GANDHIAN APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

A Study of Sustainable Farming by GSGSK

INTER UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE ECONOMICS
University of Kerala, Kariavattom Campus
Gandhian Approach to Rural Development: 
A Study of Sustainable Farming by GSGSK

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INTERNERSHIP REPORT

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Anamika Dinesh
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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE NO.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2  GANDHIAN APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>5-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3  SUSTAINABLE FARMING IN GANDHIAN CONTEXT</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4  SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>17-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I know that the work of making an ideal village is as difficult as to make of India an ideal country. But, while it is possible for one man to fulfill his ambition with respect to a single village someday, one man’s lifetime is too short to overtake the whole of India. But if one man can produce one ideal village, he will have provided a pattern not only for the whole country, but perhaps for the whole world. More than this a seeker may not aspire after.” Mahatma Gandhi

Rural Development has never been a new concept for India; it is rather interwoven in the heritage of Indian culture, mention of it has been made along with the history of mankind. Even in the famous epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata the instances of rural governance in terms of welfare of the people, justice to the people has been made. During the British rule, no sincere efforts were made for rural development. Famines were a common phenomenon, and rural agrarian economy suffered a lot under the feudal system. The tillers of the soil were isolated from their land.

According to Ministry of Rural Development (2013-2014) India has the largest rural population in the world. Sixty-nine per cent of Indian population, that is 833 million people, lives in rural areas. The population of rural India is about 12% of the world population, which makes it bigger than the size of Europe. Most of the rural people remain engaged in farm related activities. It is difficult to make out a living from the small and marginal farms upon which over 80 per cent of rural households depend. The unemployment rate in rural India has increased by 2% in rural areas. As on January 1, 2010 the number of unemployed was 9.8 million. By January 1, 2012 it has increased to 10.8 million. In rural areas poverty ratio remained above 50% with a marginal decline until mid-1990s and declined faster thereafter. Promoting development in rural areas is a slow and complex process faced with many challenges. The enhancement of productivity and income of rural communities is at the core of rural development. Due to lack of adequate options, majority of rural population rely on agriculture and farm related works for their livelihood. Moreover, social and economic inequality adversely affects people’s quality of life; leading to a higher incidence of poverty.

Gandhi was one of the biggest actors who have contributed towards the field of rural development; his experiments as well as economic thoughts have always been the source of inspiration. Gandhi looked at Rural Development in his own unique way. Gandhi never equated happiness with economic prosperity and physical pleasure alone. His concept of the Rural Development was totally opposed to the utilitarian concept of development. It is Gandhi’s deep-rooted conviction that individual happiness lies in the happiness of society and vice-versa; and this is constantly seen in almost all his pronouncements regarding rural development. He considered man superior to the system he propounded. A major...
objective of Gandhi was to rebuild India with the village as its nucleus. He was in search of the soul of India which according to him lies in her innumerable villages. Gandhi proclaimed that if once the villages perish India will perish. Gandhi said, “My idea of village swaraj is a complete republic, independent of its neighbors for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for, many others in which dependence is a necessity.” Village swaraj provides the key to understand the concept of decentralization.

Gandhi visualized an ideal social order wherein man and machine together would promote the basic human values. The approach of Gandhi based on decentralization with its corollary people’s empowerment opens up a new chapter in the socio-economic and political order. Gandhi sought to revive villages for it is impossible to have non-violence on a factory civilization which is essentially materialistic. Thus Gandhi advocated Swadeshi, which symbolizes economic self-reliance and economic independence. He envisaged an ideal socio-economic and political order with the individual at its center. For Gandhi, true economics, stands for social justice; it promotes the good of all by equally including the weakest, and is indispensible for decent life.”

The Gandhian approach to economic problems is an essentially practical and Gandhian approach to rural development accepts the method of planning and development but of different nature. He did not want it along industrial lines. He wanted to prevent our villages from catching the infection of industrialization. Gandhian plan is man centered one. As the plan has integrated approach to rural life it covers all the aspects of rural life. Gandhi is a champion of swadeshi or home economy. According to him mass production forces the people to leave their villages, their land, their craft and their homesteads. Gandhi was always laying stress on the twin principles of maximum production and fuller employment.

Gandhi Smaraka Grama Seva Kendram (GSGSK), the district level branch of Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi started to function in Mararikulam, Alappuzha district from the year 1958. During the initial years it mainly worked to strengthen the work of leprosy eradication and the rehabilitation process. The socio-political and economic condition of S.L. Puram, Alappuzha where GSGSK is functioning had been very pathetic in the initial period. Exploitation as well as lack of hope was very severe in all parts of life and besides, poverty and unemployment were deep rooted in the society. The fight between landowners and workers occurred frequently in these places. So people in these areas were not interested to cooperate with the principles and ideologies attached with the Gandhi an activities in the beginning. The GSGSK started to function here after the Punnapara-Vayalar-Mararikulam agitation. The activities of this Centre have really helped to enhance the spiritual awakening and moral upliftment of the people. Later on several committed and dedicated youth came forward to cooperate with the activities of the Centre.

