

**“ROLE OF GANDHIAN ORGANISATIONS IN THE SOCIO-  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT”**

**MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT  
SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION  
SWRO, BANGALORE**

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**2013-15**

## **Introduction**

Voluntary organizations are playing a vital role in the socio-economic development of the society especially after the introduction of New Economic Policy in the 1990s. Voluntary organizations formed for propagating Gandhian ideals and living play a major part in the changed socio-economic scenario. The present topic of research “**Role of Gandhian Organisations in the Socio-economic Development: A Case Study of Thiruvananthapuram District**” is a macro as well as micro level study on the socio-economic impact of Gandhian Organisations with special reference to Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. It is also an earnest attempt to analyse the Gandhian Movement in Kerala.

Gandhian values of truth and non-violence have still relevance in this fast and aggressive world. Gandhi himself had established a number of voluntary organizations for implementing his constructive programmes with a view to build an ideal society. Even those who disagree with Gandhi will have to admit that his presence is felt in India one way or other, in every field of activity-economics, social development, education, industry or environment, politics or statecraft.

Naturally there happened a decline of Gandhian values in the political life of Kerala in the post-independent period. It requires a proper academic probe to find out the relevance of Gandhian ideals which can be still preserved. Any positive endeavour in that direction will inevitably lead to an in depth enquiry into the relevance and the style of functioning of most of the Gandhian organizations and institutions and the role they play in keeping the Gandhi impact in Kerala's contemporary society.

## Review of Literature

There is no paucity of sources on Gandhiji and his ideals. He exerted a great influence on the history of India. The ever increasing literature about Gandhiji is a testimony to this fact. But the present study focuses on the Gandhian movement after Gandhi. Certain important works which have been utilized for this study are highlighted here. D.G. Tendulkar's *Mahatma* in 8 volumes, J.B. Kripalani's *Gandhi His Life and Thought*, S. N. Sinha's *Gandhian Philosophy of Sarvodaya*, J.D. Sethi's *Gandhian Values and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Challenges*, Ostergaard Geoffrey's *Non-Violent Revolution in India* etc. give valuable evidence on various phases of Gandhian movement in India. Gandhiji's life and ideology have been revealed through his speeches, pamphlets, journals, news papers, autobiographical sketches, books etc., which has been compiled as *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* in 100 volumes. Some of the books which give information on Gandhi's views on Voluntary organizations are *Gandhi and Voluntary Organisations* edited by Janardan Pandey, *Gandhi Sarvodaya and Organisations* written by B.P. Pandey, *Gandhian Alternative* edited by R.P. Misra and K.D. Gangrade, *Gandhian Approach to Development and Social Work* by K.D. Gangrade, *Gandhian Sarvodaya Realising a Realistic Utopia* by Thomas Vettickal, *Gandhian Thought A Study of Tradition and Modernity* by M. Maharajan, *Sarvodaya of Gandhi* by K.M. Prasad, *Gandhi and Social Change* by T. K. Unnithan, etc.

To know about the history of Voluntary agencies in India, a number of secondary works are referred. It includes *Voluntary Action in India: Past and Present* written by Anil K. Singh, *NGOs and Socio Economic Development Opportunities* edited by Kamta Prasad, G. R. Madan's *Voluntary Social Organisations in India and Development A Critical Appraisal*, *Social Work and Social Action A Development Perspective* edited by H.Y. Siddiqui, *Voluntary*

*Social Welfare in India* by D. Paul Chowdhry, etc. Various websites, journals and articles were also utilized for this purpose.

About the Gandhian movement in particular the number of books is comparatively meager. Kerala Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (KGSN) is one of the pioneering institutions in the state for promoting Gandhian Movement. *In Memory of Mahatma Gandhi* published from Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and *At the Feet of Gandhi* published from Kerala Gandhi Smarak Nidhi provides valuable information about the activities of the organization in its different phases. Certain books and souvenirs published by KGSN also provide information on its activities and organizers.

