

**MODULE 8: PRE-INDEPENDENCE EXTENSION PROJECTS AND RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

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Module number and title	<b>Module 8: Pre-Independence Extension Projects and Rural Development Programmes</b>	
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Keywords	Rural Reconstruction, Rural Project , Spiritual development	
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To understand the history of Rural Reconstruction in India.</li> <li>2. To know the various pre-independent rural development Projects in India.</li> <li>3. To get an idea about the contribution and challenges of this pre-independent development projects.</li> </ol>	
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## **MODULE 8: PRE-INDEPENDENCE EXTENSION PROJECTS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

### **Introduction**

In the Indian context, the village population has been growing without a proportionate increase in production or income. The average villager has a pitifully low standard of comfort.

Rural reconstruction implies renovation of the villages for the total wellbeing of the ruralites. It is oriented to their social, economic and political development. The principal objectives of rural reconstruction include (a) eradication of poverty by means of regeneration of cottage industries, establishment of cooperative societies, improvement of transport, (b) spread of education, (c) progress of health, (d) abolition of social malpractices like casteism, untouchability and the like. The non-violent Swaraj of Mahatma Gandhi was based on the idea of rural reconstruction.

Rural reconstruction has been advocated by three schools of thought who are known as (i) The Philanthropic Group, (ii) The Reformist Group, and (iii) The Revolutionary Group.

The Philanthropists offer a pragmatic approach. They plead for improving the condition of the rural population within the purview of the existing rural institutions and structure of the rural society.

They attach supreme importance to purely humanitarian Endeavour's like (i) establishment of schools and hospitals, (ii) creation of charity funds to cater to the needs of the rural poor, (iii) moral appeals to landlords or money-lenders to relax their pressures on the peasants and labourers.

The Reformists assume that it is the malfunctioning of the existing social institutions that causes economic misery and socio- cultural backwardness of the ruralites. They, therefore, stress the need of reformation of the social institutions for the healthy functioning of the social system in order to bring about holistic development of the rural community.

The Revolutionary group supports the programme of revolutionary transformation of the rural matrix. The thinkers belonging to this group are of the opinion that evils of the rural

community are not an outcome of the malfunctioning of the rural social institutions but are concomitant of the social system.

These evils are the inevitable product of the normal functioning of the contemporary social order. Therefore, they recommend radical transformation of the rural social institutions to bring about a revolutionary change in the social system.

### **Aspects of Rural Reconstruction:**

Broadly speaking, rural reconstruction programme entails three aspects. They are material, intellectual and moral. So far as the material aspect is concerned, rural reconstruction programme is oriented to improve the health and raise the standard of living of the ruralites. The former is achieved by encouraging better sanitation and by the provision of medical aid.

The moral aspect, however, is the most fundamental. It seeks to awaken the villager from the long stupor of ages, so that he may realise his due in life as well as shake off his lethargy and work in co-operation with government agencies to ameliorate his lot.

It aims at creating in him the desire for self-improvement and self-discipline by individual and collective action so that he may be freed of the inhibitions standing in the way of his self-realisation. It seeks to release his pent-up energies for removing defeatism, superstition, baseless fears created by centuries of depression.

### **Importance of Rural Reconstruction:**

The importance of rural reconstruction cannot be gainsaid. Rural reconstruction puts an end to exploitation, diseases, illiteracy, gambling, drinking, corruption or class struggle. It seeks to establish a socialistic system in the country and thereby brings about the social and economic development of the ruralites.

By establishing agricultural and cottage industries, rural reconstruction solves the food problem of the country and saves millions of rupees in foreign exchange which goes towards the import of food grains. It also increases the national income.

Indian culture will be regenerated and will forge ahead through rural reconstruction. Rural reconstruction, in this way, will pave the way for the establishment of a true democracy in India, since most of the population lives in villages.

Various individual groups, associations and parties have perceived the gigantic task of rural reconstruction in their own light. Prominent among them are leaders, planners, philanthropic bodies, missionary groups, welfare associations, governmental institutions and others.