During 55 years of its existence, GSGSK has done yeomen service to empower the poor and the marginalized segments of rural population in Alappuzha district. It has extended successfully an array of services to the people in agriculture, particularly zero budget natural farming and organic farming, rural industries, microfinance, participatory technology development, education, rural housing, health insurance and women empowerment. In Alappuzha district majority of the people works in the areas of agriculture and laborers. Kuttanad, water logged area belongs to this district. It is also considered as a store house of rice in the state of Kerala. Due to the lack of natural resources and cash crops this district is segregated mainly for farming and other activities. In Kerala number of people involved in farming is decreasing day by day. But people in Alappuzha district still stick on to the traditional agricultural activities. Here the farmers do play a major role in promoting agricultural sustainability, environmental safety and food security. The GSGSK works in close collaboration with the expertise of these farmers in taking the agriculture forward. Rural development is very much linked with agriculture development. The form of agricultural practices which enables us to produce healthful food without compromising
future generation's ability to do the same is sustainable farming which is the most promising solution for the present agrarian crisis. Under this context sustainable farming practices facilitated by GSGSK needs special attention.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The GSGSK in Alappuzha district is a voluntary agency working for the development of rural community by upholding Gandhian principles. Intervention of GSGSK in the field of sustainable farming requires special attention because it holds potential to revolutionize the current agrarian scenario. Development of agriculture along sustainable lines can speed up the process of rural development. The research aims to study the sustainable farming programmes initiated by GSGSK and how far they have been successful in setting up a rural agrarian development model based on Gandhian principles.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

MRD (2013-14) report tells us the present condition of rural India is no different from the pre-independent India. The synthesis of the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi with the ideas of the modern world will create a more holistic and integrated society. It will deliver more happiness, generate more altruistic economic surplus and bring about a more egalitarian society than what is now available to us.

M.K. Gandhi (1941) very clearly mentions socio-economic and political problems which are deep rooted in Indian villages. He dreamt that Indian village people should be free from malnutrition, poverty and unemployment in near future. The principle of non-violence could be upheld in the present society through the village economy as well as the sufficient marketing methods. He emphasizes the need for rebuilding Indian villages and its developmental features in all dimensions. Shriman Narayan (1960) very clearly and analytically explains the Gandhian planning to the society and its implementation. He presents some arguments for proving the authenticity of Gandhi’s view on rural development approach.

Krishna Nandala (2013) points out that economic philosophy of Gandhi is written about, discussed and talked about, however, when it comes to implementation, it is criticized for being impractical and imaginary. He was of the opinion that, the village swaraj model of development could have been implemented in selected villages of the country by ensuring sufficient flexibility in the techniques of production so that these villages not only attain self-sufficiency but also generates sufficient agricultural and village industry surplus for the growing urban population of the country.

J D Sethi (1978) observes that ‘Gandhi broke the dichotomy between the individual and the society; such dichotomy made irrelevant of all the questions raised by the so called welfare economics. What Gandhi did was to lay down principles and methods of practice by which the individuals and social utility function were jointly determined. A non-violent economic society and the replacement of demand oriented production by need oriented production are two principles out of the many he put forward’. Abraham Kurian (2014) analyses the role of Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi in rural development. He found that GSGSK in Mararikkulam, which is functioning according to the principles of Gandhi have helped to improve the economic development of villages in Alappuzha district.

Rural folkscould attain self-sufficiency and self-reliance through various people centred programmes of the centre in farming and other non-farming sectors which itself underlines the importance of Gandhian ideas. Bisha (2009) in her study points out that, Gandhi’s mission was to reconstruct India from bottom upwards, a decentralized socio-political and economic order with India’s myriad villages at its base. His concept of rural reconstruction and development are based on independent, self-contained, autonomous, self-supporting, self-ruling and self-reliant village communities in which life
will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom but an oceanic circle whose center will be the individual.

Gandhi was of the view that every village should enjoy maximum freedom to manage its own affairs even to the extent of defending itself against external invasion and to attain social and economic self-reliance. All that he said and did reflected the Indian framework of thought. Some literatures related to Gandhian principles and ideas on rural development are presented above. Since Gandhi worked out meticulously for the details of a wide variety of practical things which are vital to build a graceful village life. His conception of the village was not anchored on the modern notion of development but on the post-modern perspective of quality of life. His main emphasis was on the quality of life. So far various studies conducted are not comprehensive hence the present study attempts to examine if sustainable rural development is possible to achieve through Gandhian outlook with the following objectives.

1.3 OBJECTIVES
- To understand Gandhian approach of rural development.
- To examine various activities of GSGSK.
- To identify various methods of sustainable farming implemented by GSGSK and to analyze it under the framework of Gandhian principles.

1.4 METHODOLOGY
The study focuses on the sustainable agricultural activities of GSGSK in Alappuzha district under Gandhian outlook. Whole study is based on descriptive qualitative method. Data collection was done using both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through direct personal interviews (DPI) and site visits. Both administrative staffs and beneficiaries were interviewed. For convenience beneficiaries were selected from Mararikulam. Agricultural activities of GSGSK are implemented through various Joint Liability Groups. Best performing beneficiaries were selected from different groups according to convenience. In order to collect data about GSGSK centre at S.L.Puram, houses and fields of beneficiaries at Alappuzha and Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi at Trivandrum were visited. Secondary data was obtained from various research publications, books, reports of various committees and commission, periodicals and annual report of GSGSK.
Chapter 2
GANDHIAN APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

‘The development of the country lies in the development of the rural masses and rural areas’

Gandhi was neither a pure academic nor an economist; the socio-economic conditions of the 19th century world; the circumstances and surroundings in which he was born and brought up, all these have exerted influences on Gandhi’s ideas and principles. The Indian villages were self-sufficient economic units before the colonial era. Village industries and handicrafts flourished highly in the pre-British India. Trade and commerce were of a high order during that period. As a result of the British rule in India the capital that had accumulated in India over these centuries drained away. As a result the self-sufficient, self-reliant and autonomous nature of Indian villages was completely destroyed. These socio-economic conditions that existed in India during Gandhi’s times also influenced him in shaping many of his economic ideas like swadeshi, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, emphasis on village and cottage industries etc. His opposition to the multiplication of wants and the creation of urban-industrial civilization is linked with his love of the ancient Indian villages-their self-sufficient, self-reliant, autonomous and prosperous nature. By emphasizing khadi and other village and cottage industries in his economic philosophy Gandhi wanted to rejuvenate the self-sufficient nature of ancient Indian village system.

