It is my certain conviction that, if work is done on a systematic basis in this direction, the department doing it will become self-supporting, the talent will be stimulated, the educated as well as the uneducated unemployed will find honourable employment without displacing anyone and crores will be added yearly to the wealth of this country, which is getting progressively impoverished.


CHAPTER - IV

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES FOR VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

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CHAPTER IV

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES FOR VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Introduction

Rural industrialisation solves many of the problems of our villages. It stimulates rural economic growth and overall development of the rural areas. Rural industrialisation has the potentialities of increasing agricultural production, increasing capabilities of individual production, inducing the development of agro-based and rural small scale industries, which in turn creates employment opportunities in rural areas. Thus with its potentialities for gearing rural development and employment opportunities, village industrialisation has become an indispensable tool for rural upliftment. In this chapter, the importance of village industries and its impact on village development is discussed in the Gandhian perspective.

Gandhiji was fully convinced of the fact that village industries can solve many of the problems of Indian villages and therefore the promotion of village industries can be a very effective means of rural employment and rural reconstruction. According to him:
without spinning wheel, the problem of India's poverty cannot be solved. Millions of India's peasants starve for want of supplementary occupation. If they have spinning to add to their slender resources, they can fight successfully against pauperism and famine. Mills cannot solve the problem. Only hand spinning and nothing else can. When India was forced to give up hand-spinning, she had no other occupation in return.1

4.2. Village Development - Gandhian View

Gandhiji was deeply concerned regarding the problems of Indian villages and was thriving throughout his life for the reconstruction of Indian villages. Today the term village development is also used to denote the concept of rural reconstruction. By rural reconstruction Gandhiji meant to reorganise the villages into a self-sufficient, self-governing units on sound scientific and spiritual values. The village reconstruction as proposed by Gandhiji is a means for establishing 'Sarvodaya'. Gandhiji realised the fact that India lives in her villages. He asserted "I have believed and repeated times without number that, India is to be found not in its few cities, but in its 7,00,000 villages".2 Therefore he opines, "If the village perishes, India will perish too. India will be no more India, Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is possible,

1. Young India, 6.4.1921.
2. Harijan, 4.4.1936.
only when it is no more exploited”. He found out that destruction of self-sufficient, self-supporting economy is the main reason behind the decay of Indian villages. The only method acceptable to revive village economy is the promotion of village industries.

Constructive Programme is a non-violent strategy for rural reconstruction. Gandhiji proposed Constructive Programme as a means for establishing 'Poorna Swaraj' or complete independence by truthful and non-violent means. It included twenty one items of work viz.

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. Education in health & hygiene
10. Women
11. Provincial languages
12. National languages
13. Economic equality

14. Kisans  
15. Labour  
16. Adivasis  
17. Lepers  
18. Students  
19. Civil disobedience  
20. Improvement of cattle  

It is pertinent to observe that all these twentyone items are aimed at the service of society by removing social weakness and evils. Of these twentyone items, khadi and village industries have a predominant role to play as these are the only means to provide employment to the rural folk to earn an honest income. He stated:

I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and 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 introduce spinning in their homes and every village must repossess its own weaver.  

His idea of rural reconstruction through charkha is significant because he found that through it the rural folk can achieve rural socialism, as it is "an emblem of self-assertion, self-reliance and the determination to abolish artificial distinction between the rich

and the poor, capital and labour and establishes a living bond between the two". 5

To Gandhiji charkha is the symbol of all labour intensive enterprise. Therefore he opines "what is true of khadi is more or less true of other village industries". 6 (He said "village industries must be revived if khadi is to be universal".7 Hence he wrote in Young India, "I would make the spinning wheel the foundation on which to build a sound village life. I would make the wheel the centre around which all other activities will revolve".8

The Gandhian concept of khadi and village industries programme is not the only means for economic independence, though it is a must. It also implies political and social regeneration of the villages. That is why Gandhiji said .... "while khadi is good for the poor as an honourable occupation for earning bread, it has an additional and far greater value as an instrument of winning swaraj through non-violent means".9

7. Ibid., p.255.
8. Young India, 21.5.1925.
4.3. Village Industries - A Means for Non-violent Production

According to Gandhiji village industries are a means for non-violent production because there is no chance for any kind of exploitation. Hence the power of production is vested on the producer. In this system Gandhiji conceived production as a method "to provide work for body and to satisfy economic needs of the society so that its members can fulfil themselves within a harmonious society". The inputs used in this system are locally available thereby reducing the need for dependence from outside.

