

BACK TO GANDHI : ANSWER TO CRISIS OF FOREST MANAGEMENT  
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

The failure of capital intensive economic growth, <sup>DE</sup> modernisation and centralised resource management approach in eradication of mass poverty of countries like India has forced for the search of alternate economic systems. Long before any one else had appreciated the need for any alternative to modern economic growth, Gandhiji's grasp of economic realities led him to anticipate, the contemporary case against modern economic growth. He suggested the Non-violent Economic Order.

The Gandhian Concept of Non-Violence (GCNV) is a positive concept not definable by a process of negation or elimination. Amritananda Das\*1 identified the positive dimensions of We-They Orientation (WTO) and Us Orientation (USD) behaviour as corresponding with the lower and higher aspect of GCNV respectively.

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Economic behaviour can be guided by three distinct types of motivational orientation:

1. I-They Orientation: In which the individual pursues his I-interest, neglecting the effect of his acts on all other human beings, who are grouped together in the 'they group'
2. We-They Orientation: In which the individual recognises an in-group (we) whose welfare he has to take into account in his actions and an out-group (they) whose welfare need not be considered.
3. Us Orientation: In which the individual regards the entire human kind as in his group, without any sub-group being treated as they.

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Gandhiji's numerous pronouncements about the Non-violent economic order gave raw material for fairly detailed and elegant pure theory of collaborative economic order. It has two features - first there must be a group of human beings submitting themselves to a common direction and discipline for the attainment of a goal which is common to all, second, in the sharing of benefits and costs of the goal attainment process, there must be mutual concern for every one's welfare.

Collaborative economic behaviour can be distinguished from two other modes of economic behaviour - the individual acquisitive and the collectivist. The individual - acquisitive behaviour is that each person pursues only his own interest, while the collectivist involves the sharing of commitment to the welfare of individuals who make up the collective. Thus, collective organisation makes free use of coercive and violent techniques on the part of leadership to discipline individuals who deviate from ideal behaviour of the selfless group-oriented worker.

Collaborative economic behaviour is mostly observed where human beings come to form small permanent or semi - permanent social groups. Gandhiji was of the view that behaviour of human beings in the economic sphere is determined by the relationship of the individual to socio economic micro groups and the relationship of micro-groups to society. Thus it is the collaboration which is the fundamental theme of economic life.

Micro -groups are, of course a reality. They exist equally and persistently in societies where ruling theory is of individualism or that of collectivism. However it has been dismissed as being of small importance to social analysis by the whole range of economists from Adam Smith to Keynes (in the capitalist line) and from Marx to Stalin (in the socialist line). (Pruin, F 1975) Gandhiji proposed, to take the micro-group as the foundation of his economic philosophy. It was due to his belief in certain modes of action and decision making of micro groups which are fundamental to the humanisation of economic life. The particular character of behaviour of human beings in micro- groups which attracts Gandhiji is it's NON-VIOLENT character.

When Gandhiji talked about collaborative economic order, the economists, the planners and the Prime Minister of our country did not agree with his economic principles. On the basis of the western experience, we went ahead for mixed economy, a hybrid of private economy (individual - acquisitive behaviour) and public economy. (collectivist behaviour). In this economy, the management of natural resources like forests came under the umbrella of the public (Government) sector, in which command is centralist, hierarchical and like the army in its properties.

However human instinct for collaborative behaviour is so strong that pockets of micro - social interactions and collaborative behaviour inevitably emerges within the framework of pure market places and inhumanly large organisations. It is this human instinct only, which has revolutionised the whole discipline of personnel management by finding that the worker responds much better initiatives when he is treated as a member of social- micro groups.

