CHAPTER III
G. RAMACHANDRAN AS AN EDUCATIONALIST AND HIS ACTIVITIES IN GANDHIGRAM

G. Ramachandran was an exponent of Basic Education propounded by Mahatma Gandhi. He always stressed that education should be need based and skill oriented. This perspective and hard work finally realized the formation of a village university, along the lines of Gandhian and Tagorian vision, at Gandhigram in Madurai. Like all educationalists, G. Ramachandran too believed that education is a powerful weapon in removing ignorance. To him, education of the head and heart must always go together\(^1\) and there is no great revolution than education to transform the society. Such a revolution would and must represent the integration of character, health, learning productive work, community living and service, aesthetics, research and extension. The aim of education should be nothing less than the creation of a casteless and classless society through truthful and non-violent means\(^2\).

G. Ramachandran displayed a special ability to sum up even the most complex aspect of Gandhian philosophy\(^3\). ‘Nai Talim’ was the new name Mahatma Gandhi gave to education as he conceived it. ‘Nai Talim’ means new education which included the following aspects:
1. Education must set before itself not only the creation of a totally just,
democratic, and peaceful social order based on non-violent sanction. It should also indicate clearly and precisely the methods of achieving such an objective.

2. Such education must begin with the earliest years of childhood and should run on throughout life.

3. The school should help in developing the full personality of the student, drawing out all his talents and bringing them into harmony with each other.

4. This means education of the mind and intellect concurrently with that of every physical and bodily skill. Mahatma Gandhi used poetic words in this connection when he said that he wanted in this education not only thinking brains but thinking fingers. All culture and civilization arose from the confluence of the brain and the finger of man. This leads to the rejection of any book-centered system of education and acceptance of a creative and life-centered system. Life and work are coeval. Life ends where work ends.

5. In a country like India a creative and life-centered system of education must keep productive work at the centre and such productive work must be carefully regulated from year to year in
consonance with the aptitude and capacity of the growing child. Handicrafts producing useful and beautiful articles thus occupy the centre of the educational process for boys and girls in ‘Nai Talim’.

Books are not discarded but kept in their proper place.

6. The aim on ‘Nai Talim’ is never simply the production of articles, however useful or beautiful. Productive work is only the means to the end. It is the complete education of the child and the full development of its personality.

7. Education is drawn from three main sources constituting the catchment area of learning: the natural environment, the social environment and the process of productive work, each one of these three sources being of equal importance. The child thus grows in harmony with nature, properly integrated with society, taking delight and pride in productive work because all such work is transmuted into the substance of learning. The child puts its roots in to its own soil and then reaches out to an ever-expanding vision of life, its purposes and duties.

8. The development of the sense of freedom, initiative and responsibility should be achieved through the self-government and self help of children in side the school community. Therefore, every school has its parliament and its chosen cabinet of ministers in charge of
Sanitation, punctuality, internal disciplines, making the school happy and bright and cultural and recreational Programmes. The abolition of policeman’s examination must follow as a matter of course. Such examinations should be replaced by the continuous assessment of the achievement of the children throughout the year, including a measure of self-assessment.

9. The school must be closely linked with the community and vice-versa. This means extension in the best sense of the word.

10. Children, growing up in the love and pride of productive work, learning through kinship with nature and the social environment, getting trained in self-help and self government and even self-assessment progressively, become the free and co-operative citizens of a democratic society in which there will be no high and low, no distinctions of class and caste and standing for justice and peace. The schools thus become the starting point of a non-violent revolution for a new social order.

3.1 G. Ramachandran’s life at Gandhigram

Gandhigram Rural Institute is the meeting place of Tagorian and Gandhian vision of Education. G. Ramachandran’s marriage with Mrs. T. S. Soundram was a turning point in his life. Mrs. T. S. Soundram was also
one of the great freedom fighters and social workers. This further helped G. Ramachandran to strengthen and practice the Gandhian Constructive programmes in real life. Gandhigram, started to put in to practice the Gandhian constructive programme with such modifications as have become imperative in the post Gandhian period in India, has now completed 56 years of service and has emerged as the biggest centre of Gandhian constructive work and educational experimentation in India. G. Ramachandran stated that, “We in this university try to instill the spirit of Gandhian values so that we could create a saner world and safer world for our children. Our faculties and departments strive earnestly towards instilling these concepts and we are in the process of reaching the youth by showing them the relevance of Gandhian ideals in all fields like economy, environment, human resource development, politics, religion etc.”