### **Scope and Objectives of the study**

The relevance of Gandhian values is ever increasing nowadays. Gandhi's genius was more spiritual and moral than intellectual. His whole life was cast in the spiritual and moral mould of which truth and non-violence were the basic tenets. His ideals are immortal and powerful for creating an ideal world. To a certain extent the Gandhian organizations established throughout India after Gandhi is an attempt to realize his ideology. The scope of the study is great that it is time for evaluate the functioning of Gandhian organizations. It tries to look into how far these organizations are successful in spreading the ideals of Gandhi and thereby changing the socio-economic scenario. The following specific objectives will be pursued in the present study.

- To make an analysis of Gandhian Movement in general and to seek its historical background
- To look into the Gandhian perspectives on Voluntary Organisations
- To find out the evolution of Gandhian Organisations and its functioning

- To examine the relevance of Gandhian ideology of socio-economic development
- To assess the working of Gandhian Organisations of Thiruvananthapuram district
- To evaluate the role of Gandhian Organisations in the socio-economic development of the locality
- To suggest some measures for the effective functioning of Gandhian organizations

### **Hypothesis**

- Gandhian Movement after Gandhi is exercising a considerable influence on the overall development of the society
- Gandhian organizations play a role in propagating the ideas of Gandhiji among all categories of people
- In spite of all these, Gandhian organizations have a tendency to become un-Gandhian due to the pressures emanating from the modern violent world

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are certain limitations in this study. A detailed study on the working of all the Gandhian organizations was not done here. Primary data is collected from some major Gandhian Organisations in Thiruvananthapuram district only. Interview, Survey and Observation methods are also used for primary data collection. It faced the limitation of non-availability or non-furnishing of proper data in the offices of Gandhian organizations. In spite of the fact that this work is mainly confined to the Gandhian organizations of Thiruvananthapuram, an attempt was made for an overall analysis of Gandhian Movement in Kerala.

## **Methodology**

The present work *Role of Gandhian Organisations in the Socio-economic Development: A Case Study of Thiruvananthapuram District* has been completed on the basis of primary and secondary sources. Books written by Gandhi himself, Books on Gandhi, published research works, News papers, journals, magazines etc., constituted the sources of secondary data. Primary sources are collected through field work based on interviews and observation. The present study is descriptive, explanatory and analytical in nature. The data thus generated have been processed and analysed in accordance with the enlisted objectives of the study.

## **Chapter Design**

The proposed study is organized into six chapters including introduction and conclusion. The introductory chapter briefly traces the importance of Gandhian voluntary organizations in the modern world, scope and objectives of the study, previous studies, hypothesis, its limitations and methodology. The historical analysis of Gandhian movement in Kerala constitutes the second chapter. The third chapter examines the development of voluntary organizations with particular reference to organizations with Gandhian perspectives. The fourth chapter gives an over view of major Gandhian organizations functioning in Kerala. The fifth chapter contains the main theme of the study that the main Gandhian organizations in Thiruvananthapuram district and its impact on socio-economic development. The concluding chapter consists of findings and suggestions after the study.

The most serious challenge faced by India today is the conflict between violent and non violent approach of development. Needless to say that majority of population of India is still deprived of basic fruits of development, but rather than

adopting the approach which is more inclusive and look for solutions within the constitution, India is faced by disturbances in many parts of the country. This not only hampers the development projects but also shrink the space for people's participation to achieve their goals through peaceful means. The voluntary sector being present in such locations faces the challenge of delivering the services and even mobilizing people on the development agenda. The need of the hour is to work closely to each other for the benefit of the marginalized people, as even today the dream of Mahatma Gandhi has not been achieved.

It can be concluded that India has got a vibrant and fast growing NGO sector. They perform a lot of functions in areas including environment, health care, anti-corruption, eradication of child labour, education, protection of human rights of women and children, consumer protection, relief, disaster management and many more. Though the benefits of NGOs are being reached to crores of Indian population, there lies lack of public awareness about the very necessity of such non profit motive organizations. A healthy linkage of Government and NGO is the requirement of the time. It is now well established that NGOs have an important role to play in the development processes and that both the state and market need the collaboration of credible, active, and accountable NGOs. Given their connect with the grassroots realities, NGOs can and should play the "game changer" to pro-poor development through leadership on participatory research, community empowerment and search for development alternatives. It is also of paramount importance that the NGO sector in India, considering its social concerns and necessity, should properly be recognized and extensively researched.