Eventhough the traditional framework of forest management does not have any place for the idea of social-micro groups and collaborative behaviour, the people from different corners of the country, have proved the Gandhian proposition of collaborative economic behaviour by evolving the different viable management systems of forest ,based on strong human instinct of collaborative economic behaviour. It seems that the outcomes of centralist forest management system were so undesirable, that the cases of forest management based on micro-groups social interactions and collaborative behaviour have been reported from all parts of the country ie. Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal from eastern part, Gujarat from western part, Madhya Pradesh from central part and Himachal Pradesh & Uttar Pradesh from northern part. Though the management systems, factors which facilitated the evolution of the system, the process of evolution and outcomes of the systems vary from place to place, but the basic motivating force behind all these systems is the 'Gandhian view of human instinct for Collaborative behaviour'. Though on the basis of the group responsible for management, these new forest management systems can be grouped in three classes: Community Management, Joint Management and Co-operative Management, but the backbone of all the systems is the nature of adjustment (sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy) between the individuals and micro-groups to which they belong and of those micro groups to the society. The systems differ in terms of the arrangement for management, sharing of benefits among the people and 'people & Government'. So it will not be possible to cover all the systems in this paper, but to give an overview, a summary of each type of system from one area is being given:

#### COMMUNITY FOREST MANGEMENT IN ORISSA

Orissa is one of the state which has a forest area more than 33% of geographical area (standard area as per national forest policy). The village communities of the state seem to be pioneers in designing community based forest management systems, some of them having taken it up as early as 1950-55. According to preliminary survey (By Project Corporate Consultants, Bhubaneswar), approximately 1,80,000 Hectares of forest area (approximately 3% of total forest area) is being managed by communities as a common resource. The community action is concentrated in four districts of state ie. Dhankanal, Mayurbhanj, Koraput and Sundergarh.

The communities have organised themselves into informal and formal organisations. The informal organisations are 'Group Of Village Elders', 'Village Forest Protection Committees', 'Village Council'

and formal organisations are 'Village Based Voluntary Organisations' and 'Village Youth Clubs'. In some cases the motivating force has been the presence of some voluntary organisations in the area. In other cases the design and operation of the community based forest management system led to the formation of local level voluntary organisation. The organisations have the common pattern of any association, society or sangh. Invariably it has an Executive Committee consisting of a President, Secretary and Treasurer as office bearers and a few members. These are selected/elected by the general assembly.

In case where the agency is not institutionalized, the village elders assemble whenever necessary and take decisions regarding forest management.

The main job of these organisations is protection and maintenance of the forests, regularising the harvest and distribution of forest produce. The process begins with villagers collecting together, taking some decisions and setting up a committee to implement them. Certain do's and don't's are agreed to, and publicity is given through words of mouth, both inside the village and in the neighbouring villages. Generally the community which is managing a particular patch of forest, permit themselves the collection of MFPs i.e. fuelwood, dry leaves, brush wood, Mahua flowers, Sal seed etc. for self consumption but not for sale. In some villages, the collection is strictly restricted, the demand for fuelwood is rationed while in some villages poods are allowed to collect some produce i.e. Sal leaves, Mahua flowers, Sal seeds etc. for earning some income.

Normally the don't's are (1) No cutting of trees without the permission of the village committee; (2) No cooking in the forest; (3) No carrying of axe to forest without permission of the village committee. Forests are protected either on a rotational basis by all the households or by paid watchers. In case of the rotational system, one member from each household goes for protection on his turn; in case of paid watchers, all households contribute towards the payment to the watcher.

Normally the collection is done by the individuals as per their allotment, but in a few cases collection is also done collectively on a fixed day of the year and collections so made are distributed equally among all villagers including the disabled and helpless widows.

In most of the cases the distribution among households is done equally, but there are cases of need based distribution also. In some cases, each household is allotted shares, depending upon total members in the household. The timber obtained in thinning operations, is sold in an auction and the sale proceeds utilised for development works or for wages of watchers. The other sources of revenue to village committees are fines from defaulters, money received from royalty of forest produce and sale of MFPs and excess produce.

The defaulters are punished. Punishment varies from committee to committee. Normally the punishment to insiders ie. people of the same village is mild. In some cases it may only be a warning. In case of outsiders the punishment is a must and is heavy. Sometimes such culprits are handed over to forest or police officials.

The spread of community management of forests, as well as the realization of the need to involve communities for regenerating forests led the Government of Orissa to pass a resolution in 1988. This resolution, recognises the need to involve local population in forest protection but does not effectively offer much. Other than the bonafide consumption of wood and rights to MFP, which in practice local people already exercise, no special rights to communities managing the forest have been recognised. The Government order intends to change the de jure government controlled forest management and de facto community management to joint management. But this and subsequent government orders are not specific regarding the rights and duties of both the partners ie. Government and People, therefore the status of de facto community management is as it is.

#### JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT IN WEST BENGAL

In 1970, due to conflicts between the 'tribal people who were cutting sal trees rapidly' and the 'forest department which sought the police assistance for protection of forests was tense. In Purulia district the situation was explosive. The District Forest Officer, who was appointed in 1972 in the area, sought the help of the local police officers in stopping the felling of trees, the activity slowed down during the pressure but resurfaced as soon as the authorities' attention was diverted elsewhere. In the process the extent of confrontation increased and in one confrontation, three persons were killed. A judicial enquiry was ordered.

In response, the DFO and his field staff started negotiations with forest communities. He offered them a share of fuelwood and minor forest products, even without any authority to do so, in lieu of forest protection by them. The forest communities responded well and 25 forest protection committees were formed. But after the transfer of the DFO from the present post, disagreements arose between foresters and the communities.

In another part of southwest Bengal, the research experiments were constantly being disrupted by cutting of fuelwood and grazing on experimental plots. In frustration, the concerned forest officer began meetings with the villagers of villages surrounding the research site Arabari. He suggested them to stop cutting and grazing and first offered a comprehensive employment programme, which was subsequently changed for 25% share of sal timber and rights to all minor forest products including leaves, fibres and fodder grasses etc. This was accepted by the villagers and they stopped cutting fuelwood and grazing.

Thus through the discussions forest officers were able to identify terms for effective management partnerships. The arrangements which responded to the economic needs of forest communities, helped in the emergence of effective control on forest exploitation. Villagers formed volunteer patrols. The offenders were warned by village volunteers, repeat offenders from participating villages were fined and outsiders were handed over to forestry personnel. The capacity of degraded natural Sal forest to regenerate rapidly and produce fodder, fuel, fibres and other valuable materials appears to have been instrumental in sustaining community protection activities.

The effect of these early achievements was limited to small forest tracts. However the concerned officers were communicating their experiences to their superior officers, and the progress in Arabari was attracting attention. In the early 1980s, some senior forest officers began encouraging the field staff to pursue similar negotiations in wider areas throughout the southwestern part of the state. In 1986, the Conservator of forests for southwestern forest of West Bengal (who was DFO of Purlia in 1970's), began urging the DFOs and field staff to work with communities. The message that the forest department is committed to meaningfully involve the communities in forest management, was conveyed to field officers. So the few dozens FPCs existing in 1985, increased to 1300 in 1988 throughout Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia districts covering 1,52,000 Hectares of forest. The desire to move away from policing and confrontation attitude of forest management, was supported by the Communist party government, that was in power in West Bengal.

In May 1989, in a workshop of senior state officers and forest department staff, participants reached an agreement that while problems remained, the programme was making considerable progress and needed formal approval. In July 1989, a state government resolution was issued acknowledging the authority of forest protection committee throughout the state and their rights to a 25% share of timber and all minor forest produce. This resolution also gives the composition of FPC, duties, functions and rights of the committee members.

Thus a new approach of resolving the agency-community conflicts and retarding the deforestation process, a new approach - Joint Forest Management has been developed. The programme does not require any complex registration and a budgetary allocation process for communities to take action, but rather it presents communities with a straight forward opportunity to protect the local forests and enjoy benefits therefrom. So it is easier for communities to get mobilized. But the program is constrained by staff rotation and concern among some officers who are anxious that rapid empowerment of communities could lead to a permanent erosion of departmental control over forests.

## COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

Forest Cooperative Societies are existing in Kangra District for four decades. The idea of Cooperative Societies was the result of a resolution passed in the Forest officers Conference in 1935 in which the policy of management of the unprotected forests was proposed to be reshaped in such a manner that their protection is ensured. In pursuance of this resolution the Punjab Government appointed the famous Garbet Commission in 1937, to take stock of the situation and make recommendations. The commission recommended to associate Panchayats for management of forests.

