



Gandhiji's concept of rural upliftment and role of GI products in it

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Abstract

Gandhiji 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. Gandhiji has well said that India lives in its villages therefore to develop India it is essential to develop villages of India. In present time Gram Utthan is possible in many ways, one such way is identification of role of Geographical Indications (GI) goods and its benefits. GI, a sign must identify a products or goods as originating in a given place. In addition, the qualities, characteristics or reputation of the product should be essentially due to the place of origin. Through this research paper, researcher has framed an idea to move forward to get some concrete evidences about scope, opportunity and challenges for GIs in India on the pathways of rural development. Though, main focus of present research paper is to analyze agricultural GIs products implementation related opportunities and challenges, especially in the State of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Keywords: Gram Utthan, Constructive Programme, Rural Development, Sevagram, Geographical Indications, Trusteeship

“**India lives in villages**” were the golden words of Mahatma Gandhi many decades ago. Though there is substantial migration from rural to urban areas in India, still almost 68% of India continues to live in rural areas. **‘REAL India resides in RURAL India’**. The Rural economy is an integral part of the overall Indian economy. As majority of the poor reside in the rural areas, the prime goal of rural development is to improve the quality of life of the rural people by alleviating poverty through the instrument of self-employment.

Gandhiji's Concept of Rural upliftment

Gandhiji was neither a pure academician 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 Gandhiji's ideas and principles. The Indian villages were self-sufficient economic units before the colonial era. Cottage industries and handicrafts flourished highly in the villages in pre-British India. 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 Gandhiji'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.

Gandhiji looked at Rural Development in his own unique way. He 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 Gandhiji'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. A major objective of Gandhiji was to rebuild India with the village as its nucleus.

Gandhiji says, 'my idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours 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 should 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 should have the sanction of village community'.

Role of GI Products in Rural Development

The definition of "GI defined by World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) indication of source simply means any expression or sign used to indicate that a product or service originates in a country", a region or a specific place, whereas "appellation of origin" (or GI) means the geographical

name, "which serves to designate a product originating therein, the characteristic qualities of which are due exclusively or essentially to the geographical environment".

Under appropriate conditions, GIs can contribute to development in rural areas. The entitlement to use a GI generally lies with regional producers and the added value generated by the GI accrues therefore to all such producers. Because of GI products likely to generate a premium brand price, they contribute to local employment creation, which ultimately may help to prevent rural exodus to urban. In addition, GI products often have important spin-off effects, for example in the areas of tourism and gastronomy". Geographical indications may bring "value to a region not only in terms of jobs and higher income, but also by promoting the region, protecting and encouraging the young energy from de-channelizing as a whole. This will certainly contribute to the creation of a regional brand, for geographical indication creates the belongingness for the habitants. It is necessary for careful reading that "a mere fact of developing a GI for any product does not guarantee the automatic success or development for the region but for GIs to contribute to development. Several conditions must be present in the region in a way in which the specific GI scheme is designed".

Gandhi and Geographical Indications

Gandhiji aimed at Gram Swaraj in rural sector that is the village itself-reliant and self sustained. Through Geographical Indications goods, the

villages become self-reliant. His support to swadeshi is envisioned through GI goods and its use by the rural and urban areas of India. The products made by, grown by local artisans and farmers develop people's attitude towards love for the country. Generally associations and groups get the recognition of GI authentic products in this way; the trusteeship principle of Gandhiji comes into existence.

Conclusion

Gandhi wanted every village to be self-contained republic, each village should grow articles for its own consumption. The concept of GI and its utility fulfill the conditions of rural upliftment in India. 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 Agriculture, Handicrafts, Handlloms & *Khadhi* industries etc. The village will serve as a part of the decentralized economy. The GI products should contribute to village economy in two major objectives. The first, it would provide maximum employment and income to the inhabitants, and second, it would generate equality (especially social and gender equality), freedom and justice.

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