During British rule some selected social workers had started some programmes of rural development. The evolution of extension programme is described in two stages:

Stage I- Pre-Independence Era (1866-1947)

Stage II- Post-Independence Era (1947-1953)

### **Pre-Independence Era (1866-1947)**

During the pre-independence era, various attempts were made by the individual persons and private agencies viz. Gurgaon project in Haryana by Mr. F.L. Brayne; Sriniketan Experiment in Bengal by Sri Rabindra Nath Tagore; Marthandam project by Dr. Spencer Hatch under the auspices of YMCA; Sevagram experiment in Wardha by Mahatma Gandhi; Adarsh Seva Sangh, Pohri, Gwalior; Indian Village Service in Lucknow and Etawah in Uttar Pradesh by Mr. A.T. Mosher and Sarvoday Programme in Bombay province by Sri B. N. Gupta were prominent.

It was during this period that the Department of Agriculture came into being in June 1871 under the then Government of India, and by 1882, agricultural departments in most of the provinces started functioning in skeleton form. Recognising the need for new and improved methods of cultivation based on agricultural research, the then Government of India also set up an Institute of Agricultural Research at Pusa in Bihar in 1905.

**Table 4.1 Rural development programmes**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Person/agency</b>
1920	Gurgaon project in Haryana	Mr. F.L. Brayne
1920	Seva-gram experiment in Wardha in Gujarat	Shree Mahatma Gandhi
1921	Sriniketan experiment in Bengal	Sri Rabindra Nath Tagore
1928	Marthandam Project in Kerala	Dr. Spencer Hatch Young Men Christian Association (YMCA)

1932	Baroda village reconstruction project	Shree B.T. Krishnamachari
1946	Firka Vikas Yojana in Madras (now in Tamilnadu)	Government of Madras

### ***Gurgaon Project (1920)***

In Gurgaon district, this programme of village development was the first one to be run by the State. It was started by the Mr. F. L. Brayne. In 1920, Mr. Brayne had been appointed on the post of Deputy Commissioner in Gurgaon district and he began this project of rural upliftment in his district, which became famous as Gurgaon Project. Rural upliftment movement on a mass scale was first started by Mr. F. L. Brayne. He was prompted by the backwardness, poverty and misery of the people. A village guide had been posted to act as a channel through which the advice of the experts in various departments could be passed on to the villagers. The main objectives of this project were: (1) To increase crop production, (2) to control extra expenditure, (3) to improve the health, (4) to develop the feeling of women-education, and (5) home development work

The programme of introducing improved seeds, implements, the methods of cultivation etc. was started throughout the district. As the village guides were not technical men, very little permanent value was achieved in fact. The project could not develop leadership in the villages that would continue work when the village guides had left the villages.

The work again gathered momentum, after 1933, where Mr. Brayne was appointed Commission of Rural Reconstruction in the Punjab. 1935-36. Government of India granted Rs.1 crore for various rural works which acted as a stimulus. Nevertheless the project could not make much headway as the local talent was not utilized for development process. Most of the work done by exercising authority over the people rather than by voluntary participation of local people. Moreover, this project was also based upon the sentiments of F.L. Brayne and when he was transferred, gradually this programme also stopped.

### ***Sriniketan Experiment: (1921)***

Ensclosed in a *zamindar* family and brought up in affluence the young Tagore had initially never felt the plight of exploitation, illiteracy and atrocities of life which the villagers used to face. Tagore's ardent interest of village upliftment arose when he was exposed to the poverty

and oppression which engulfed the rural mass, during the time when Tagore was in charge of the family's estates in East Bengal. This whole scenario made him keenly sensitive towards these people and he decided to pull them out from this ominous sign of darkness, so as to rebuild India and its villages. Tagore's ideological framework and attitudes towards the life and society of rural people was inspirational to attract Leonard Elmhirst, a British agronomist to come to India upon the invitation of Tagore to work with him, and in the process they began to formulate methods for social and economic change. Tagore's ideas of rural development reverberated from his saying:

If we could free even one village from the shackles of helplessness and ignorance, an ideal for the whole of India would be established... Let a few villages be rebuilt in this way, and I shall say they are my India. That is the way to discover the true India (Tagore, 1928).