The deep roots Gandhigram had put out in the rural soil and the branches that have spread out in many directions to meet the needs and challenges of rural India in the context of the modern world, owe their origin to the inspiring leadership of Mrs.Soundram Ramachandran and G.Ramachandran. Mahatma Gandhi selected Mrs.Soundram to work under the Kasturba Trust for the upliftment of rural areas in Tamilnadu. As rural development was to start from country, G. Ramachandran and Mrs.Soundram began their activities at first in villages of Chinnalapatty,
chettiapatty and Thoppampatty near Gandhigram. These villages were socially and economically backward and the inhabitants led their life in an unhygienic condition. They entertained communal feelings and developed disunity among themselves. The Harijans of the villages were denied even the basic rights to enter schools, to walk with the chappals on, with in the streets, and to take drinking water from the wells of caste Hindus.

To put an end to their social problems and to pioneer the creation of a casteless and classless society they started an institution at Gandhigram. The Chinnalapatti friends under the leadership of Shri.Lagumiah met Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran and G. Ramachandran and desired that some activity in the name of Mahatma Gandhi should be started at this historic place where they had 'darshan' of the Mahatma. Shri.Lagumiah offered 25 acres of land on the roadside with a big well. The credit for the early making of Gandhigram should go to the unstinted support of the TVS family. They not only helped Gandhigram financially but also spared the services of a Civil Engineer working in their concerns with a lorry for the purchase of materials for construction of different sections of Gandhigram. Financial help came from different quarters. It was Mrs.Soundram Ramachandran who discovered the site. The foundation stone of the Gandhigram's first building was laid by the aged mother of the Lagumiah brothers on 15th August 1947. In this way G. Ramachandran and his wife Soundram started Gandhigram in
Madurai on 7th October 1947. It was inaugurated by Sri. B. G. Kher, the then chief minister of Bombay.

Mahatma Gandhi's message on the inauguration of Gandhigram, "success Attends Where Truth Reigns" forms the bedrock on which Gandhigram has been established. This message has been both a challenge and a blessing to the founders of Gandhigram. It was a remainder that Success is inherent only in truthful action. This Institution has certain exalted aims. They are: To promote agriculture, to foster the spirit of unity and solidarity among the rural masses, to start schools and colleges for the villagers, to promote Khadi products, to uplift the Harijans, to give care to the orphans, to offer work for the handicapped and to start welfare activities in the rural areas.

The authorities of Gandhigram laid down in the constitution for Gandhigram that their major task was, to work for the reconstruction of the social order in our country along lines laid down by Mahatma Gandhi, i.e., the building up of a classless and casteless society of complete justice to the common man through wholly non-violent effort, with special emphasis on the social and moral values of bodily and productive work.

The avowed aims of Gandhigram have been to devise such steps and programmes, to interpret creatively the significance of Gandhian philosophy, organize extension programmes, programmes for women uplift, promotion of
small family norms, village sanitation. Basic education, communal harmony and conflict resolution and undertake governmental and non governmental programmes. G. Ramachandran and his wife Soundram plunged themselves into action at various levels, Mrs. Soundram concentrating on women’s education, care for deserted wives and orphaned children and medical care to women from unfortunate circumstances and G. Ramachandran spending his time in providing a revolutionary frame work to Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of Basic Education. Khadi work, village industries, rural housing, sanitation, extension work and employment opportunities for the unemployed youth in the village around Gandhidram.

Gandhigram was started only with a few buildings of traditional type with a small group of people. But today it is a lovely and sprawling campus of more than 400 acres of land nestling in the shadows of the Sirumalai hills. Forty years ago it was just a stretch of empty, open land without a single tree. Today thousands of trees wave their heads in brilliant sunshine and there are patches of ploughed and cultivated land.

Gandhigram was gradually developed under the guidance and stewardship of G. Ramachandran and Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran. In the initial stages Gandhigram had organized health, education and training activities directed towards the welfare of women and children in the rural areas. It has now grown in to a complex of teaching, training, production,
extension and research institutions with nearly 2500 students and 500 teachers. It harps on integrated programmers or rural development, covering about 100 villages. Now there are over 30 institutions in Gandhigram. Among them there is a children’s home, a pre-basic school, Thambithottam Basic School, the Kasturba Sevikashram, the Rural Institute of Higher Education, the Lakshmi Teachers Training College, the Gandhi Centenary School of Educational Crafts, the Kumarappa Court of village studies, the Kasturba Hospital, the institute of Rural Health and Family planning, the family child welfare Training centre, the Khadi Bhavan, the Shantisena, the Kulabhavan and the fellowship of Friends of Truth. G. Ramachandran continued as the Director of Gandhigram for thirty years.

