

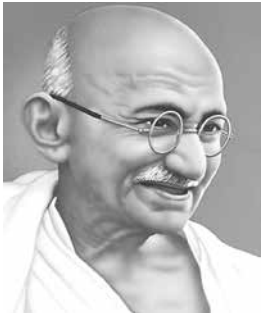
Empowering from the Grass Roots to Improve Public Governance

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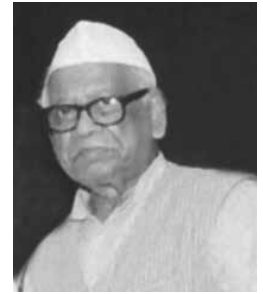
THE PRELUDE

Swaraj of My Dreams

Mahathma Gandhi



(Excerpts from abridged version of Gandhiji's 'Swaraj of my Dream' by Dr. H. Sreenivasaiah, President, Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, Bangalore)



Dr. H. Sreenivasaiah

In this structure (of Swaraj) composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose center will be the individual, always ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral unit...therefore the outermost circle (the nation) will not wield power to crush the inner circles, but give strength to all within and derive its own from the center (the individual citizen)...we are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots, which are deep down in the bowels of this earth. The mightiest of winds cannot shake it.

Swaraj can be maintained only where there is a majority of loyal and patriotic citizens for whom the good of the nation is paramount above all other considerations whatever, including their personal profit. Sawraj means a Government by the many. Where the many are immoral and selfish, their Government can spell anarchy and nothing else.

The Kisan or the peasant of India, whether a landless labourer or a laboring proprietor, comes first in my picture of Swaraj. He is the salt of the earth which rightly belongs or should belong to him.

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I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have to learn to strike the meaning between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member.

We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the enormous population, the situation and the climate of the country have in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilization. Its defects are well known, but not one of them is irremediable.

We must train these masses of men who have a heart of gold, who feel for the country, who want to be taught and led. But a few intelligent, sincere workers are needed, and the whole nation can be organised to act intelligently and democracy can be evolved out of mobocracy.

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? In other words will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away."

The Current Project

THE VISION :

Transform Public Governance in the 'Bottom Up' concept of Mahatma Gandhi – from village to Parliament. Politicians will come and go, but the governance is basically in the hands of the Civil Servants. Keeping this artery of government administration healthy with ethical, moral and social values being of paramount importance for the integrity and growth of the nation, this project is formulated.

THE MISSION

To start a Value Education Centre (VEC) in a village to begin with. To spread this to one village in each Districts of India (at least 400 Districts) in sixteen years.

THE OPERATIONAL PART:

Stage I

1. A village based educational project – COMPLETELY FREE.
2. To adopt 10 children of farm labourers, aged 4 years, every year.
3. To educate them till they complete their graduation.
4. Parents, the farm labourers, drop the children in the morning while going for their work in the field and taking them back while returning home after work.
5. The toddlers are taught in a Gurukula format at the Value Education Centre (VEC) for the first year – no reading, no writing - only oral learning through storytelling and playing. Nutritious food and health care included

6. When they complete 5 years of age, they are admitted to the nearest School for further schooling from Class 1 onwards (in the mother tongue).
7. Even when the children are admitted to the school, they will come to drop their children at the VEC in the morning. Here they will be served breakfast, exposed to Slokas (for generating concentration ability) and pep talk on 'Subhashidham' (to create positive vibrations in their minds) and later send to the school.
8. In the evening when the children are back from school VEC where light snacks and beverage will be served and they will be engaged in physical games, exposed to storytelling, book reading and yoga basics.
9. On weekends they will be given training on athletic and sports activities apart from Yoga classes.

Stage 2 - Higher Education:

1. On successful completion of school education, the children are admitted to the nearest college (all expenses met by VEC).
2. During this period, at weekends, they will be trained on Patanjali Yoga, concentration exercises, memory enhancing exercises, etc.
3. On completion of college education they are prepared to appear for Govt. of India Civil Service Examination.
4. Special training is given to them on Professional Ethics and Public Governance at this stage, during weekends - 50 weeks x 3 years x 8 hours = 1200 hours. This will include Gandhiji's perception on social responsibility and public governance (reading the entire gamut of Gandhian literature) as well as Chanakya's Arthasastra and Neethisastra.
5. On getting posted in Civil Service on professional assignments, they will be provided

with weekly video-conferencing and counseling wherever required by experienced retired Civil Servants, from the Head Quarters.

FUNDING

– SBI's recently announced poor rural children's educational support funding from a share of various loan interests of the bank.

– CSR contribution from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) of the Panchayat Town and rural areas under the Panchayat as a return for technical support on TQM (Total Quality Management), TEI (Total Employee Involvement) and MBE (Making Business Easy) for the SMEs through direct intervention with the Panchayat, District Industries and other Govt. Depts.; all within the framework of Gandhiji's 'Gram Swaraj' and Dr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam's 'India Vision 2020.'

– CSR contribution from major private sector companies for strengthening infrastructure facilities once the Value Education Centre (VEC) completes 3 years with statutory auditing and Income Tax clearances.

Conclusion:

1. The study cycle of the first batch of children taking up the Civil Service examination will be 16 years. (1+12+3)
2. By that time, it is hoped that the project will be taken up by one or a team of potential and committed citizens from each District of India, in a new 'Vanaprstha' format – returning to their village after retirement and enjoying worldly life more in the 'Karmasanyasa Yoga' format, to make life enjoyable and peaceful for them at the sunset years, through their efforts to build a strong, integrated and prosperous India.