The Punjab Government accepted the recommendations in 1938 with the modification that instead of handing over the management to Panchayat bodies, Cooperative Societies be made responsible. The office of the Registrar of cooperative societies, Punjab was asked to step in and it did so with the constitution of a VCFS cell to supervise the distribution of revenue, audit the accounts and oversee the business activities of the society. In April 1939 the village Cooperative Societies were organized and a full fledged Division namely Kangra Village Forest Division was created. The management of all forests—demarcated, undemarcated, unclassed forests and shamlat were organized as one single economic unit within that mauza and handed out to the VCFS as a 'forest estate'. The Punjab Government sanctioned the schemes in 1940 for a period of five years and the first society of Behnala was registered in 1941. Grants-in-aid up to Rs. 50,000 per annum were offered with no restriction on the number of societies provided that the amount of grant-in-aid does not exceed Rs. 50,000 p.a. and any increase beyond Rs. 50,000 could be considered depending on the economic status of the Society.

The right of membership to these Societies was limited to those who owned land and paid land revenue thus depriving a large section of the village including non-agriculturists, village artisans from use of forest usufructs. Further, the management having centered around few landlords, mostly from higher castes, alienated the majority of lower caste households from forest management/protection including its large percentage of chamars, weavers, ironsmiths, bamboo workers who owned no land and once had a subsistence survival but needed most of the timber, fuelwood and fodder from the forests. In fact, the very purpose of the 1935 resolution was defeated when all forests in a particular mauza including the reserved forests and demarcated protected forests were transferred to the society. Since some extremely rich and productive part of forests were transferred the society's interest was on maximising economic gains from these forests rather than improving and rehabilitating the degraded ones.

The management of Cooperative Forest Societies from then onward was viewed in various perspectives. The Forest Department being the original custodian of forest lands was being side tracked. The Cooperative Department being the financial controller and auditor

of Cooperatives became more and more powerful in actual practice. The Forest Officers of Cooperative societies were to follow the instructions of the Forest Department but in actual practice this did not happen. The expansion of the scheme was, therefore, stopped and during 1961 to 1971 the grants-in-aid system was modified and grant amounts were restricted to the net income of the Society.

In 1971, the Himachal Pradesh Government decided to stop the grants-in-aid to Cooperative Societies and the last grants-in-aid was given in 1973. Thus legally the Cooperative Societies existed but their income was restricted to the petty sales of grass, compensations, fines, grazing fee and nominal timber distributions charges. The controversy of whether or not the scheme should continue remains unresolved.

The overview of forest management from three different states gives a very rough idea of the recent developments in forest management in India. The collaborative economic behaviour in terms of either of these three modes has been noticed on a wider scale. In Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, the communities took the initiative to manage the local forests as common property, while in case of Gujarat, Harayana, Jammu and Kashmir forest officials are working with communities for development of Joint Management Plans. Some organisations like Rashtriya Vriksha Mitra Sahayog Ltd (RVMSL), Indian Farmers Fertilizers Company (IFFCO) and few non - government organisations are working for organising the communities in cooperatives for afforestation and wasteland development.

The main features of all the cases of forest management based on some degree of collaborative economic behaviour, reported from India are given next:



STATE	TYPE OF FOREST	GROUP/ORGANISATION NAME	NUMBER	STATUS OF ORGANISATION	MEMBERSHIP
<b>COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT</b>					
Orissa	RF,PF	VFC,VC,YUVAK Sangh etc.	1179	Mostly informal, some recognised by FD, some registered sangh	Generally one from each household
Bihar	RF,PF	VFC,VC,Caste iz. tribal committee	181	Informal	Generally one (head) from household
H.P	RF,PF	VFC,VC,Caste committee		Informal	Same as above
H.P	Panchayat, community & Undemarcated Forest	VDC, Mahila Mandal	2000	Informal	Same as above
<b>JOINT MANAGEMENT</b>					
West Bengal	RF,PF	FPC	1684	Certified by FD	Head of each HH
Harayana	RF,PF	VFPNC	45	Registered Society	Man & Woman of each HH
Gujarat	RF,PF	FPC	200	Recognised by FD	All HH
J and K	Demarcated	VFC	101	Organised by FD	All HH
Tamil Nadu	RF, Revenue Land Plantation	Community Group	100	Informal	SC, ST & poor HH

