

# Holistic Development in Rural India: The Strategy for Grassroots Level Development

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## **Preamble:**

### **Rajiv Gandhi as an Icon of New Technology:**

Rajiv Gandhi is known to the Indian public, at large, as an Icon for Technological Revolution in the Country. It was during his period, as Prime Minister of the country (1984-89), that the Network of communications was expanded to cover the grassroots level entities of rural India. He inducted the culture of computer-use, in the different spheres of economic and educational activities. His educational reforms made the infrastructure of education spread far and wide in the rural areas. He gave big boost to industrial production by liberalising a number of policies and encouraged privatisation of the production activity. In short, we can easily pronounce that Rajiv Gandhi was a messiah for a Technology-driven New India with focus on Grassroots level development.

It is very appropriate that the Academy of Grassroots Studies and Research of India (AGRASRI) has instituted an Award in the memory of Rajiv Gandhi to be awarded on the occasion of his Birth Anniversary, on 20<sup>th</sup> August every year.

I feel honoured by the fact that this Honour is being bestowed on me this year.

I would like to use this occasion to recall some moments of my personal meeting with Shri Rajiv Gandhi. It was in 1986, that there was the Eighth Non-Aligned Summit in Harare, Zimbabwe. I was, then, functioning as the first (founder) Director-General of the Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS). I recall that RIS was established with the initiative of Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, and the then Chair person of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), after the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit held New Delhi, in 1983. RIS was established in response to the Resolution passed in the NAM Summit that there should be a Research Institution for conducting high quality Research on international Issues, with a view to projecting the interests and the view points of the developing countries. I had had the privilege of being invited to be the first DG of such as a prestigious Institution. We had had the ambition of producing an extraordinary Report on the Issues of the world economy to project the interests of the developing countries. Accordingly, we had produced a Unique Report entitled, "The World Economy in the Mid-Eighties", highlighting the concerns of the developing countries in a forceful manner. I had personally taken about 300 copies of the Report to the NAM Summit in Harare. This Report was extensively reported in the HERALD, Daily of Harare, which received the attention of Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi. Sri Rajiv Gandhi specifically mentioned about this Report in his News Address, while in Harare.

\_\_\_\_\_ Text of the **15<sup>th</sup> Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Lecture**, delivered by **Prof. V. R. Panchamukhi**, eminent economist and Former Chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, Govt. of India, New Delhi, under the aegis of the **Academy of Grassroots Studies and Research of India (AGRASRI)**, Tirupati, on 20 August, 2016 at Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

A week later, there was a Conference in Delhi, on Commemoration of the "Asian Relations Conference" held in 1947, under the leadership of the Jawahar Lal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India. This Commemoration Conference was inaugurated by Shri Rajiv Gandhi. After inaugurating the Conference, Rajiv Gandhi came to meet all the delegates. When he came in front of me, he recalled our Study for the Harare Summit and discussed with me for a few Minutes about that Study. I was greatly impressed by the grand stature and simple disposition of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, which has remained in my mind as a permanent imprint of his gracious personality.

I am sorry for this personal nostalgic recall of my personal meeting with Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

Let me revert to the subject matter of my Lecture: "Holistic Development in Rural India: The Strategy for Grassroots level Development".

### **Man as a *Holistic Man* and *Holistic Goals* of Human Activity**

Modern Economic Science (MES) is based upon the premises that *Man is a rational Economic Man and all his decisions are aimed at optimising Economic Benefits*. As per the Indian Classical Economic Science (ICES), Man is a combination of Materialistic aptitudes and what one may call as Spiritual aptitudes. The blend of the two aptitudes makes Man a Holistic Man. The Modern Economic Science (MES) considers only the partial dimension of *Man* and thus defines only material benefits as the contours of the human welfare.