## Findings

- There are 3.3 lakhs NGOs functioning in Kerala state. Above 320 registered NGOs are working in Thiruvananthapuram district. Majority of them are local NGOs and a few others International or national level NGOs.
- Gandhian constructive programmes are the guidance for almost all NGOs functioning in the state to achieve the goal of alleviation of poverty and giving better standard of living to the weaker sections of population.
- All the voluntary organisations, in one way or other, try to follow the Gandhian principles in order to establish an egalitarian society. Although Gandhiji was a man of action, most of the office bearers of these organisations show the tendency to become inactive and thus unGandhian.
- Prominent Gandhians of Kerala agree that the Gandhian Organisations have failed to educate and guide people in the Gandhian way. There is an erosion of social, moral and political values.
- Like all the NGOs, the Gandhian organisations are also registered under the Societies Registration Act and run mainly with the support of the funds they raised, and execute the programme in a very cost effective manner.
- The NGOs play a vital role in rural development in creating awareness among the rural masses with respect to various flagship development programmes of the Government. They can also influence the policy formation of the Government.
- The local NGOs enjoy good rapport with people and can render assistance to very poor people especially in rural areas. The local

organisations can help the development of the region better as they are flexible in adapting to local situations and responding to local needs and therefore able to develop integrated projects.

- The NGO sector has contributed significantly to finding innovative solutions to poverty, deprivation, discrimination and exclusion through means such as awareness raising, social mobilization, service delivery, training, research and advocacy.
- The Kerala Gandhi Smarak Nidhi with its Head Quarters at Gandhi Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram acts as the parent organisation in creating necessary infrastructure for the spread and growth of Gandhian Movement in the state. It could make great changes in the rural areas of the state through its programmes and policies.
- In spite of all the short comings, the Gandhian organisations play an active role in realizing the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi through voluntary action towards the development of society. This also proves the fact that Gandhian principles and practices are still relevant for the socio economic development of the society.

## **Suggestions**

- There is need to bolster public confidence in the voluntary sector by opening it up to greater public scrutiny. The Government must encourage Central and State level agencies to introduce norms for filing basic documents in respect of NGOs, which have been receiving funding by Government agencies and placing them in the public domain (with easy access through the internet) in order to inculcate a spirit of public oversight.

- Public donation is an important source of funds for the NGO sector and one that can and must increase substantially. Tax incentives play a positive role in this process. The Government could simplify and streamline the system for granting income tax exemption status to charitable projects under the Income Tax Act. At the same time, the Government might consider tightening administrative and penal procedures to ensure that these incentives are not misused by paper charities for private financial gain.
- The Government should encourage all relevant Central and State Government agencies to introduce pre-service and in-service training modules on constructive relations with the voluntary sector. Such agencies need to introduce time bound procedures for dealing with the VOs. These could cover registration, income tax clearances, financial assistance, etc. There must be a formal systems for registering complaints and for redressing grievances of NGOs.
- There is a huge flow of funds into the NGO sector and this requires prudence and good practices to maintain accountability and transparency to the benefit of all stakeholders. Hence issues of internal control mechanisms, professionalism, accountability, transparency and financial management must be given impetus.
- Many of the projects of the Kerala Gandhi Smarak Nidhi are model projects as they can only show a model before the public. Necessary action may be taken to convince the people about the value of the projects. Most of the Grama Seva Centres are financially weak and are not dynamic. Steps may be initiated to find out ways and means to strengthen the Grama Seva Centres to take up the Gandhian rural reconstruction work.

- The KGSN can implement more welfare programmes with the help of foreign associations. Steps may be initiated to undertake more innovative projects and programmes. Steps may be taken to protect the khadi industry from the present challenges. The autonomy of the organisation should be maintained and it must find new avenues of income like strengthening of its publication division.
- There is a dearth of leadership in KGSN. Steps must be taken to train youngsters in the leadership positions. The Government should give every support as financial and policy level for the effective functioning of the organisation. Its activities should be strengthened to educate the people that Gandhiji is ever relevant and the Gandhian techniques are still applicable.