RF: Reserved Forest  
VC: Village Committee  
VDC: Village Development Committee  
VFPNC: Village Forest Protection and  
Management Committee  
PF: Protected Forest  
VFC: Village Forest Committee  
FPC: Forest Protection Committee  
HH : House Hold

## COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT

NAME OF ORGANISATION	STATE	NO. OF COOPERATIVES	MAIN ACTIVITY
Forest Department	H.P	600	Forest Management
	M.P	Formation Stage	Rehabilitation of Degraded Forest and Management
RVMSL	Gujarat		Afforestation and Wasteland Developmen
	Rajasthan		Ditto.
	Orissa	55	Ditto.
	Karnataka		Ditto
	Andhra Pradesh		Ditto
IFFCO	U.P	5	Ditto
	M.P	17	Ditto
	Rajasthan	11	Ditto
BSC	Gujarat	12	Ditto
Nasik Tree Growers Cooperative Society	Maharashtra	01	Tree Growing as Commercial crop

BSC:Behavioural Science Centre, Ahemadabad

IFFCO :Indian Farmers Fertilizers Company

RVMSL :Rastriya Vriksha Mitra Sahayog Limited

M.P:Madhya Pradesh

U.P:Uttar Pradesh

H.P:Himachal Pradesh

## DISCUSSION

The significance of the emerging patterns of forest management is important and thought provoking. Some key issues raised by these developments are :

### a. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In resource management key question is of a good match between the resource and organisational arrangements used for management. Some people focus entirely on the separability of consumption of these resources and argue that rights to specific quantities of use units should be defined and managed by arrangements similar to private market. Others focus entirely on the problem of exclusion from the resources and argue that the management of these resources should be turned over to government authorities. Others argue that with regards to many but not necessarily all common resources, it is possible to manage them as common property resource. But our experience of forest management proves that the alternate resource management systems can not be

compartmentalized between these three alternatives only. There is a continuous array of good match between the resource system and the organisational arrangements, and we have to choose the best. Joint Management is one of the other alternatives available on the array.

The repetition of only two modes of resource management ie. private and government controlled in all the countries for all the resources, gave the impression that choice of resource management system is independent of the resource and the user group; and it depends only on the ideology of the government. It seems a wrong notion. Due to neglect of characteristics of resource, and the levels of dependence of people (user group) on resource, the forest management system which were same as the forest management systems of countries of rulers, adopted by developing countries after their independence, have failed to a great extent. In designing the sustainable resource management systems, physical characteristics of the resource and the level & extent of user group dependence on resource, will play a very critical role. For example the exclusion of user group from forest will not be difficult in developed countries due to high purchasing capacity and low dependence on forest, therefore private or government controlled management may be a viable alternative. But is it possible to exclude the user group ie. people of India, where majority of rural population which does not have buying capacity and depends on forests for fuelwood, fodder and material for house construction, from forests. If not, can the private or government controlled management be a viable alternative. Similarly the two management methods ie. private or government controlled can not be a viable alternative for resources like ground water, in which exclusion is difficult, even in developed countries.

Thus a particular resource management system can not be a universal phenomena. The selection of a particular management system from the continuous array has to be made on the basis of physical characteristics and extent of the resource, sociological, cultural and economic characteristics of the user group and the degree and type of dependence of user group on the resource.

#### b) PROPERTY REGIME

A resource regime derives its meaning from the structure of rights and characterize the relationship of individuals or kin groups to one another and to the objects of value. Dr. Bromley (1989) distinguished between 'right & duty' and 'privilege and nb right'; and proposed that it is sufficient to consider four possible resource regimes; 1) State Property Regime 2) Private Property Regime 3) Common Property Regime and 4) Non Property (Open Access). The experience of forest management in India shows that these four regimes are not enough. As per the arrangement of 'rights and duties' of state government and community which is a partner in forest management, under Joint forest management, the evolved property regime is hybrid of State Property Regime and

Common Property Regime, let me term it as Joint Property Regime. In this regime the members of community management group have duty to observe use/access rules determined by them and their partner i.e. State. They have right to exclude non-members, and non-members have duty to abide by exclusion. Individual members of the management group including the state have both rights and duties with respect to use rates and maintenance of the resource. In other words, in this case the management group includes the state as well as community members, so in broad terms it may be called as Common Property, but since these two have been identified as separate identities for resource management, the appropriate terminology would be Joint Property Regime. In this regime there may be other regimes also i.e. 'State and Private' and 'Common and Private'.