Rural development for Gandhi is a self-sufficient village economy and self-sufficient village community. He emphasized the utilization of local resources for development. Gandhi realized that India lives in her villages and villages constitute the heart of India. That is why he said, “I would say that if the village perishes, India will perish too. India will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost”. He found that the destruction of self-sufficient, self-governing and self-supporting Indian village economy is the main reason for the decay of Indian villages. For him the objective of rural reconstruction is to attain village swaraj. Only through village swaraj it is possible to attain a sarvodaya order of society. Through rural reconstruction Gandhi advocates a rural and agrarian civilization based on neighborliness and sharing.

Gandhi wanted to make the affairs of rural development the work of the rural people itself. Their participation is highly relevant to the effective implementation of programmes and schemes having direct, immediate bearing on their socio-economic life. The Sevagram project established by Mahatma
Gandhi in 1936 is an answer to all problems of rural development. The project was a scheme of rural development for a self-sufficient and self-governing village community managed by rural people themselves, with the motto ‘individual is supreme’. Gandhi’s model of ideal village was free from all kind of social evils like untouchability, illiteracy, unhygienic conditions, health hazards and religious intolerance. This same idea is reflected in Amartya Sen’s work ‘Development as Freedom’. In which he says development is freedom, freedom from all social evils.

Gandhi’s idea of decentralization of economic and political power was the principle idea behind Panchayat Raj scheme approved by the National Development Council in January 1958. Local self-government of the modern times is essentially a British creation. But Article 40 of the constitution is considered as a victory of the Gandhian approach. It says “The state shall take steps to organize village Panchayat and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government”. The 73rd constitutional amendment act passed in December 1993 has given a new direction to the Panchayat Raj system. But the performance of the Panchayat Raj system in many states has become weak and ineffective. The present effort for rural development is criticized for its much dependence on governmental assistance rather than the self-help; for its spoon feeding approach than the self-reliance and cooperation. It was said that, despite the administrative innovations from the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee to the present 73rd constitutional amendment act people’s participation in the process of development could not be ensured and above all the whole process was taken to task as it failed to provide proper leadership to the rural poor.

Gandhi says, ‘my idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbor’s for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent where dependence is a necessity. Thus, each village’s first concern would be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve of its own for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible, each activity may be conducted on a co-operative basis. There will be no caste discrimination such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-cooperation must have the sanction of village community’.

2.1 IMPORTANCE OF GRAMA SWARAJ IN RURAL SECTOR

The term Grama Swaraj means self-rule and self-restrains. In this ideal village if people are doing any wrong thing or ill-legal activities it would not be treated in a harsh method rather reformation of the mental attitude of the culprit is the panacea. While emphasizing the concept of village swaraj, Gandhi’s intention was to create a non-exploitative, non-violent, non-competitive society in the near future. The article written by Gandhi in Harijan in 1942, very clearly says that ‘my idea of village swaraj depend upon perfect democracy based on individual freedom’. Some of the main elements included in the Gandhian concept of village swaraj are trusteeship, swadeshi, bread labour, self-sufficiency, decentralization, co-operation and equality. By swaraj his intention was to liberate the human beings from evils, bondage and low human dignity (Sheo Kumar Lal, 1981).

2.2 RELEVANCE OF SWADESHI IN RURAL SECTOR

Gandhi had announced swadeshi movement in order to boycott the foreign clothes and the other foreign items. Gandhi defines swadeshi as, ‘that spirit within us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote’. The main aim was that all the villages in India would be well and sufficient enough to produce essential items for its own
survival. In the villages, the success of swadeshi depends upon the people’s attitude for buying the products which are made locally. At the same time Gandhi never liked to keep ill feeling or bad attitude towards the foreign people or their product. The doctrine completely depends on self-less service based on love and ahimsa. In case of any need the villagers should have the responsibility supply essentials commodities to the nearby villages. In the moral field its emphasis is to attain the decentralized economy so that village development would take place simultaneously in the country (Shashi Prabha Sharma: 1992). Khadi was an instrument put forward by Gandhi to communicate the idea of swadeshi. Production for use, not for a market is the essence of Khadi economics. The pathetic condition of the British India forced him to emphasize on Khadi as providing relief to the poverty-stricken masses. Thus he placed spinning wheel at the center of his economics.

2.3 RELEVANCE OF BREAD- LABOR IN THE RURAL SECTOR

Gandhi had developed this concept by reading the books of Ruskin, Tolstoy and New Testament. According to Gandhi he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen foods. Sacrifice here means bread labour. Bread labour concept would give new vigour among the many unemployed people living in the rural areas of the country. People can attain essential items such as food, shelter, and clothing by doing the physical labour in far and near places of the villages. No labour is too mean for one who wants earn an honest penny.

2.4 RELEVANCE FOR TRUSTEESHIP IN RURAL SECTOR

The idea envisaged by Gandhi for the concept of trusteeship got great admiration and wide discussion all around the world. “Gandhi advised the owners of property to consider themselves as trustees of the property which really belonged to the whole society and manage it accordingly, taking only what they needed for their own upkeep but using the rest for the welfare of society.” (Mathai,2000) As per the concept people who have enough money should act as a trusty and use the money wisely for essential purposes. The greedy mind and the money-oriented life style were the real cause behind the increase of various social problems and criminality in society. By implementing this concept society can avoid class war and the fight between poor and the rich. In many rural places of India especially in remote areas people are almost living like slaves and the rich land lords are exploiting the skill and manpower of these poor for increasing their profit. But the trusteeship concept says that the landlords should donate excess land to hundreds of landless people living in our country.

2.5 IMPLICATION OF SARVODAYA IN THE RURAL SECTOR

The meaning of Sarvodaya is welfare of all. This concept asserts that development should reach to the last person in the society. Truth and non-violence are the two main components associated with this concept. Here Gandhi had specifically mentioned the reframed social and economic order which is more convenient to rural people. The basic unit of sarvodaya society is the self-sufficient village having the ability to fulfill all the basic needs of the people in the rural sector (Abraham Kurian, 2013). Ultimate aim of sarvodaya movement is to uplift the downtrodden and to make a silent revolution in the society through the change of people’s attitude as well as appropriate development strategy concerned to the rural people.