In Gandhian ideology "the supreme consideration is man. The machine should not lead to make atrophied the limbs of man" Therefore Gandhiji was against machinery which replace human labour thereby creating unemployment. His own words will reveal this:

What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all.


11. Young India, 13.11.1924.

12. Ibid.
He argues:

Mechanisation is good when hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil where there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case of India. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages. The problem is how to utilise their idle hours which are equal to the working days of six months in the year. 13

In this regard the only suitable method to solve the problem of unemployment in Indian villages is the revival of village industries.

Nowadays machinery is used for mass production, which results in concentration of production within a few hands. This will widen the gulf between the rich and the poor in India, because "mass production takes no note of the real requirement of the consumer. If mass production were in itself a virtue it should be capable of indefinite multiplication. But it can be definitely shown that mass production carries within its own limitations". 14 Therefore Gandhiji envisaged production by the masses rather than mass production. Once he asked "how can a country with crores of living machines afford to have a machine which will displace the labour of others". 15 As Gunnar Mydral points out:

Gandhiji's enthusiasm for independent and self-directed work was linked with his animosity towards machines. He was hostile towards mechanisation and by implication antagonistic towards modern industry and technology. In his view India need, not to industrialise, but to revive village crafts. This condition was indeed the central theme of his whole approach to village uplift.  

4.4. **Kumarappa’s Views on Village Industries**

Joseph Cornelius Kumarappa, the original exponent of Gandhian economics, contributed a lot to the concept of village industries for village development. Gandhiji's idea of village reconstruction through village industries was fully contained and endorsed by J.C. Kumarappa. According to him, the culture of India is essentially rural and hence the future of India lies in the wellbeing of rural people. He points out that village industries are the only means for the attainment of village self-sufficiency. To him, the economy of village industries is that of non-violence and only through them that we can attain the economy of permanence. In his opinion, the prime feature in any plan for India should be 'self-sufficiency' in food and clothing. "If every village cannot be self-sufficient in food and clothing, it is no use having swaraj. We want to assume to everybody enough food and clothing. And

unless we do that, it is no plan for our country".  

He recommended village industries as an important method for solving the problem of unemployment. Because:

every raw material presents opportunities of employment. The export of raw materials, therefore, deprives the locally producing raw material of the possible employment. For this reason, as a rule, the people of the locality must work on the raw materials available and should be paid adequately.

The mode of production he proposed is the method that involves increased labour forces. He opines:

apart from the mere satisfaction of the physical needs of the people, we should aim at inculcating the spirit of self-help, mutual aid and a consciousness of social solidarity. When we achieve this end, we shall have travelled a long way on the road to swaraj through self-sufficiency.

Regarding the use of machines and tools, he proposed:

where standardisation and regimentation of labour are called for, the use of largescale machines is indicated... But in consumption goods, duplication and standardisation are not of the very essence of

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18. Ibid., p.10.

their being... In such cases, only cottage and village industries can answer the purpose. 20

He found out that "the greatest handicap from which village industries suffer is the utter resourcelessness of the artisan. Being unorganised he is unable to stand against the competition from his resourceful and organised rivals, the mills". 21 This Doctor of village industries also suggests certain clinical remedies to solve the problems confronting village industries.

The multipurpose co-operative societies can supply raw material, stock the finished goods and help in distributing all village industries products, especially those connected with food processing, textiles and other primary needs. They should be ever watchful of the interest of the villagers. 22

Kumarappa has made valuable contribution for the development of village industries. It can be observed that many of the ideas proposed by Kumarappa will help to solve the problems confronting the village industries sector at present. His thoughts and ideas are becoming increasingly relevant today.

4.5. Contemporary Thinking

The contemporary thinking accepted and supplemented a lot

21. Ibid., p.147.
to the idea of village industries for village development as proposed by Gandhiji. It is worthwhile to highlight the views of these thinking on the role of village industries in village development. Dr. Devendrakumar opines that "Because of the constant inrode in rural employment made by capital intensive, centralised urban industries, the basic pattern of rural India is very dark".  