Viewed in the framework of a *Holistic Man*, as per the ICES, the concepts of Happiness, Well-being, Individual and National welfare will all have to be redefined. Happiness of a *Holistic Man* is not a function of materialistic possessions or income levels, as in the case of a rational economic man. Happiness of a *Holistic Man* is a function of income *plus* some values, like contentment, sacrifice, sharing etc., which are induced in him by his *spirituality dimensions*. National Domestic Welfare Product needs to be defined as a sum of National Materials Domestic Product *plus* National Values Product, in whatever measurable fashion, the latter could be defined.

The holistic framework of the goals of a *Holistic Man*, as per the ICES, is characterised by the four goals, viz. *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha*. *Dharma* has been wrongly conceived as Religion and Religion means *Rituals*. The concept of *Dharma* has a much wider connotation. *Dharma stands for the Values of life, Artha stands for the materialistic achievement in terms of capital formation, Kama signifies consumption demand and Moksha stands for freedom from all prejudices, biases and negative attitudes of life*. Interpreted in this way, *Moksha* stands for a state of highest efficiency, which is realisable in a setting of freedom from *Biases, Prejudices, Negative attitudes*, which act as a binding on the realisation of full potential of an individual's capabilities. Thus, the four *purusharthas*, viz., *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha* provide a holistic framework for the goals of life. As per the ICES, they together mean, *Optimum Capital Formation so as to satisfy the minimum basic needs of all, realised in the most efficient manner in a Values-based framework*. As against this, the Modern Economic Science talks about only, *Artha—Capital Formation and Kama—Consumption Demand*. Thus, the models based on the Modern Economic Science cannot provide the basis for the analysis and the solutions for the Challenges of Development and human transformations for better welfare. Further, the MES treats *Consumption Demand* as the engine of *growth*, thereby creating a scenario

for excessive consumerism, which has its own negative fallouts on the process and the pattern of development.

Before considering the contours of Holistic Development, we will devote some time to bring out some of the typical distinctions between the approaches of MES and those of ICES.

### **Focus on Human Resource as against that on Capital and Technology**

The MES gives emphasis on the role of Capital and Technology in the process of economic transformations. As against this the ICES gives emphasis on the role of Human Resources. Again, the concept of Human Resource as per the ICES, is not confined to the concept of labour as considered in the MES. In ICES, Human Resource means *Labour* of MES combined with the attributes, such as aptitudes of commitment, dedication and selflessness, duty-consciousness etc. to ensure highest levels of productivity. Labour in the MES is measured by the number of workers and the extent of their qualifications on paper. In ICES, however, the human resource is measured by the extent of the attributes which the Labour possesses. In ICES, the human resource is classified as *Satvika, Rajasa and Taamasa*, depending upon the nature and the intensity of the attributes that each labour unit possesses. For example, a *Satvika Human Resource* is the one who possesses the following attributes: He should be totally committed to his Duty: He should be such as not to say, "I did it"; He should be full of enthusiasm and courage; He should be unruffled during great successes and utter failures. A Human Resource is called as *Rajasa*, if the labour is endowed with qualities, such as, highly selfish, always mindful of the results, always crazy, always pursuing unfair means. Similarly, Labour, which always adopts nefarious means, which is mean in its attitudes, would be considered as *Taamasa Human Resource*.

The above fundamental difference in dealing with the factor of production, labour, as between MES and ICES, brings out, the imperatives of adopting a *holistic approach* in dealing with the challenges of human resource transformations in the country. As of now, we think that expanding the opportunities for skill generation, for creating additional number of engineers, doctors, skilled labour, is necessary for strengthening the human resources levels of the nation. We do not consider the compulsions of inducting proper attributes in the so called *skilled labour* that would make the same as a useful *human resource*. These observations should be useful in designing a Holistic Policy Framework in the matter of evolving a truly productive Human Resource in the Economy, so that the crisis situations do not arise in the nation.

Unless a *productive human resource* is generated, as discussed above, any amount of Capital and any nature of Technology would not be useful, in generating the desired impact on the development process of the economy. This mismatch between the nature of human resources available in an economy and the induction of huge amount of capital and technology could be the source of failures, in regard to the use of the latter resources in an effective manner. Crisis situations become imminent when such mismatches occur in great intensity and wide canvas. Unfortunately, this factor is not recognised in the debates on the causes and remedies of crisis situations.