2.6 SELF-SUFFICIENT VILLAGE ECONOMY

Gandhi wanted every village to be self-contained republic, each village should grow articles for its own consumption. The solution to the problems of villages was given the top priority in his plan so
that poverty could be eradicated and people would be happy and self-reliant. He laid emphasis on the revival of village industries like soap making, paper making, Khadi industries etc. The village will serve as a part of the decentralized economy. The village economy must satisfy two major objectives. The first, it would provide maximum employment and income to the inhabitants, and second, it would generate equality, freedom and justice. In villages, there are village industries and cottage industries. The production, consumption and distribution of villages industries are confined within them. In the case of cottage industries the articles may be produced for the entire country and sometimes for foreign countries. Gandhi believed that in large scale industries there is a sense of alienation. In village industries human capability expansion is feasible through nonviolent methods.

2.7 SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT

Gandhi has strongly recommended the eco-friendly cultivation and production method. “Gandhi believed that economic productivity, environmental protection, maintenance of resources and social justice should go together with growth” (Asha Patel, 2005). Gandhi was against the policy of over exploitation of natural resources in order to get rapid economic growth by blindly following the western method of development.

2.8 CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Gandhi has designed constructive programme which includes eighteen programmes for the reconstruction of Indian villages. The Gandhian movements of rural reconstruction consist of:

- Communal unity
- Removal of untouchability
- Prohibition
- Khadi
- Other village industries
- Village sanitation
- Basic education
- Adult education
- Women
- Education in health and hygiene
- Provincial language
- National language
- Economic equality
- Kisans (farmers)
- Labour
- Adivasis
- Lepers
- Students

Gandhi had intense desire to see the development of the poor and the downtrodden who live in the rural areas. He strongly believed that not only the material progress but also the progress of morality is very essential for the success of the country. Gandhi had introduced constructive programme consisting of eighteen items especially for the wellbeing of rural people.

Gandhi visualized a new social order- Sarvodaya which would be egalitarian, classless, casteless and without the division of high and low. Sarvodaya negates the utilitarian philosophy of the greatest good of the greatest number. Sarvodaya stands for the good and happiness of all. Here all individuals have equal opportunities for their development. The sarvodaya is free of seven evils- politics without principle, education without character, science without humanity, wealth without work, commerce without morality, worship without sacrifice and pleasure without conscience. The economic system in the sarvodaya order of society always makes a balance between economic progress and moral progress. That is why Gandhi said that truth and non-violence are the corner stone of the sarvodaya order of the society. For him, real happiness is a combination of material, moral and spiritual growth.
2.9 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF GSGSK

Gandhi Samaraka Grama Seva Kendram (GSGSK), S.L.Puram, Alapuzha is the district level branch of Gandhi Smaraka Nidi, Trivandrum. The latter is the Kerala state unit of Gandhi Memorial National Trust Delhi. GSGSK was established in the year 1958 as a non-profit, secular, non-political institution to take rural development programmes. The territorial jurisdiction of GSGSK is Alapuzha district covering 71 Gramapanchayat, 12 block panchayat and 5 municipalities. During these eventful years of existence GSGSK has won laurels for its spectacular achievements in the socio-economic space of the district. The vision of GSGSK is the creation of a casteless and classless society referred to as “Sarvodhaya society” by Gandhi. In this society, there is political, economic and social equality for all; every person is conscious of his duties and responsibilities and everyone works for the material and moral wellbeing of himself and the society.

The mission of GSGSK is to serve the poor and the marginalized villagers through promoting and strengthening their community based organizations in order to enhance opportunities for employment, income generation, and education, health care and social wellbeing. GSGSK has done yeomen service to empower the poor and the marginalized segments of rural population in Alappuzha district. It has extended successfully as an array of services to the people in agriculture, particularly zero budget natural farming and organic farming, rural industries, microfinance, participatory technology development, education, rural housing, health insurance and women empowerment. The microfinance service launched during the year 1996 added synergy to the multifarious development initiatives of the institution. GSGSK won wide acclaim for the successful implementation of the people centered programmes like zero budget farming, palliative care of patients, human resource development, Gandhi darsan in schools, etc.

Zero budget natural farming aimed to produce safe foods free from pesticides and fertilizer residues which in the long run might induce carcinogenic diseases in human beings. Gandhi darsan was an educational programme to convey to the new generation of students Gandhian philosophy founded on truth, nonviolence and self-reliance. The efforts of GSGSK on human resource development laid stress on capability improvement of the clients in designing, implementing and managing their development interventions.

THRUST AREAS OF INTERVENTION:

Sustainable Agriculture

since the district has an agrarian economy GSGSK works in close collaboration with the small and marginal farmers in moving sustainable agriculture forward. With the guidance and assistance of NABARD, GSGSK has been keen on promoting integrated farming system models, organic farming methods and improved agricultural techniques.

Microfinance

GSGSK launched microfinance service during the year 1997-98 in order to make credit available to the poor and the marginalized segments of the rural population on a large scale, adopting the SHG model developed by NABARD. Through microfinance programme people can organize jobs in their own locations with limited money and natural resources.

Livelihood Intervention

GSGSK believes that microfinance per se may not bring about economic development although it is an important input in economic activity. The credit has to necessarily invest for gainful employment
generation and it could be ensured only by inducing self-help groups to graduate from microfinance to microenterprises. GSGSK accomplishes this by transferring skills, technologies and management information to target groups for gainful adoption.