3.1.1 The Children’s Home

Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran and G. Ramachandran had opened a small home called “Sowbhagya Ilam” on the same day when Gandhigram was inaugurated, to provide a place of warmth and security to the foundlings and orphans of tender age and to give them proper education, enabling them to settle down as functioning citizens with self-respect. “Sowbhagya” means happiness and prosperity. Discarded babies, just a few days’ old, orphaned boys and girls, destitute children with no homes became the wards of children’s home. In an organized and co-operative community life the children take their rightful affection under the loving care of her dedicated...
workers. Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran took an abiding interest in the welfare, education, growth and rehabilitation of every child that entered the home. She spared no effort to supplement the slender stipends given by the Government to support the children by raising funds through her friends and well-wishers. Many children that had grown in the home now holding positions of stature remember with gratitude and pleasure the home and pay periodical visits and contribute occasional support.

The children’s home has two sections- Approved school and Destitute home. Children’s home laid emphasis on providing them with good nutritive food and protecting them against communicable diseases. To bring harmonious development of all their facilities, the children have been provided with opportunities not only for education but their social and cultural aspirations. In children’s home the children are brought up without caste and class distinction. The children’s home captures the attention of every one who comes to Gandhigram than any other institutions in Gandhigram.

3.1.2 The Pre-Basic (Nursery) School

To implement Mahatma Gandhi’s educational programme Nai Talim (New Education) the Pre- Basic School was started in 1947. This school is attached to Senior Basic School, Thambithottam. Education is largely through plays, story telling, visual aids and oral instruction. A Crèche was
also attached to this Nursery School. The children of working labourers and the children from in and around Gandhigram are taken care of by the Crèche. Food and toys are provided to the children. Every child in Pre-Basic School is given a free noon meal plus milk in the afternoon. Twice a year the health of every child is medically checked up and the weaker children receive a special diet of vitamins and Cod-liver oil. The two teachers keep in close touch with the parents of the children who are often invited to come and watch their children at work and play. Now, Gandhigram is developed as an educational complex.

3.1.3 The Senior Basic School

A small Basic School with teachers trained in Basic Education was the foundation over which the educational structure up to the university level was built in Gandhigram. The School has taken the village Samiarpadi for development and the teachers are involved in educational health and economic programmes in this village. Cotton craft was the centre of educational programme. This economic activity and the social environment of the child offered situations for its learning process.

The Senior-Basic School was started in 1947 at Thambithottam. Basic Schools were not popular in those days. This is really a farm school with agriculture and spinning and weaving as the basic crafts. About 50 percent of the food needs were met from the schools own farms and most of the boys
and girls got their dress from their own spinning and weaving. Both agriculture and cloth production were treated as multi-process media of learning. The students and teachers constitute a co-operative, producing and learning community living together and sharing in the daily vicissitudes of life.

The entire community life of the school is reared on student-self-reliance and self-government through their own assembly and periodically elected ministers. Boys and girls have thus developed right attitude towards democratic living and citizenship. From time to time batches of students under their teachers camp out in villages to study village conditions at first hand and to get training in rural service. Villagers now warmly welcome students and teachers and give them unreserved-co-operation. The school and the village community around Gandhigram are thus intimately linked together.

3.1.4 The Post Basic School

When the children reached eighth standard for further continuation of education a post basic educational programme was started in an adjacent campus called Thambithottam in 1952. Both the Senior Basic School and the Post- Basic School have been emphasizing agriculture and community life. Agriculture is the major basic craft of the Post- Basic School. Cloth production is the subsidiary craft. Most of the life of the school is lived with
the farm at the centre. Teachers proposed to add to weaving, dyeing, printing and tailoring. Pupils are also given instruction and practical training in Ghani, apiary and in soap making in the Village Industries Court attached to the Gandhigram Rural Institute. In 1955 the Post-Basic School functioning in Thambithottam became a high school. In 1978-79 it was upgraded into a Higher Secondary School. Apart from the academic course, the students learnt spinning, weaving and agriculture and also fine arts. The school was selected as one of the comprehensive High Schools by the state Government. Library and reading room of the school are put to good use by the students.

The school is working close in association with the youth organization in the neighboring Muruganpatty village. The youth club has done very good work among the poor in the village. Education and life are more closely co-ordinated in the Post-Basic School than anywhere else in Gandhigram. Boys and girls engage themselves systematically in planned productive work to get their education in different subjects and also to meet, as far as possible, their basic material needs, i.e., food and clothing. There is hardly an idle moment inside the Post-Basic School. The school works for 240 days in the year and the daily time table is divided in to 4 hours of productive and community work and 4 hours of school instruction. The pupils keep in close touch with village life and its problems and the integration of the school with the community is continually kept in view. Every item of work is done by the
pupils and teachers jointly in small batches and no one is left out in such a programme. All work is thus done by all in turn. The pupils Assembly and their elected cabinet of Student ministers generally function efficiently and with decorum. One of the primary factors helping to develop responsibility is the Association of teachers and pupils as working comrades in daily life, work and learning. The Post-Basic School has demonstrated the possibility of the self-sufficiency aspect of Basic Education.3

3.1.5 Kasturba Sevikashram

During Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran's stay in Adayar, the plight of deserted wives, widows and destitute women received her concern. Realizing the apathy of the society, helplessness of the families and indifference of the public to this social problem, she started a home for their rehabilitation, in 1945 at Adayar in Madras. Then it was transferred to Gandhigram in 1947 and it was called Kasturba Sevikashram.

