

## Unit 1

In India, the Panchayati Raj now functions as a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of local administration. The system has three levels: Gram Panchayat (village level), Mandal Parishad or Block Samiti or Panchayat Samiti (block level), and Zila Parishad (district level). Currently, the Panchayati Raj system exists in all states except Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram, and in all Union Territories except Delhi.

The Panchayats receive funds from three sources:

- Local body grants, as recommended by the Central Finance Commission Funds for implementation of centrally sponsored schemes Funds released by the state governments on the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions.

### M.K Gandhi's Ideas on Swadeshi and Gram Swaraj!

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was not an academic economist whose contribution to economics could be seen in terms of one theory or the other. He wrote on wide ranging issues of significance in economics like consumption behaviour, trusteeship, charity, leisure and sanctity of work. But from the point of economic development, his writings on 'Swadeshi' and Gram Swaraj' are of great importance.

M.K Gandhi's thoughts were inspired by the ancient Indian thoughts on development and human welfare, which were enshrined in the ancient scriptures of India and partly spelt out in the masterly treatise on economics and statecraft, called Kautilya arthashastra of sixth century BC.

According to Gandhi, not all kinds of happiness contribute to human welfare. Not all kinds of desire satisfaction contribute to happiness. Individuals' desire for goods and services is not a limited set. The more one gets, the more one wants and still remains unsatisfied. Multiplying one's daily wants in this fashion merely makes a person a slave to an unending sequence of desires, and there is no slavery equal to slavery to one's own desires.

Such a process does, not lead an individual to any sustainable steady state consumption path. He considered that Western development was driven by a culture of multiplying wants which he regarded as a flawed one. For him, deliberate restriction of material desires by individuals by means of utmost efforts offer a more rational solution.

Gram swaraj, or village self-rule, was a pivotal concept in Gandhi's thinking. It was the centerpiece of his vision of economic development in India. Gandhiji's Gram Swaraj was not the reconstruction of the old village but the formation of fresh independent units of villages having self-sufficient economy.

Self-sufficiency in basic needs was one of the fundamental conditions of Gandhian village reconstruction. Food, clothing and other basic necessities should be produced at the village itself, which would lead to full employment of almost each able bodied person and would prevent the rural-urban migration in search of employment and better opportunities.

In the 1940s, a Gandhian plan was prepared for India (by Shiman Narayan) with an emphasis on self sufficient village community. Some natural wants, according to Gandhi, could only be specified at the village level-like clean roads, better sanitation, good transport, better drainage, vegetation, school, dispensary, clean water and a dharmashala.

Similarly, at individual level, everyone must have access to balanced diet, a decent house, facilities for children's education and adequate medical relief. The village community should embody the spirit of the home an extension of the family rather than a collection of competing individuals. Gandhi's dream was not of personal self sufficiency, not even family self sufficiency, but the self-sufficiency of the village community.

Gandhi's ideas on swadeshi came as a part of the struggle against the British rule. Swadeshi movement was a mass movement to encourage people to develop a habit of consuming Indian products rather than foreign products.

He justified swadeshi on moral principles. The first relevant principle was that of neighbourhood. The duty of an individual is to his neighbours. This leads to swadeshi which refers to the consumption of local products.

His contention was that it would be sinful to wear foreign clothes while neighbouring weavers starve due to lack of demand for their products. Spinning and wearing khaddar (khadi) became symbolic expressions of swadeshi.

The British believed in centralised, industrialised and mechanised modes of production. Gandhi turned this principle and envisioned a decentralised, homegrown, hand crafted mode of production. In his words, "Not mass production, but production by the masses." His swadeshi principle made Gandhi oppose the western model of industrialisation.

He was against mechanisation for three reasons. First, machinery displaces human and animal labour, instead of supplementing it. Second, unlike human labour, there is no limit to its expansion and growth. Third, it has a law of its own, which leads not only to labour being displaced, but also to its being displaced at an ever increasing rate.

He thus opposed machinery because they create unemployment. He was a staunch advocate of strengthening the decentralised production with the promotion of village level industries. He believed in the feasibility of self sufficient village level production of food and clothing.

Swadeshi is the way to comprehensive peace: peace with oneself, peace between peoples, and peace with nature. The global economy drives people towards high performance, high achievement, and high ambition for materialistic success.

Vinayak Narahari “Vinoba” Bhave was an Indian advocate of nonviolence and human rights. Often called Acharya, he is best known for the Bhoodan Movement. He is considered as a National Teacher of India and the spiritual successor of Mahatma Gandhi. He was an eminent philosopher.

He was associated with Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian independence movement. He stayed for some time at Gandhi’s Sabarmati ashram in a cottage that was named after him, ‘Vinoba Kutir’. He gave talks on Bhagvad Gita in Marathi to his fellow ashramites.

These highly inspiring talks were later published as the book “Talks on the Gita”, and it has been translated into many languages both in India and elsewhere. Bhave felt that the source of these talks was something from above and he believed that its influence would endure even if his other works were forgotten.