**Technology Transfer**

Technological improvements have made great success in various periods. GSGSK adopts participatory action process to accomplish meaningful changes in the livelihoods of the rural poor through training and counselling, action plans, technology transfer and midterm correction in adoption. Experts belonging to the farming and non-farming sectors regularly visits the organization and clear the doubts and give guidance continuously. *Grameena prathana kendram* was founded by GSGSK in 2002 to cater the technology transfer needs of the rural community. *Kendram* also attends to the task of identification, documentation and dissemination of tradition knowledge in the fields of agriculture, fishery and health care.

**Market Promotion**

Basically the items produced by the groups and members of GSGSK have to be sold in the market. To help the micro entrepreneurs GSGSK supplies them with resources and market information's and renters assistance to organized marketing groups thereby grooming them as better managers of their enterprises.

**Women Empowerment**

GSGSK strives hard to empower women in their fight against discrimination and marginalization. Here members belonging to self-help groups formed an organization known as ‘Mochitha’ which raised voices and protested against the injustices and the violence faced by women in our society. This initiative will help to create social awareness and togetherness among the women community.

**Health Caring and Housing**

GSGSK has launched a holistic healthcare system through a project ‘Sarvesanduniramaya’ meaning health for all. The poor villagers are also brought under health insurance cover for medical care. GSGSK has also been implementing other healthcare programmes like on the spot clinics, palliative care etc.. The centre makes available house construction loans to the poor people, in collaboration with reputed financing institutions.

**Education**

GSGSK has the mandate for promoting Hindi, the national language. This is achieved by running educational institutions up to post graduate level. Under the leadership of the centre an English medium primary school is working near the head office. In certain places centre has arranged loans from the financial institutions to the children of the GSGSK members.

**Rural Development Projects of the Center**

*Swadesi Cluster*

Some of the women self-help groups work in the production of various types of soap, washing powder, lotion etc. The Gandhian centre for rural development is giving technical assistance to them.

- **Milk Diary Units and Egg Farming Units**

Realizing the scarcity of milk supply in Alappuzha district, the centre took decision to promote milk farming with the help of banks. SBT provides financial assistance to the dairy farmers associated
with the GSGSK. The centre has also been promoting goat rearing for milk production particularly among the low income groups of women. Women members associated with GSGSK are showing more interest to work in the field of egg farming. The project egg for all designed exclusively for rural women has been in operation since 2005-06. The centre is doing all kinds of help like providing advice, financial assistance to the individual farmers in the district.

- **Kora Grass Unit**

  The centre is giving training and technical advice to the members belonging to the kora grass units. Some of the products made by the units with kora grass are bags, floor mat, waste basket, office file, cushion and flower vase. The National Institute of Design Development and other financial institutions are also helping and giving guidance to these groups of GSGSK.

- **Fish Farming and Processing Units**

  The GSGSK established ‘Matsyasamrudhi’ fish processing and marketing units with the assistance of Japan fund for poverty reduction through disaster management with the objective of creating employment to the fisherman, particularly women in the tsunami affected coastal panchayats. Project named as ‘Makarika’ included members of the joint liability groups and they produce various fish products which are ready to cook and serve.

- **Solid Waste Management**

  GSGSK formed twelve vermin clubs which include two hundred people. Here the club members are given proper instructions for using earth worms as an agent for converting solid waste into organic manures. The main aim is to promote the idea that waste produced in our household can be decomposed in an environment friendly manner rather than dumping them on the public places, roads and neighboring places.

- **Industrial Coir Development Cluster**

  GSGSK has taken particular care for starting the coir industrial clusters in the district. GSGSK has entered in the field of coir development in 2000 with the objective of empowering small scale producers and workers to take up production, processing and marketing of coir and its products, avoiding totally, the middleman. Infra-structure for coir spinning, dyeing and market promotion of end products was also developed. Gandhi felt that a strengthened and economically sound rural economy would revitalize Indian economy. He preached hence the ‘gospel of rural mindedness. A rural economy of self-contained villages alone could be the basis of a non-violent economy. He felt that small communities molding their lives on the basis of voluntary cooperation would be the best environment for the extinction of exploitation. The regeneration of India he felt to be impossible without village reconstruction. Hence he gave his slogan “back to villages”. In small self-sufficient villages producing mostly for their consumption a peaceful life devoted to the pursuit of democratic values was possible. Big urban concentration on the other hand results in the monopolization and accumulation of wealth by a minority. Economic concentration is bound to lead to political centralization. Centralization in turn supports violence. He was of the definite view that non-violence could be realized not on the basis of a factory civilization but only on that of self-contained villages.
Chapter 3
SUSTAINABLE FARMING IN GANDHIAN CONTEXT

3.1 FARMING ACTIVITIES OF GSGSK

Even though Gandhi did not mention anything about the concept such as sustainable development but his actions have supported these aspects on several occasions. This highlights that development is not only for the satisfaction of present generation but also for the future society. GSGSK is concentrating their activities on nature oriented things and the wellbeing of the society. Their never support the perception like the use of the resources only for today and not for tomorrow. So far we have seen the overall socio-economic activities of GSGSK, now we examine the sustainable farming practices implemented by GSGSK in particular:

Farm Sector

Agriculture is the mainstay of economy of the district. It continues to provide shelter for more than 60% of the population. Although estimates indicate that the contribution of this sector to the economy is sliding down due to various reasons. Emphasis is therefore given to empower the farm sector by extending credit and technical support.

1. Annapurna Rice Farming

This is an ongoing programme, launched during 2005-06 in the vast rice bowl of Kuttanad, Alappuzha where farmers had been leaving rice paddies fallows due to declining profit margins over a number of years. GSGSK successfully persuaded 80 joint liability groups of 616 tenant’s farmers to raise paddy in 600 hectares during 2005-06. This program was continued during the following years in different parts of the district for increasing rice production. During the 2012-13 1715 farmers participated in the program and produced 3822 tons of rice from 873 hectares of paddy fields.