To translate his dream into reality, the Institute of Rural Reconstruction in Sriniketan was established in 1922 as an experiment with the initiative of Tagore and Elmhirst. Elmhirst was supposed to be the man behind the entire experiment. Rathindranath Tagore and Santosh Majumdar had been sent to study agriculture at the University of Illinois-Urbana in 1906, and Tagore later put them in charge of agricultural development as a part of Sriniketan experiment. Rabindranath Tagore's work in "village reconstruction" at Sriniketan is not as widely known as his work at Shantiniketan. Founded at Sriniketan in 1922, the Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IRR) was Tagore's attempt to put to work his ideas about village reform.

Tagore has recalled how he, a "town-bred" individual, came to recognize the "sorrow and poverty of villagers" while being a manager of his family's agricultural estates in East Bengal in the 1890s.

In 1906, Tagore released his 15 point Village Reconstruction Charter in Pabna (now in Bangladesh). This document makes clear that making villages autonomous was chief among his concerns. It was necessary to use "indigenously made goods." Further, all the village disputes had to be settled within through a process of village arbitration. A community grain bank was necessary to guard against famines. In a gesture towards the necessity of women's autonomy, the Charter asks that "housewives" be trained in a trade that could enhance the family's income.

While Tagore sought autonomy for villages, he did not wish that they remain isolated. In his

view, it was necessary that "brotherhood" was cultivated between "hamlets, villages and districts."

The object of Sriniketan is to bring back life in its completeness into the villages making them self-reliant and self-respectful, acquainted with the cultural tradition of their own country and competent to make an efficient use of modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic conditions.

The objectives of the mission were:

1. To win the friendship and affection of villagers and cultivators by talking a real interest in all that concerns their lives and welfare, and by making a lively effort to assist them in solving their most pressing problems.
2. To take the problem of the village and the field to the class room for study and discussion and to the experimental farm for solution.
3. To put the students in the way of acquiring practical experience in cultivation, dairy, animal husbandry, poultry keeping, carpentry, and smithing, weaving and tannery; in practical sanitation work; and in the art and spirit of cooperation.
4. To give the students elementary instruction in the science connected with their practical work.
5. To encourage in the staff and students of the department itself a spirit of sincere service and willing sacrifice for the people of the surrounding villages.
6. To train the students to a due sense of their own intrinsic worth, physical and moral and in particular to teach them to do with their own hands everything which a village householder or a cultivator does or should do for a living, if possible, more efficiently.

The experiment was strongly supported by a team of foreigners and Bengalis. Among the foreigners; C.F. Andrews, W.W. Pearson, Kim-Taro Kashahara, Dorothy Straight Whitney, Miss Jenson remarkably contributed for the development of Sriniketan, as a model of village development; both by their own efforts and sometimes by financial assistance.

Elmhirst's closest associates were Rathindranath Tagore and Santosh Majumdar. Another

invaluable worker was Kalimohan Ghosh who was nicely portrayed by Elmhirst in the following manner "Kalimohan, with his extensive rural experience, laid the foundation for all the work in the village in his role as chief interpreter and contact person". Sri, Dhirananda Roy, V.S. Masoji, a student of Kala-Bhavan and Gour Gopal Ghosh were also other great warriors behind the experiment as Tagore visualized.

The Sriniketan programme covered broadly four general areas: *agriculture, crafts and industries, village welfare and education*. The agricultural activities were based on three phases- (i) experiment; (ii) training, and (iii) extension. Extension activities were given much priority. A Demonstration Plot was created to impart training and education to all the farmers through real life situation. One or two agricultural workers from Sriniketan often used to go to the villages and farmers to supervise all activities. Dairy, poultry, pisciculture and bee-keeping were also some of the salient activities associated with the experiment in view of augmenting the rural resources and over all development of the villagers. Significance of this programme:

The Cooperative movement was a significant aspect of the experiment. Cooperatives are an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprises.