## **Focus on Duties as against that on Rights**

The debates on development paradigms in the MES focus on the *rights* of the different segments of the society—women, the poor, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, etc. etc. While the emphasis on the fulfillment of the rights of the different segments of the society is well taken, the analysis of the causes for the non-fulfillment of such rights should be done in a *holistic framework*. There is a one-to-one relationship between the fulfillment of the *rights* of some and the performance of *duties*, by the same or the other segments of the society. *Rights* and *Duties* are two sides of the same coin. While adjudicating on the issues of violation of *rights*, we hardly adjudicate on the failure in the performance of *duties*. We have *Human Rights Commissions*—*National Human Rights Commissions*, *State Human Rights Commissions* and *United Nations Human Rights Commission*. But we are not aware of any *Human Duties Commissions*. Even in our Constitution, a Part on *Fundamental Rights* was enshrined to begin with, while that on *Fundamental Duties* was inducted much later—after twenty five years. Thus, there is a fundamental error in our perception about the issues of Rights violations in the framework of *Duties Violations*.

Our ICES has laid emphasis on the matter of *Duties first and Rights as a corollary to come later*. There is a famous principle laid down in the *Bhagavadgita* that says "*you care for your duties and the rights would follow automatically*". Unfortunately, this fundamental principle of work-culture laid down in the ICES, has often been misinterpreted to mean that in the Indian Classical setting, work culture is exploitative in the sense of emphasizing only on the hard work by the labour without caring for the rewards. This has been an erroneous interpretation of the ICES work culture, which has aimed at providing a holistic framework for matching fulfillment of rights with the performance of duties by one and all.

The above observations also pertain to the need for considering the Human Resources in the Nation, in a Holistic Framework, in which commitment to one's own duties is required for ensuring the evolution of a fully balanced Human Resource in the economy.

## **Sustainable Development as Perceived in the ICES**

Sustainable Development, as per the MES, refers to the development pattern, which implies less pollution of *earth, water, air, space* and *energy sources*, and in the present times for a better future. The concept of *environment* as per the ICES is much wider. It refers not only, to the five elements of the material world, viz. *Prithivi, Aap, Tejas, Vayu and Aakaasha*, but also to four more elements, viz. *Kala, (Time), Dik (Direction), Aatma (Conscience) and Manas (Mind)*. Even if you keep the five elements of the material world pollution-free, as per the strategies dictated by the MES, *environmental pollution* becomes a repetitive aspect of life if *Kala, Dik, Aatma and Manas* are polluted. Pollution of Time means not maintaining the discipline of timeliness and completion of projects in the prescribed time limits. Pollution of *Dik* means not following the principles of *Vastu Shastra*, so as to ensure control over the emission of negative energies in the system. Pollution of *Aatma*, means not acting as per the dictates of the inner conscience. Pollution of *Manas* is the most dangerous factor for perpetuation of pollution in all the spheres of life. The ICES framework in the matter of *Sustainable Development*, is more *Holistic* and hence superior to the framework considered in the MES.

Moreover, MES is based on the premises of excessive consumerism, which is a corollary to the approach of treating consumption as an Engine of Growth. Unless the principle of *Sustainable Consumption*, is inducted in the system, sustainable development becomes a mirage. In contrast to this, the ICES prescribes, *Restraint on Consumption* as an engine of growth process with equity and sustainability and hence provides a better scope for the prospects for sustainable development.