In 1940 he was chosen by Gandhi to be the first individual Satyagrahi (an individual standing up for Truth instead of a collective action) against the British rule. It is said that Gandhi envied and respected Bhave’s celibacy, a vow he made in his adolescence, in fitting with his belief in the Brahmacharya principle. Bhave also participated in the Quit India Movement.

Bhave’s religious outlook was very broad and it synthesized the truths of many religions. This can be seen in one of his hymns “Om Tat Sat” which contains symbols of many religions. His slogan (Jay Jagat) i.e. “victory to the world” finds reflection in his views about the world as a whole.

Bhave observed the life of the average Indian living in a village and tried to find solutions for the problems he faced with a firm spiritual foundation. This formed the core of his Sarvodaya movement. Another example of this is the Bhoodan (land gift) movement started at Pochampally on 18 April 1951, after interacting with 80 Harijan families. He walked all across India asking people with land to consider him as one of their sons and so gave him one-sixth of their land which he then distributed to landless poor. Non-violence and compassion is a hallmark of his philosophy, he also campaigned against the slaughtering of cows.

Bhave said, "I have walked all over India for 13 years. In the backdrop of enduring perpetuity of my life's work, I have established 6 ashrams.

The Brahma Vidya Mandir is one of the ashrams that Bhave created. It is a small community for women that was created in order for them to become self-sufficient and non-violent in a community. This group farms to get their own food, but uses Gandhi's beliefs about food production, which include sustainability and social justice, as a guide. This community, like Gandhi and Bhave, has been influenced greatly by the Bhagavad-Gita and that is also used to determine their practices. The community perform prayers as a group every day, reciting from the Isha Upanishad at dawn, the Vishnu Sahasranama at mid-morning, and the Bhagavad-Gita in the evening. As of today, there are around 25 women who are members of the community and several men have also been allowed to join in the community.

Since its founding in 1959, members of Brahma Vidya Mandir (BVM), an intentional community for women in Paunar, Maharashtra, have dealt with the struggle of translating Gandhian values such as self-sufficiency, non-violence, and public-service into specific practices of food production and consumption. BVM's existence and the counter-narrative its residents practice demonstrate how one community debate the practicalities and tradeoffs in their application of self-sufficiency, non-violence, and radical democracy to their own social and geographic context. One mainstream narrative described by BVM and the farmers that work with them is that large-scale agriculture is inevitable, necessary, and the sole possibility of feeding the world. Instead, at BVM they reject the narrative that success in agriculture comes from expensive technology. BVM is a small community in India, therefore it does not hold much power to promote its beliefs and practices in the mainstream. Meanwhile, India today proudly proclaims its large and growing middle class, and although many see Gandhi as a hero, some reject his views in favor of US-style-consumerism and look for an alternate route in agriculture with technological advancements. The existence of BVM provides a counter-narrative on enacting alternative agricultural and social practices that were already being practiced by BVM's women back in the 1960s.

Vinoba Bhave was a scholar, thinker, and writer who produced numerous books. He was a translator who made Sanskrit texts accessible to the common man. He was also an orator and linguist who had an excellent command of several languages (Marathi, Kannada, Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit).

Bhave was an innovative social reformer. He called “Kannada” script the “Queen of World Scripts” (Vishwa Lipigala Raani) He wrote brief introductions to, and criticisms of, several religious and philosophical works like the Bhagavad Gita, works of Adi Shankaracharya, the Bible and the Quran. His views of Dnyaneshwar’s poetry and works by other Marathi saints is quite brilliant and a testimony to the breadth of his intellect.

Bhave had translated the Bhagavad Gita into Marathi. He was deeply influenced by the Gita and attempted to imbibe its teachings into his life, often stating that “The Gita is my life’s breath”.

Some of his works are:

The essence of Quran The essence of Christian teachings Thoughts on education Swarajya Sastra Vinoba Bhave University, located in Hazaribagh district in the state of Jharkhand, is named after him.

Vinoba Bhave and Land Donation Movements

On 18 April 1951, Bhave started his land donation movement at Pochampally of Nalgonda district Telangana,[13] the Bhoodan Movement. He took donated land from land owner Indians and it away to the poor and landless, for them to cultivate. Then after 1954, he started to ask for donations of whole villages in a programme he called Gramdan. He got more than 1000 villages by way of donation. Out of these, he obtained 175 donated villages in Tamil Nadu alone. Noted Gandhian and atheist Lavanam was the interpreter for Bhave during his land reform movement in Andhra Pradesh and parts of Orissa

Assuming that there were 50 million landless peasants in India. Vinobaji set himself the task of collecting in land gifts of 50 million acres, so that one acre could be given to each landless peasant with an average of five members. Each such family, it was hoped, would end up with 5 acres.

He called in Gandhian terms upon the landowners to feel compassion for the plight of the landless and to demonstrate their compassion by giving to the Bhoodan movement one sixth of their holdings. Since roughly 300 million acres were under cultivation in India, such gifts, if made all over the country, would total up in the required 50 million acres.