Another concept '*Dharmagola*' reflecting the principle of cooperative was introduced in 1928 for the benefit of the villagers. Later on, many villages were found with *Dharmagolas* and they ran it quite efficiently. During the harvesting time, every family used to deposit some amount of paddy in the respective *Dharmagola* and in time of exigencies they could buy some after paying minimum interest within their affordability. There were irrigation cooperatives also in a few villages and they were responsible for pond renovation; construction, maintenance and proper utilization of irrigation canals. *Mahila Samities* (Women's Association) played a considerable role in the economic and social welfare of the community. Right from 1936, Mahila Samities were very active in Bolpur, Bandhgora, Bhubandanga, Surul and Goalpara and plenty of activities were carried out for the upliftment of rural women.

The district of Birbhum is surrounded by *Santals* - an indigenous and disadvantaged community. They were under utter poverty and landless labourers. Formation of *Santal*



*Hitaishi Samiti* in 1931 presided by Kalimohan Ghosh was a landmark in the development of this tribal community and it gave a new fillip to the Sriniketan experiment.

In assessing the impact of Sriniketan, various aspects must be taken into consideration. There are the statistically verifiable achievements found in the reports of Elmhirst, P.C.Lal, and others, such as greater crop output, soil reclamation and reforestation, upgrading of livestock, reduction of deaths due to epidemics, creation of cooperatives, revival of and creation of cottage industries, establishment of schools and higher rates of literacy, and so forth.

In spite of the success story of Sriniketan, Tagore himself acknowledged some of the difficulties of Sriniketan experiment. Stating that “forces are working for creating a complete deviation from the path which we pursued when we first began our work”, he also conceded that the unlimited freedom which he had given the staff had resulted in a fragmented programme. He found that the approach of the ‘experts’ had undermined the establishing of sympathetic relationships with the villagers”.

### ***Marthandam Project (1928)***

The work was commenced by Dr. Spencer Hatch an American Agricultural expert in Travancore under the auspicious of young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in 1921. The villages in Marthandam area were undeveloped economically and the economic condition of the native majority was poor. Here, people used to cultivate only paddy and coconut on some places. For exploiting this weakness, it was thought that some developmental work should be done, so that the Christian faith could spread. Consequently Dr. Hatch made agreement with YMCA and the Church for his work and initiated this project in neighbouring village Marthandam. The main objective of the project was to bring more abundant life for rural people. It was intended to symbolize the three-fold development, not only spiritual, mental and physical but also economic and social. The essential technique of the centre was ‘Self-help with intimate expert counsel’. From the demonstration centre at Marthandam, about hundred villages were covered through Y.M.C.A. centers in villages.

The objectives of this project were also made on the basis as to how the public of this area could become Christian. The main objectives of this project were:

- a) Spiritual development

- b) Mental development
- c) Physical development
- d) Social development
- e) Economic development

For this project, the extension secretary was appointed to supervise the activities of the group. Marthandam was in a strategic position to serve the villages. It kept prize bulls and goats, model bee-hives, demonstration plots for improving grain and vegetable seeds, poultry runs with prize laying-hens, a weaving shed, etc. Inside the centre, there was equipment like honey extractors, health charts and the items needed for other cottage vocations. At the centre, cottage vocations were taught and agricultural implements tested. The emphasis throughout was on self-help and co-operation. The successful output of this project was the Egg-selling Club. In 1939 which became a self governing body. Another co-operative society was honey club, where the villagers were taught the use of modern bee-hives and extracted honey scientifically. The honey was cured and marketed co-operatively. There were Bull clubs, weaver's club also. The activities conducted at centre could meet the mental, physical and spiritual needs of the villagers. The main shortcomings of the project were inadequate funds and governmental help. The activities were mainly organized the Marthandam and the village workers did not stay in villages. The religious bias of the institution was also a major hindrance in its activities.

For, this programme of Dr. Hatch remained for a long period because he had trained workers and the local people were inspired to work themselves. As such this project was very successful in this area. But the whole programme was centred on a person and after the death of Dr. Hatch, there was a conflict on the question of leadership between YMCA and Church Association and due to no economic advantage to the non-paid workers, this programme could not survive.

### ***Seva-Gram (1920)***

Self contained and self sufficient village life was the dream of Gandhiji. He was aware about the grassroots' problems of India, rural set up and he wanted to solve these problems without intervention of any outside agency. He wanted to solve these problems by local people and

through local resources. People know Gandhiji not only as a Mahatma or political agitator, but also as a social and economic reformer. He made people to understand that India lives in villages and that the common man's upliftment is the upliftment of the country.