If we analyze with a little depth, we will observe that the same resource (same forest) may be under different property regimes with reference to rights to different benefit stream. For example in case of forest areas which are under Joint forest management in West Bengal; they are under state property with reference to land, joint property with reference to timber production, common property with reference non nationalised minor forest products and open access resource with reference to indirect benefits like oxygen. Therefore the design of appropriate resource management system has to take into account a broader view of property regime instead of looking the resource in one particular property regime.

#### c. BACK TO GANDHI

The inadequacy of the Government controlled forest management system has forced the forest managers to look back into the economic propositions of Gandhiji. Few propositions of Gandhian economic thought, which has been realised either by community or by forest managers and which are being practised by them are given below:

#### 1. COLLABORATIVE ECONOMIC BEHAVIOUR:

Gandhiji's view of collaborative economic behaviour by individuals in micro-groups has been proved by all the cases of Community management and Joint Management of forests. The individuals have the tendency to cooperate on the basis of adjustments, some times happy and sometimes unhappy. This type of individual behaviour totally disregards the selfish behaviour as propounded in Hardin's Tragedy of Commons. The efforts of Joint-Management and Cooperative Management have been started by the resource managers only after realizing the possibility of collaborative economic behaviour.

#### 2. VILLAGE SWARAJ

Gandhiji was of the view that each village will be a republic in itself. In the July 26, 1942 Harizan issue, he observed "My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic, ----. There will be the compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village ----. The Panchyat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive." The structure and functioning of different committees either evolved

by themselves or formed by forest department match with the proposed village panchayat by Gandhiji. In case of committees formed by forest department the jurisdiction is limited but in case of some committees which evolved themselves, the jurisdiction is as wide as thought by Gandhiji. The system of rotational forest protection (known as Thengapali in Orissa) is also same as the system of village guards proposed by Gandhiji.

### 3. KERNEL OF GANDHIAN ECONOMIC THOUGHT

The kernel of Gandhian economic thought is: 'For improvement in living conditions of masses, growing structural unemployment must be halted. This can be done only by revitalising the labour intensive occupations of the traditional sector' (Amritananda Das). For promotion of labour intensive traditional sector, he also suggested:

- i. Programme for marketing of labour intensive products and for supply of inputs to the labour intensive activities.
- ii. Technical extension and credit facilities for labour intensive activities.

In case of Joint Forest Management, the state forest managers have realised the importance of labour intensive traditional sector and they are working for promotion of the sector which is dependent on forests for its raw material. They realised that the degradation of forests can be stopped only when the stage of full employment of rural masses is reached. Therefore the state departments and supportive agencies like Ford Foundation are working on indigenous techniques of Minor Forest Products (MFPs) processing, marketing of products and supply of inputs and credit facilities, to overcome the stage of unemployment and underemployment for eradication of mass poverty. The interest of forest managers is that as economic returns of rural masses from forest will increase, they will be more interested in protection of forests.

### 4. SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES

Gandhiji suggested the system of supportive agencies for promotion of labour intensive sector and for a proper balance between labour intensive and capital intensive sector. For the labour intensive sector he suggested- Cooperative (Micro) groups of farmers and artisans, non official agencies for input supply and marketing of products, and supportive state agencies like Banks etc. With the evolution of cooperative micro groups, state forest managers and community organisers have also realised the relevance of 'Non-official agencies for input supply and marketing of products'. In case of community management, some voluntary organisation are trying to play this role, while in case of Joint Forest Management the state forest managers are working for establishing the federations of micro groups which can play the identified role.

Thus the state forest managers of India have realised the relevance of Gandhian economic thought with reference to resource management after a period of about 40-50 years, and now the communities as well as forest managers are trying to reform the state controlled forest management system to Community Management

or Joint Management based on collaborative behaviour of individual. The need is to focus the attention on other aspects of Gandhian thought ie. discouragement of investment in capital intensive activities competing with labour intensive activities, restriction on the competition between products of capital intensive activities and labour intensive activities, and strengthening of village level organisations.

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