He realised that "economic development of our country can proceed only if both production and distributive justice are simultaneously enhanced". In this regard he recalls Gandhiji:

The experiments in village industries, which he initiated, were meant not only to improve the existing crafts in the rural areas, but also to introduce new techniques on the basis of the latest scientific knowledge which could improve our economy.

According to Vasant Desai:

the advantages of the development of khadi and village industries lie in the family pattern of production, and low labour cost and overheads, besides, they provide employment to rural people at their doorstep, prevents the migration of population to urban areas and avoids the attendant consequences in terms of social stress, tensions and other problems such as housing, education, health,

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25. Ibid.
transport and loan and orders. To sum up what is required is not mass production, but production by masses.  

Srinivas Y. Thakur also supports this opinion:

India has over the last three decades achieved a measure of industrial diversification. In the next decade - considering inter-regional inequalities and small poverty and underemployment - it is well-advised to initiate development from below and bring the vast small population into the vortex of economic development. It is in this wider socio-economic context that the Chinese model of industrialisation should have great appeal for it, while India could as well insulate the example of countries like Japan, Australia and Taiwan, for example, in mobilising resource from the agricultural sector to finance the growth of non-agricultural sector in rural areas...  

L.K. Bharatiya opines:

These industries certainly have overwhelming economic importance, but they have a related social aspect also, which is rightly significant. The economic point of view has to be considered as the economic set up, determines to a great extent the social behaviour of the community, and at no point of time does the economic aspect cease to have its impact on the social. A programme of khadi and village industries development can be an economic solution to social ills, like inequality and moral degradation, as Gandhiji claimed.  

In the opinion of Mohan Prasad and Hari Dev Gagneja "These Industries are generally labour intensive, the capital required per person employed is much smaller than in the case of large scale industry. They thus ideally suit India where capital is scarce while labour is super abundant".29

The prevalent economic infrastructure does not permit the establishment of too many large industrial units, though they are necessary. The dearth of capital and skilled labour resources on the one hand and the abundance of unskilled labour resources on the other, coupled with the presence of imperfect market, enhance the possibilities of adopting labour intensive methods of production. As the village industries can more easily be decentralised, than the large scale industries, there should be a drive to have more village industries in rural areas so as to provide the local people decent jobs without their having to move to the big cities. Decentralisation of village industries help to fill the racks and gaps in the industrial structure created by the indiscriminate development of large scale industries.

The village industries create independent entrepreneurs who can use their skill and earn their livelihood. They infuse self-confidence among the people, which is vital for development

and progress. Thus the concentration of money within a few hands could be avoided and greater distribution of national income would become possible. The country would move towards equality and democracy. These industries would also create the feeling of self-respect among the people. Thus, the establishment of a large number of village industries ensures the maintenance of democratic institutions.

The above discussion reveals that, the khadi and village industries have a very important role in the Indian economy characterised by its vast spatial spread, unemployment and underemployment, rapidly rising labour force, capital scarcity, numerous market segments and diverse demand pattern, broad and diverse resource base and supply, predominance of widely scattered numerous village settlements, growing modern large industrial sector giving scope for a civilization and so on.

In a country like India, characterised by abundant labour supply and the concomitant unemployment and underemployment, khadi and village industries assume special significance because of the employment potential. Agriculture provides only seasonal work to the village people while khadi and village industries provide employment opportunities during the off-season and help many households to mitigate their problems during off-seasons. Village Industries also provide employment to special categories of people like women, children, aged, physically disabled etc. The participation of scheduled castes, scheduled
tribes, women and other weaker sections of the society in this sector is significant.

The khadi and village industries are expected to ensure maximum utilisation of locally available raw materials by adopting appropriate techniques. In some cases, non-conventional raw materials are used thereby converting 'waste into wealth'. As these industries can be implemented in almost all areas including backward, tribal, hilly and inaccessible areas, they are helpful in reducing the regional economic imbalances. This sector has acquired more attention in recent years due to the absence of environmental pollution. As they use only very little electric power or fuel they do not create energy crisis. Thus in all respects village industries are well suited to ensure the steady development of Indian villages.