Regarding development work in the country, he emphasized that the "salvation of India lies in cottage industries." The key-words of his economy are: - Decentralized production and equal distribution of wealth Self-sufficiency of Indian villages.

For equal distribution of wealth, cruel process of extermination was not followed but throughout the heart of the owners by persuasion and appeal to the better sense of man. According to him self-sufficiency of Indian villages can be achieved by eradicating middlemen, so that the farmer could get the full price for his produce. He wanted that the tiller should be able to consume his own products like fruits, milk, vegetables etc. Only then will come up the true India.

Keeping these are in mind, Gandhiji began this welfare project SEVA GRAM establishing his Ashram in wardha, in 1920.

The main objective of this programme was to prevent the economic and social suppression of the people and to create the feeling of patriotism among them and they must think that this is their own country. For fulfilling this objective, Gandhiji made a programme, which became famous as Gandhian Constructive Programme. The main objectives of this project were:

- (1) to use khadi clothes
- (2) to introduce Health Programme
- (3) the programme of sanitation in the village
- (4) the programme of women welfare,
- (5) the programme of economic help
- (6) to uplift the backward classes
- (7) primary and adult educational programmes

(8) to improve the conditions of poor people

(9) programme of social harmony and

(10) to popularise the mother tongue and other national dialects.

Gandhiji wants to make villagers self-sufficient and also want to develop stamina which is useful against oppression and injustice. The important institutions, which were organized to foster his ideas were; All India Spinner Association, All India Village Industries Association, Gandhi Ashram at Tiruchungodi, Gandhi Niketan at Kallupatti, Gandhi Gram at Dindigal, Gandhi Sewa Sadan at Porur (Malabar), Kasturba Ashram in Trichur, Kerala. Truly speaking, the Gandhian constructive Programme became big institutions and simple ideas became philosophies. His emphasis on Khadi became the Charkha movement and then, the All India Khadi and Village Industries Board. His thought, against untouchability and caste system, resulted in the organization of Harijan Sewak Sangh and many like this. He created leaders like Vinoba Bhave, Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan, Mira Ben etc. who came from common stock, but got inspiration from Gandhi.

But Gandhiji's constructive programme was not followed completely by majority because those things, which were made by machines, were more beautiful and low-priced than the products were made through these programmes and the common people could not be impressed. The single cause of failure of Gandhiji's programme as stated by the scholars was industrialization in the country.

### ***Firka Vikas Yojana (1946)***

The government of Madras (now Tamil Nadu) decided to make efforts for the development of villages at Firka level. The first programme began in 1946. Among Pre-Independence projects, this was the biggest project.

The Firka Development Scheme launched by Madras Government in 1946 aimed at the attainment of the Gandhian ideal of "Village Swaraj" by bringing about not only educational, economic, sanitary and other developmental activities of villages but also by revitalising the spirit of the people and making them self-confident and self-reliant. Sarvodaya Scheme was launched by the Bombay Government with a view to promoting the furtherance of Gandhiji's constructive programme.

The underlying idea of this scheme was to inculcate in the villagers the spirit of self-help and mutual help. Begun under the sponsorship of the provincial government of Uttar Pradesh in late 1948 with a unit of sixty-four villages, the project of Etawah finally became a prototype for Community Development Projects and National Extension Service blocks in thousands of villages every part of India by an enlightened popular government and carried through without compulsion among a peasantry known for its conservatism.

***Conclusion:***

It has found that the above mentioned projects were initiated by renowned personalities like Gandhiji, Rabindranath Tagore etc in different parts of the country in different point of time at the pre-independence era. It has contributed in many ways and influenced the life of rural people for the betterment. Certain concepts, like Cooperatives, khadi, village sanitation etc were few to mention which were praise worthy but these were not continued in a longer time for various reasons and mostly due to the departure of the founders or initiators and fund issues like. But the most important think is that these projects have shown the way out of defining the community development programme after independence. These projects can be called as *fath-founders* for rural development programme in India.



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