### **Growth Alone: Not Enough for Holistic Development**

In the recent years, we have been over-obsessed by the single parameter *Growth Rate of GDP* in assessing the nature and magnitude of the development performance of a country. We make historical comparisons in a given country and also between-country comparisons of growth performances, by using the single parameter of *growth rate of GDP*. Professor VKRV Rao, a famous economist of the country and a pioneering researcher on national income issues, had expressed a categorical view that inter-country comparisons of growth rates of GDP are meaningless in drawing inferences about the levels of the well-being of the peoples. For the same reasons, as put forth by VKRV Rao, historical comparisons of growth rates of GDP are also meaningless in regard to the question of drawing inferences about the well-being of the peoples.

An interesting study by UNDP, on Human Development, has argued that five types of growth are not useful in drawing inferences about the quality of development. They are listed as follows: *Job-less Growth*, *Ruth-less Growth*, *Voice-less Growth*, *Future-less Growth* and *Rootless Growth*. It is useful to mention briefly about each of these terms. *Job-less Growth* refers to that pattern of growth, which does not create additional jobs or which reduces the quantum of available jobs. *Ruth-less Growth* is that pattern of growth, which increases the inequities in the system. *Voice-less Growth* refers to that pattern of growth, which does not improve the voice of the disempowered segments of society such as, women, other deprived sections like tribals etc. By *Future-less Growth* is meant that pattern of growth is such that destroys the environmental and ecological balance of the economy. Finally, *Root-less Growth*, refers to that pattern of growth, which ends up in destroying the basic foundations of *Values, Traditions, Life styles, Faiths and Social norms of life*.

Thus, the above discussion makes it clear that the recent focus on Growth Rate of GDP as a signal of development, in the current paradigm of globalisation and development is highly misleading. It provides only a partial measure of the nature and the intensity of the development process. This leads us to present the contours of what one may call as Holistic Development as a new paradigm of development.

### **Contours of Holistic Development**

We define the contours of Holistic Development as consisting of three interrelated dimensions as given below:

1. Economic Aspects focusing on Technological Transformation, Growth Rate of GDP, in overall and per capita terms;
2. Social Aspects, covering dimensions such as employment, reduction in inequities, empowerment, environmental sustainability, social infrastructure--including education, health facilities, rural development— and human resource development;

3. Cultural Aspects, preserving and fostering of values, conserving cultural roots, maintaining life style, traditions and faith etc.

The objective of High Growth Rate of GDP is a must, so that the cake for distribution of the benefits of development is fairly large. But this dimension cautions one against the temptation of aiming at high growth rate for its own sake. But content and quality of growth are even more important than the mere quantity of growth;

Further, Technological Transformation, on which Rajiv Gandhi gave special emphasis, is necessary. But it is not a sufficient condition for Holistic development.

Further, in order to avoid the pitfalls of the growth alone strategies, as pointed out earlier, we have added a second dimension, viz. Social Aspects of Development and a third dimension which deals with values, norms, and cultural roots etc. Thus, the paradigm of Holistic Development would consist of the three dimensions of the development process. The strategies for Holistic Development should be worked out in such a manner that all the three dimensions are fulfilled in the most appropriate manner.

### **Delineation of Values and Cultural Roots for Holistic Development**

We propose to list out some of the values that have been eroded from our midst and which need to be preserved and fostered for ensuring a Holistic Development process to become a reality. We would only list some of them, for the purpose of illustration, with brief notes appended on each of them. These are the following:

- **Value of Contentment and Value of Restraint on Consumption:** At present, there is a tendency of desiring more and more without contentment. The corollary of the *Value of Contentment* is the *Value of Restraint on Consumption*, which is prescribed in the ICES. This craze for more and more for consumption leads to a situation of excessive consumerism leading to a situation of ecological imbalance and environmental pollution. The craze for more and more should be curtailed by proper control over consumerism.
- **Value of Cooperation:** Presently, viewing every activity in the framework of competition, has generated a tendency of using the principle of competition to destroy all avenues of cooperation and cooperative tendencies. Unhealthy competition would generate forces of destruction rather than avenues for higher efficiency. In a developing society, cooperation rather than competition should be the modality for organising economic relations.
- **Value of Caring and Compassion:** In a globalising world with cut throat competition, there is little scope for Caring and Compassion. In the ICES, there is prescription for caring, compassion and sharing of the resources for optimum social welfare. The principle that the world is like a family and that we should all share the resources and distribute the benefits of development in an equitable manner, is advocated in the ICES.
- **Principle of Managing oneself before thinking of managing others:** The ICES has laid emphasis on the need for managing oneself before thinking of managing others. Each one should be an optimum performer, by conforming to certain principles of self-control, ethical living and caring for others, and setting norms for public behaviour. Bhagavadgita is a

