. This is what Gandhi emphasised when he advocated a need based economy based on economic equality and devoid of any exploitation. The policy must be turned in favour of the rural classes, the production priorities must cater to the needs of these poor people and they must be afforded adequate opportunities both for greater participation in economic activities and for enjoying extended opportunities to raise their income and social status. The slogan of Gandhi - ‘Back to the villages’, has to be viewed in this context as he not only wanted to save millions of young rural people from underwork, he sought to afford them for self-employment opportunities at the village only. This will exploit local talent and local raw material for better and cheap production. Unless an understanding of Gandhi is made in the most liberal sense and efforts are made to revise his doctrines on the dynamic scale of time, keeping his constant parameters in mind, one cannot possibly understand the basic philosophy of Gandhian concept of rural development.

Gandhi's economic ideas have been subjected to great criticism at the hands of pure economists. It is argued that his concept of rural development is the basis for industrial uplift in a very guarded way. In contrast, rural sector was considered as 'handmaiden to industrialisation'. The Gandhian way pre-supposes a golden age of village isolation - and termed him as 'pastoral-populist', who wishes to establish 'probably mythical rural golden age' devoid of scientific agriculture, and discarding industrial development.60

M. Lipton himself spares Gandhi on at least three accounts from other pastoral populists. To quote him, "first, there was nothing vicarious about his simple-liferay; he acted out his vision of rural transformation through, egalitarian and self-sufficient community life... "second, he did not leave urban exploitation out of his account of rural degeneration, and thirdly, his recipe for rural regeneration had policy consequences extending far beyond the unpromising formula, "Leave them alone". He further analysed, "Indeed Gandhi despite his many years of argument with Nehru about industrialisation inspired policies of 'Community development' and rural self government (Panchayat Raj) which by diverting attention from the villages need for developmental resources and the high returns to scientific rural modernization chimed in perfectly with the priorities of the industrialisers".

This analysis of Gandhi is perhaps a tribute to him. For him harmony between rural and urban life was important. In fact, he wished to achieve a social order on rural foundation. He was not against any development of urban sector. For him the existence of rural and urban sectors is a reality and he never sought the extinction of urban sector. Of course, both rural and urban development have to qualify his value parameters.

The hypothesis of Gandhi was based on the pains he suffered in seeing the appalling disparities between man and man. As Lipton wrote, "The most important class conflict in the poor countries of the world today is not between labour and capital. Nor is it between foreign and national interests. It is between the rural classes and the urban classes. The rural sector contains most of the poverty, and most of the low cost sources of potential advance, but the urban sector contains most of the

61. Ibid., p. 136.
articulateness, organisation and power". He wrote further, "The urban classes have been able to win most of the rounds of the struggle with the countryside, but in so doing they have made the development process needlessly slow and unfair. Scarce land, which might grow millets and beansprouts for hungry villagers, instead produces a trickle of costly calories from meat and milk, which few, except the urban rich can afford. Scarce investment, instead of going into water pumps to grow rice, is wasted on urban motorways. Scarce human skills design and administer, not clean village wells and agricultural extension services, but world boxing championships in showpiece stadia. Resource allocations, within the city and the village as well as between them, reflect urban priorities rather than equality or efficiency. The historical trends have been also explained by Lipton, the same which Gandhi lamented and wished all to pay attention to. The developing countries never resorted to the slogan of mass consumption firstly. They first took care to utilize their 'massive installing extra capacity' for providing the people necessities of life—food, clothing, bread, simple goods and development of primary sector rather to concentrate on luxury items. The production priorities must not satisfy firstly the market requirements (this is what Gandhi advocated so vehemently), but the requirements of its masses who form the dominant rural and poor sections as they will subsequently become the tools of development. But the stress of Indian development strategy similar to those of industrial nations at the time of their industrialization culminated into 'unequal nature of development'.

This is the cause not only of great disparities between urban and rural sector but rural and rural sector, which instead of alleviating, encouraged disparities further, perpetuated

63. Ibid.
poverty and deprivation in rural sector and concentration of wealth and power into the hands of the few. Even the projects and programmes which were designed to alleviate poverty got inadequate resources, do not have concerted thrust for implementation and are ab-initio non-viable. The need is to go back from the stage of start of industrial process and to have a very deep insight about the whole structure of the polity and society of India. Instead, the country launched industrialization slogan without carrying for the structural development which is necessary to start a modernization process in our country. The concentration of human development and neglect of agriculture have pushed resources away from activities where they can help growth and benefit the poor, and towards activities whereby they do either of these, if at all, at the expense of the other. Therefore, there is urgent need to give basic priority to agriculture and allied sector both from the point of real priority and diversion of resources towards it.

Gandhi's slogan of 'Go back to the villages' has also its roots in his extreme vision and understanding of the urban psychology and growing rural distrust. The real change of heart and genuine care for the poor is essential for the own existence of urban society. So unfavourable is the opinion and treatment towards rural classes that no gains are allowed to percolate to poor. If this is not done, the rural classes have no alternative but to mobilize against urban interest and that will bring conflict and may be violent one which is outside the scope of Gandhian thinking and therefore, he advocated a change of heart towards the 'daridarnarayan'.

Contact with masses in the rural area and a change of life style was stressed by Gandhi. The concept of Shramdan does not only require intellectuals, administrators or politicians to work physically but it also desires them to work with people to know them and acquaint themselves with the specific and general problems they are facing and the socio-politico-economic conditions in which they are living. Unless they (the decision
makers, the policy framers, planners and implementers) understand
the rural life anatomy and have contact of working directly with
village over a long period of time, they are living in a fool’s
paradise. This was perhaps the "truth that Gandhi intuitively
grasped."  

64. Ibid., p. 340.