2. Haritha Samrudhi

The program instated during 2005-06 aimed to enhance fruits and vegetable production adopting the following strategies:

- Vegetable cultivation in homestead
- Vegetable cultivation on the terraces of dwelling houses
Vegetable cultivation in rice fallows
Banana cultivation in coconut gardens as intercrop

As per 2012-13 data seven joint liability groups (100 members) raised vegetables in 190 hectares and banana in 72 hectares and 1520 tons of vegetables. Three farmers also started high value vegetable cultivation in green houses under this project.

3. Ksheera Samridhi

Considering the ever green market for milk and milk products in Alapuzha district the project Ksheerasamridhi was initiated in 2005-06 with objective of organizing a large number of mini diaries each having three milk animals procured at staggered intervals of three months and barn. Accordingly 130 joint liability groups of women were organised and low priced credit was made available to them. The project did make a clear impact on the farmers income and employment. Further the diaries met the organic manure requirement of crops in the farms. Even though there was a delay in the repayment of loans and financial shortage during the year 2012-13 milk production is now on the path of recovery. Ksheera Samridhi project also envisaged the popularization of goat rearing in home stead as an income generating activity for women.

4. Egg for all

Poultry farming has been an important economic activity in rural homesteads in Kerala, managed primarily by women. The project egg for all was launched in 2005-06 to gear up this micro agri business confined to the homesteads in the districts. The accomplishment of the project was commendable and therefore it was continued indefinitely. During 2012-13, 1309 farmers reared poultry birds. The rate of production of eggs was in order of 8500 per day, providing reasonably good supplementary income to the farm families, besides satisfying the protein needs.

5. Matsya Samrudhi

Matsya Samrudhi Industrial Fish Processing, GSGSK established this industrial fish processing unit during 2008-09 with the aim of empowering fisher women in the Tsunami affected coastal tracts. The unit received financial support from the Government of Kerala through Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction.

The recently introduced project of matsya samridhi is a farming method that successfully integrates solid waste management and profitable fish rearing. Under this programme, interested members are selected and they are provided financial assistance for the construction of the fish tank. And specific variety of fish is provided to them, which feed on the household floodwater, after six months or seven the fish attains complete growth and it can be sold at good price.

3.2 SUSTAINABLE FARMING ACTIVITIES

Declining soil fertility is a major problem confronting farmers in most of the agricultural tracts. Soil fertility management, therefore, is crucial to the development of farming systems that are sustainable. It is in this context organic farming more particularly natural farming assumes importance. Zero budget natural farming, a variant of conventional organic farming was conceived and developed by Sri. Subhash Palekkar of Maharastra state. It is a system that is environment friendly, sustainable and the least expensive. Further it ensures poison free agricultural products. Natural farming system makes use of microbial population and the dung of indigenous cows, the earth worms in the natural soil and crop residues for making available plant nutrients thereby reducing the farming expenditure. No input is brought from outside of the firm. In order to popularize zero budget farming in Alapuzha district a NABARD assisted project entitled “Promotion of zero budget natural farming”
was implemented during 2012-13. A series of awareness classes were organized in the district in which 724 intending farmers, students, social workers and officers of the Department of Agriculture participated.

i. **Bio-Inputs for Crop Production and Protection**

Considering the importance of bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides in organic farming system, a laboratory for the production of biological inputs needed in agriculture was established by GSGSK in 2006-07 with financial assistance of NABARD. The first product released was Prakruthi ‘fluorescent pseudomonades’, a broad spectrum antagonistic micro-organism capable of controlling soil and airborne pathogens affecting crop growth and production. Subsequently, the production of Trichogramma egg parasitoids was launched with the technical assistance of the Project Directorate of Biological Control, Bangalore. This is now extensively used in rice fields, particularly in Kuttanad, the rice bowl of the state. In 2010-11, two entomo-pathogenic fungi capable of controlling insect pests on vegetables and many of the other crops were released: Prakruthi Beauvariabassiana and Prakruthi Verticillium Iacanii. The only bio-fertilizer developed and released by the laboratory is Prakruthi Azospirillum. It is a potential source of natural nitrogen enrichment in soil. This input is yet to become popular among farmers.

ii. **Empowering Farmers**

Farmers are considered the back bone of rural economy. Yet they are the most neglected in the society and are destined to face the consequences of a host of challenges, because climate change declining soil productivity, market risk, etc. very often the farmers are prone to leave the field fallow and migrate to the other sectors in search of better job opportunities. Such a scenario, in the long-run will adversely affect the food security of the state. GSGSK piloted NABARD’s project for empowering farmers to solve the problems confronting them through mutual assistance sharing knowledge and inputs creating market support and mobilizing risk support from their government in their favor. Under NABARD’s directions GSGSK organized 18 farmers club during 2011-12. The farms club organizes a number of training programs adopting the principle of learning by doing the most important programs among these are: organic farming, zero budget farming, mushroom production, value addition in milk and home farming.

iii. **Skill Training for Self-Reliance**

*Grameena Padana Kendhram* (GPK) was founded by GSGSK in 2002 to cater to the technology transfer needs of the rural community. Further it was given the additional mandate for establishing rapport with development departments, universities, central institutes and reputed rural development organisations, for furthering the cherished goals of the centre. GPK accomplishes human resource development through training based on the principle of ‘learning by doing’. During 2013 GPK organized 34 technology transfer programs benefiting as many as 1951 clients from various walks of life. The majority of these programs were sponsored by NABARD under farmer’s technology transfer fund. GSGSK works accordingly to the Sarvodhaya principles of Mahatma Gandhi. Sarvodhaya stands for the good and happiness of all. In such a social system all individuals have equal opportunities for their development. The development approach put forward by GSGSK is mainly human centric. The activities and accomplishments of GSGSK aimed at creating a successful self-reliant economy based on Gandhian principles; thereby it provided various opportunities for rural population for improving their human potential.