treatise on optimum management of oneself for ensuring optimum social benefits. The ICES prescribes that each one should follow the principle laid down in the Bhagavadgita for stress management, self-control, efficient work culture etc.

- **Principle of Using Trust/Faith as the basis for Human Relations:**The ICES prescribes that all human relations should be based on the principle of using Trust/Faith. The aptitude of Love and Affection is based upon the approach of mutual trust. The trust of the management in the employees, the faith of the employees in the management are the guiding principles for optimum management.
- **Principle of Consistency, Competence and Commitment:** The theory of Karma Yoga, as prescribed in Bhagavadgita, puts emphasis on the principle of Consistency, Competence and Commitment. The concept of Yoga is defined as the tendency of being efficient in a consistent manner with commitment. These three C's are supposed to define the contours of what is known as the Japanese Industrial Culture. In so far as Bhagavadgita provides the basis for the Indian Classical Economic Science (ICES), these principles define the contours of efficient governance of the self and inter-human relations.
- **Value of Composure:** The ICES prescribes the attitude of composure, during situations of prosperity and those of depletions. Both at the individual level, and at the societal level, the approach of proper balance in the reactions and responses helps in maintaining a situation of harmony, peace and happiness. Bhagavadgita prescribes the practice of *Samatvam*—*Equanimity*, for realising *True Happiness* in a *Stress-Free* environment.

The above list of values is illustrative, only to bring forth the point that maintenance of proper *Values System*, as prescribed in the framework of *Holistic Development*, discussed here, is very important in ensuring a proper quality of growth and development in the system.

### **The Holistic Model of Human Welfare**

Finally, let me present the contours of a Holistic Model of Human Welfare as enunciated by Kautilya, the well-known social scientist of 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC, and author of the famous Treatise on Statecraft and Social Science, entitled, "Artha Shastra". It runs as follows:

*Sukhasya Mulam Dharmah; Dharmasya Mulam Arthah; Arthasya Mulam Raajyam; Raajyasya Mulam IndriyaJayah; Indriya-Jayasya Mulam Vinayah; Vinasya Mulam Vruddhopasevaa: Vruddhopasevayaah Mulam Vijnaanah; VijnaanaenaAtmanam Vindet.*

A proper *Values System (Dharma)* is the cause for optimum Human Welfare (*sukhasya*); proper capital accumulation (*Artha*) should be utilised for generating a *Values-based System*; for suitable capital formation (*Arthasya*), one requires proper governance and political system (*Raajyam*); for proper governance and political system, one requires a group of leaders who are free from corruptive tendencies (*Indriya-jayah*); for developing tendency for self-control one should have the aptitude of being modest (*Vinayah*); for developing a tendency of being modest and service-oriented, one should have the aptitude of respecting the elders and the scholars (*Vruddhopaseva*); for developing an aptitude for serving the elders and the scholars, one should possess the faculty of analytical and mature thinking (*Vijnaanam*). It is only through an analytical reasoning that one can realise the status of being an accomplished person.

Thus, here is a Holistic multidisciplinary Model— encompassing *Moral Science, Economic Science, Political Science, State Governance and Administration, Sociology, and Philosophy*—for realising the *True State of Happiness and Human Welfare (Sukha)*. If the messages of this Holistic Model of human welfare are expanded in the jargons of the modern sciences of economics, political science and other social science disciplines, one would get a Model which is much more meaningful than the Models of Social Welfare, enshrined in the Modern Economic Science.

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