Aims and Objectives of Bhoodan Movement:

The basic aim and objectives of Bhoodan movement are as follows:

1. To bring about a social order based on equality of opportunities by ensuring balanced economic distribution.
2. Decentralisation of economic holdings and powers. Vinobaji writes, while describing the objectives of Bhoodan movement, "In fact, objective is of three fold."
  1. Firstly, power should be decentralised from village to village.
  2. Secondly, everybody should have a right on land and property.
  3. Thirdly, there should be no distribution in the matter of wages etc.

Vinobaji was interested in the creation of a new social order.

**Bhoodan Movement and its Evaluation:**

The inspiration for Bhoodan had come to Vinoba Bhave in 1951, when he was touring the Telengana districts of Hyderabad. This was the area where the communists had recently called off an "activist" agrarian campaign during which a good few landlords had lost both their lands and their lives. Through Bhoodan, Vinobaji aimed to show the peasantry that there was an efficacious alternative to the communist programme.

The movement got off to a good start from 1952 to 1954. More than 3 million acres of land were received as Bhoodan during these periods. But the movement could not continue with that vigour and success due to certain weaknesses.

The fundamental weakness of Bhoodan movement was that its appeal was directed not to the poor and landless, but to the rich and landlords. When the Bhoodan campaigners marched into the village of the well off, they made a good show by giving away a few patches of land.

But they are careful to retain securely in their grasp the holdings and essential economic operations upon which their control of the village rests. So the voluntary donations of lands were not the generous offerings of the rich. In many States the landlords donated lands to escape from the ceiling laws. They have "no free will".

Another weakness is that the depressed people and the exploited section of the society have already exhausted patience. They are in no mood to indefinitely wait for the positive results of the movement.

Socialism to Sarvodaya Sarvodaya is a term meaning 'universal uplift or 'progress of all. The term was first coined by Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi as the title of his 1908 translation of John Ruskin's work on political economy, 'unto this last' and Gandhi came to use the term for the ideal of his own political philosophy<sup>3</sup>.

Sarvodaya is the main concept of Gandhian thought. Mahatma Gandhi gave the philosophy of Sarvodaya as a module of development for human society. Jayaprakash Narayan also accepted the Sarvodaya philosophy for social reconstruction after independence of India. But, before independence of India, he was the strong follower of Marxism. He believed that Marxism is better than Gandhism. He said, "Freedom still remained the unchanging goal, but the Marxism as a science of revolution seemed to offer a sure and quicker road to it than Gandhi's technique of civil disobedience and noncooperation.

The sarvodaya, non-violence, truth, spiritualism, creative work and gram swaraj are the main components of Gandhian thought. The Gandhian thought attracted the attention of many thinkers. One among them was Jayaprakash Narayan. Jayaprakash Narayan used Gandhian thought for social reconstruction after independence of India. Actually the philosophy of Jayaprakash Narayan is the result of the effect of Gandhian thought on him. Jayaprakash Narayan was a freedom fighter, social worker and great socialist thinker of India. His ideology changed from time to time in positive direction. He gave major contribution in social reconstruction. He was linked with Bhoodan, gramdan movement.<sup>1</sup> In 1974, he gave a concept of Total Revolution to change the corrupt, autocratic and rotten system.<sup>2</sup> He was one of those persons who worked on the way of Gandhian thoughts. Before the independence of India, he was influenced by Marxism but after independence he understood the depth of the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and accepted it. He tried to complete the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the aim of Gandhi ji's Loksevak Sangh.

**Materialism to Spiritualism** When Jayaprakash Narayan came in the effect of Marxism, he believed in materialist philosophy.<sup>14</sup> The equality and brotherhood was the main factor of his thoughts. He said, "At the same time, Marxism provided another beacon of light for me; equality and brotherhood freedom was not enough. It must mean freedom for all-even the lowliest and this freedom must include freedom from exploitation from hunger, from poverty."<sup>15</sup> But after independence, when he believed in Gandhian thought then he moved towards spiritualism.

**Gram Swaraj** Jayaprakash Narayan gave his major contribution in the development of democracy in India. He gave a right direction to the politics in India. The political thought of Jayaprakash Narayan was influenced by Gandhian thought. He said, "I believe there is no need for me to add that at no time have I claimed to have made an original contribution to political thought. I am indebted not only to Roy, but to many others, most of all to Gandhi ji."<sup>23</sup> The Gandhian concept of Gram swaraj is a base of social, political and economic thought of Jayaprakash Narayan. Jayaprakash Narayan believed that the rural development should be the base of development of this country. He said that Gandhi ji wanted to develop every village as a self dependent agricultural industrial unit. According to him, "Gandhi ji wanted that in the democracy, the power should not be in the hands of some selected people, but the power should be in hands of all people. It is possible only when gramraj will be the base of democracy."

As a result of the effect of Gandhian thought, Jayaprakash Narayan gave his thought about gramraj and tried to implement it in his work of social reconstruction. According to him, the Gramraj means autonomous village republic, not a panchayat; this Gramraj will be governed by the villagers, not by government agencies.