**3.3 THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE IN REGARD TO GANDHIAN IDEOLOGY**

GSGSK approach to rural development is clearly decentralized and inclusive in nature. Implemented programs were clearly planned by taking into account the regional and geographical characteristic of
the village. Special packages introduced for the upliftment of farmers, traditional fisher men and coir workers and emphasis on village industries are examples of decentralized pattern of development.

3.3.1 PROTECTION OF RURAL ECONOMY

Centre’s main attempt is to strengthen the rural economy and create new enthusiasm, vigor and viability in the rural community. Through preserving and protecting agriculture, GSGSK is protecting the rural economy itself. Since Indian rural economy is basically agrarian in nature, its economic stability depends on the sustainable development of agricultural sector. Gandhi had identified this fact, that’s why he included and gave special attention to kisans in his constructive programme. Beneficiaries are of the opinion that various sustainable farming practices have enabled them to improve their standard of living by providing them a promising income and it has also boosted their self-esteem and self-confidence.GSGSK acts as a bridge between farmers and the financial institutions, so loans are made available to the farmers without much technical difficulties. The centre makes sure that members repay the loan in time and they are properly used for farming activities.

3.3.2 VILLAGE SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND FOOD SECURITY

The village should be self-sufficient in almost all aspects and that was the concept propagated by Gandhi. Integrated farming practices implemented by GSGSK were able to make the rural community self-sufficient in case of food. Majority of Indian villages are deprived from daily basic food requirements, under such circumstances the farming practices of GSGSK which helped to attain food security in Mararikkulam require special attention. Milk diary unit, egg producing unit, mushroom cultivating units and other agro based industries etc help to generate employment opportunities for the rural folk. The money that generated in the village is circulating in its own areas, so that ultimate benefit goes to the entire society.

Zero budget farming aim to produce safe foods free from chemicals, which in the long-run might induce carcinogenic diseases in human beings. It is less expensive and can be applied irrespective of land size. The only requirement is an indigenous cow and its urine and jiggery. So the farmers can produce whatever they need to meet their own needs and surplus which can be distributed within the village economy. This will rather ensure the food security of the village population.

3.3.3 ECO CENTRIC DEVELOPMENT

Modern development and industrialization are great threats to the entire world by degrading the environment. Gandhi believed that the universe has enough resources for the survival human beings and at the same time not enough for the greedy. The activities of GSGSK in the agriculture sector have given more importance to the eco centric development. They never encouraged the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides in the farming activities rather encouraged the use of bio-fertilizers and manure by the farmers. Centre has conducted several experiments in organic farming and bio-fertilization production which has helped to enhance soil fertility and reduce resource exploitation. Farmers are fully satisfied with these less costly farming methods and they says that they are getting sufficient yield from this method of farming.

3.3.4 CREATION OF A NON-VIOLENT ECONOMY

Since new farming packages are implemented through various farmers clubs, GSGSK ensures cooperation among farmers than competition. Since Gandhi’s concept of Swadeshi is the economics of neighborhood, self-reliance and mass employment. In a society based on swadeshi principle people will prefer the commodities produced by an immediate neighbor and also the consumer will cooperate with the neighbor in the process of improving the efficiency of production. Economics of
neighborhood is effectively carried out by the centre, thus the farmers are able to find market for and sell their agricultural products at a reasonable price. The centre has made good relation with other agencies and financial institutions so that the entire economy would progress in a dynamic level. A decentralized production system strengthens the non-violent nature of the rural economy. All activities of the centre are implemented in the grass root level which ensures the active participation of the rural folk in all people centered programmes. This kind of a non-violent economy can be considered as a foundation stone towards building a sarvodhaya order of the society.

3.3.5 TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL FOLK

GSGSK ensures human resource development through training based on the principle of learning by doing. The training is conducted both in farming and non-farming sectors and it has really benefited hundreds of people in Alappuzha. Training, discussions and classes have been on certain areas like dairy farming, poultry, coir making units etc. and also taking into consideration the priorities of the people. On many occasions professionals, scientists and experts in different areas have extended their help, service and guidance to the members of the self-employment programme. The training programmes and exposure visits of the farmers club helps the farmers to understand and study various farming practices and it help them to acquire skills which empower them. Skill acquisition is actually an addition made to the human potential, so skill promoting activities help to generate self-confidence among the members. The members used to achieve great level of progress not only in the economic fields but also in the social, moral and personal areas. When compared with me, women have attained more progress in economic and other fields. Now the center’s work is more in the grassroots level to bring progress in the rural community.

3.3.6 APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY AND RURAL UPLIFTMENT

Appropriate technology is the best instrument for the application of Gandhian development. It is self-sufficient, affordable and non-polluting. It is appropriate in terms of its functionality, level of income of the user and the use to which it is put. It is embedded with the social system and does not cause any social dislocation. Gandhi believes that appropriate technology can facilitate rural development to a great extent by developing need based technology. The activities of GSGSK give life to this idea of Gandhi. There bio-lab which develops bio fertilizers and bio natural agents which can control insect pest affecting crop plants according to the need of the farmers. These innovative practices contribute a lot for the sustainable agriculture development. The Grameen Pradhan Kendhram of GSGK also plays a major role in transferring appropriate technology to the needy people. Many of the beneficiaries are of the opinion that these appropriate technology methods help them a lot to carry forward and revolutionize their farming practices.

