CHAPTER - 9
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANDHRA ASHRAMS WITH MODEL ASHRAMS (SABARMATHI & SEVAGRAM)

The Idea of Ashram in Hinduism is not a static one. Static ideas become out of date in course of time and are consigned to oblivion. Ashrams were once situated in the forests, far from cities and villages. During British rule, Ashrams became centres of insurrection. Madhusudana Saraswathi, an advaiten gave a new dimension in the 14th century. Swamy Vivekananda, in his own way mixed Western Humanism and Eastern spirituality and made it the basis of Ramakrishna Mission. The word "Mission" has an important connotation. It expresses zeal, zeal for serving the suffering humanity.

Gandhi set up "Sabarmati and Sevagram" Ashrams in order to propagate and implement his ideas and ideals among people. They included Constructive Programme as well as achievement of Indian independence. These Ashrams were the focal points of Gandhian ideology. These Ashrams were replicated throughout the country. Many of these were shut down for want of financial help. Some were closed due to the demise of the founders of those Ashrams. Through, Gandhism suffered a setback in the 50's and 60's of the last century people, governments, leaders and the upcoming youth have realized the significance of Gandhian thought in promoting universal human welfare. As a result of this, the Gandhian Ashrams in Andhra received a jolt. Other Gandhian Ashrams in the country also get fresh lease.

Despite the hurdles, many Ashrams have been following Gandhian Non-Violence and Constructive Programme. There has been growing interest in Gandhian principles all over the World. The youth have been instired by his life and ideals. Seeing the wide spread, hydra headed corruption, nepotism and bureaucratic redtapism even the highly qualified technocrats have been turning away from software jobs and are finding answers to their queries in Gandhiasm. We hope this is the reason for the revival of the Ashrams in Andhra and India.

Hundreds of volunteers from Andhra underwent rigorous training at Sabarmati and Sevagram and imbibed the true Gandhian Spirit. They came back to their places and propagated Gandhism through example. It spread to every nook and corner of the state. As a result, many Ashrams came up throughout Andhra.
Individual Satyagraha, Non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience, Salt Satyagraha, Entry of Harijans into Temples, Eradication of Untouchability, Prohibition, Spinning of Khadi, setting up of Village Industries, Village Sanitation and Women Welfare—all these Constructive Programme found their echo in obscure Andhra villages.

These programmes were moulded for the well-being of all the individuals in the society. These Andhra Ashrams played a pivotal role in bringing unity irrespective of caste, creed, economic status and political standing. National sentiments ran high. So, freedom fighters were given refuge, at times their families were saved from starvation. Police warnings were unheeded. In a word our struggle for independence was no less than a "Mahayajna". These Ashrams played the role of catalysts.

The students in those days imbibed Patriotism and discontinued their studies. They plunged headlong into the struggle for freedom. The Ashrams instilled noble ideals in them. The youth of those times burnt foreign cloths and articles. They also gave up their lucrative jobs and gave up their professions even. Sabarmati and Sevagram Ashrams as well as the Gandhian Ashrams in Andhra were behind these actions.

For one reason or another the present day governments are unable to implement Eradication of Untouchability, Women Welfare, Planning of Rural Development and Rural Self Employment. Almost a century ago Gandhiji implemented these programmes without any governmental help. The Andhra Ashrams stood him in good stead in implementing these Constructive Programme.

Gandhiji formulated the principles to be followed in the family, society etc., He also showed by example how to remove poverty. He also formed ideal managerial practices. Nature is there to fulfil our needs and not our greeds. Gandhiji used to take a big mugful of water from the Sabarmati and his daily morning routine was completed. Those who saw him do this with that scanty water were surprised. There the Sabamarthi flows. Here the Ashram is. When there is so much water in the river why should Gandhi be so stingy? they expressed their doubt. And Gandhiji's reply is thus "Our forefathers handed over the river to us. It is pure and pristine. We can use the water. But we should never forget it is not for us alone. It is for the posterity as well. It is our bounden duty that it is handed over to them untarnished". All the Disciples of Gandhiji were ecological conscious, followed in his foot steps the saw to it that no harm had been done to nature.
The present day Gandhi Ashrams are champions of green watch. It is his message to keep ecological balance. We can know the foresight of Gandhi in formulating and implementing these ideals.

These Andhra Ashrams along with Sabarmati and Sevagram are the beacons of hope and happiness. These Andhra Ashrams have been rejuvenated for the betterment of the society.

The Gandhian Ashrams in Andhra, especially Pinakini Satyagrahaashram, Sri Sarada Niketan, Gowthami Satyagrahashram (K.G.N.M.T.–Andhra Branch) and Vinayashram are doing yeoman service in Andhra, some of them are led by dedicated people. These Ashrams are reviving people’s interests in Gandhism. May many such Ashrams come up in Andhra and fill the land with Gandhian ideals and fill our lives with light and delight.