Gandhian view of development is clearly sustainable and inclusive in nature. His ideas on development can be summarized as consisting of self-sufficiency, self-reliance, self-control, independence and sarvodhaya. Self-sufficiency and self-reliance are necessary in the matter of production of basic needs of life; self-control stands for the control of Meta needs and greed; self-consistency refers to a situation of cognitive equilibrium with one’s own culture values and tradition and independence stands for political, social and economic freedom to develop one’s own human self and opportunities. Gandhi was trying to give an answer to the three major crisis faced by the market oriented world economy through his development model. They are resource exhaustion, ecological crisis and crisis of man’s alienation and disorientation.
Gandhian principles give us the confidence that a better world is possible. The argument that Gandhi’s ideas and principles are outdated is not true. It was at time of colonization Gandhi experimented his ideological weapons, since then the world have changed a lot, new innovations and developments have taken place in all spheres of life. So Gandhian concepts and ideas need a redefinition, but that doesn’t mean those concepts and ideas are irrelevant on the present world. By redefining ability of Gandhian ideas it is proven that, it can be molded into meaning full structure, according to the needs of the changing world. Gandhi was not a truly neo classical economists. His economic ideas were pragmatic yet moral. In his words: ‘true economics never militates against the highest ethical standard; just all true ethics to be worth its name must at the same time be also good economics’. The very base of all Gandhian ideas is rural development or rural independence. A village is the basic foundation of any society and if it is not in a better condition a society cannot move forward that quickly, it will be like building a skyscraper without laying a strong foundation and this is what India is doing now. The development of village for Gandhi is not merely an economic expansion, it is the construction of a non-violent social order, where every villager is made self-reliant not selfish.

Development of rural areas through sustainable ways is essential for the development of the entire nation. But even after 70 years of independence sustainable and inclusive development of Indian villages is not addressed properly. Planned policies and
programme are not successful in eradicating poverty from the rural areas. Even though 73rd constitutional amendment act passed in 1993 has given a new impetus and direction to the Panchayat Raj system, but the very model of Gandhian Gramaswaraj on which it is designed is still a dream. Unemployment, poverty and exploitation makes the poor rural people weak. Millions of them are struggling to meet their necessities of life. What we need is an alternative development strategy which would take into account socio-cultural and economic diversities of every village. Such a strategy should be people centred. Gandhi has put forward a development plan for villages which is relevant even today. Gandhian model of ideal village can definitely help the rural poor to escape from the Vicious circle of poverty. Gandhi has designed a decentralized production system for the upliftment of villages based on agriculture, village industries and cottage industries. A production system based on the Gandhian principle of production by masses would provide employment opportunities and sufficient income to rural folk and would create a self-sufficient rural economy. Gandhi has given immense importance to the concept ‘appropriate technology’, technology that can effectively utilise locally available resources and renewable sources of energy. It is clear that the concept of appropriate technology also includes the scope for research and development. Rural development requires development of new sustainable technologies according to the needs of the rural people.

Sustainable farming practices of GSGSK have its root in Gandhian principles. Most of the people in the villages where GSGK functions depend on agriculture, therefore the institution is dedicating its great effort for the development of sustainable agricultural activities. Zero budget farming is a revolutionary attempt in the field of agriculture and it is a solution to the present agrarian crisis of rural areas. These farming methods are affordable to poor farmers and are happy with this method of farming. Ksheerasamridhi and Egg for all (other activities should include) programmes have helped the rural inhabitants including women to earn sufficient income and a decent life. Integrated farming practices have helped the rural folk to attain food security. All kind of agricultural practices are environment friendly and provide answer to the problems of so called green revolution agricultural methods. Field studies show that young people are actively participating in farming activities. By organising farming activities through different farmers club, cooperation among the farmers is ensured. Rural population itself provides sufficient market for the agricultural products which underlines the Gandhian principle of economics of neighborhood. GSGSK is also providing opportunities for the farmers to sell their surplus product in urban areas at reasonable price. This act as a source of encouragement for the farmers to continue their activities.

Bio-lab functioning at GSGSK develops bio fertilisers and pesticides. Bio-lab represents appropriate technology which develops ecofriendly farming inputs. Training programmes arranged by GSGSK on various sustainable farming practices among farmers with the help of experts from different fields makes agriculture activities successful and also creates interest among rural people towards farming. Technology transfer and knowledge extension has empowered the rural farmers a lot. GSGSK act as a mediator between farmers and NABARD this helps the farmers to get loans at low interest rate for their agricultural activities. Similarly centre also supports farmers to get loans from other commercial banks. Efficient supervision of the centre enables the farmers to utilise loans effectively and thus
farmers are protected from entering debt trap. This practice of GSGSK is very significant because many farmers have committed suicide every year when they fail to repay their bank loans. Since agriculture constitute the backbone of rural areas the sustainable farming practices of GSGSK is a model to all villages which would lay a strong foundation for the revival of self-sufficient rural economy.

4.1 SUGGESTIONS

Government should give more attention to cooperate with NGOs which are working in the field of rural sector. Grama Panchayats must stay connected with these institutions and should organise various development projects effectively through them. Service of the experts should be made available to the farmers on innovative farming methods suitable to the geographical features of villages. Proper technology transfer and knowledge extension to the rural people should be ensured. MNREG programme should include sustainable farming practices. This would promote agriculture in rural areas and would ensure sufficient working days, in this way rural employment guarantee programme can be made more productive. Every Grama Panchayat should arrange local market for agricultural products where farmers can sell their products directly at reasonable price.
REFERENCES

INTER UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR
ALTERNATIVE ECONOMICS

Set up in 2015 by Professor Abdul Salim A. of the Department of Economics, University of Kerala, the Inter University Centre for Alternative Economics (IUCAE) promotes research and studies in alternative economics which would address the problems of the economy and society beyond the neo-classical mainstream ideas. The centre is attached to the department of Economics, University of Kerala in Karyavattom campus, within 15 Kilometers from the city of Thiruvananthapuram.

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- Interest free banking system
- Globalisation and Islamic finance
- Islamic economics vs. neo classical economics
- Gandhian vs mainstream economics
- Gandhian path and sustainable development
- Marxism vs. liberalism
- Marxian analysis of inequality
- Capitalism and labour rights
- Cognitive science of economic decisions
- Uncertainty, rationality and neuroeconomics