Kasturba Sevikashram organized programme of education and rehabilitation. It was providing education facilities for those women up to the High School classes through a special high school, arranging Vocational courses, Secretarial work, Tailoring and dress making. It also trains a limited number of them in home nursing and housemaid work. In addition to professional competency in their work and a living faith in Gandhigram’s way of life, these girls have shown incredible self-confidence supporting
themselves and looking forward to a bright future. Under the guidance of Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran it tried to expose all those girls to rural realities by taking over a village Kollapatty for its development and organized a Balwadi, a Mother Sangam and adult education classes in this village.

The students and teachers of the Sevikashram also link themselves closely with the rural community in the surrounding villages. They organize some of the best village camps in Gandhigram and wherever they go they were warmly welcomed by women and children in the surrounding villages. The students in small batches render service in the children’s home, getting trained in child-care. Selected trainees and teachers went out to do valuable service in Cyclone Relief Work in the Ramanathapuram district in 1956 and later in Bhoodan Work in the Madurai district. They also took part in the work of Shanti Sena. During the Avadi session of Indian National Congress in 1955 the trainees went out to serve as volunteers in the congress camp. They also took part in the Sarvodaya Exhibition at Teynampet, Madras.

3.1.6 Avvai Ashram, Sivasailam

The Avvai Ashram at Sivasailam in the Thirunelveli district was started as a branch of Gandhigram, on the 13th of September 1954. The main aim of this institution was to help socially handicapped women and children.
Avvai Ashram did not confine its activities to its campus alone. Moving into the villages around with a vigorous programme of adult education and Pre-school Education the Ashram organized Balwadies in the nearby villages. Handiwork and tailoring classes were conducted for the benefits of women to acquire employment.

A school for the deaf and the dumb had been functioning in Kalyanipuram near Avvai Ashram from 1956. But later the school was added to Avvai Ashram. In 1974 the Gandhigram Shanti School for the deaf came under the management of Avvai Ashram. The children were largely drawn from the poorer sections of the society. Hence apart from their physical handicap they have also their problems of poverty and misery. Staff members specially trained to teach such children are in charge of this school. The school has very spacious buildings to accommodate children of different age group and sex. Many audio-aids for developing speech craft have been provided. There are also two colleges for destitute children and a centre for semi-educated girls. It was really the extension of the Sevikashram into another area of need and receptivity in Tamilnadu. The teaching and training programme in the Avvai Ashram follows closely on the lines of the Sevikashram in Gandhigram.
3.1.7 The Pilot Health Project

The Pilot Health Project was started in the fifth year (1952) after the birth of Gandhigram in order to provide better community and personal health to villages through a conscious effort by improving the environmental sanitation and to reduce birth rate through education and counseling in a limited area\(^6\). For some valid administrative reasons the name Pilot Health Project was changed to, the Gandhigram Institute of Rural Health and Family Planning which was registered as a separate legal entity in the year 1964\(^7\). The major functions were:

1. Demonstration of improved field services,

2. Training of health personal of basic and supervisory cadres,

3. Studies on communication effectiveness.

4. Attitude towards family planning devices and registration of vital statistics pertaining to health\(^8\).

The Gandhigram Institute of Rural Health and Family Welfare had attained an international reputation for its research and training and had also bagged ‘Dr. M. K. Seshadri prize and medal’ for outstanding and pioneering work in rural health care and community medicine\(^9\). Later this Institute collaborated with Gandhigram Rural Institute in running a diploma course for advanced sanitations and a certificate course for Health Inspectors. The state

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\(^1\) This project was later renamed as the Gandhigram Institute of Rural Health and Family Planning.

\(^2\) The name change was due to administrative reasons.

\(^3\) The institute was registered as a separate legal entity in 1964.

\(^4\) These functions included improving field services, training health personnel, conducting communication studies, and attitude towards family planning.

\(^5\) The institute had an international reputation for its research and training.

\(^6\) Environmental sanitation improvement aimed at better community and personal health.

\(^7\) Birth rate reduction efforts involved education and counseling.

\(^8\) Emphasis on improving living conditions.

\(^9\) This accolade recognized the institute's contributions in rural health and community medicine.
and central government support different aspects of training research and other activities of the Institution\(^60\).

The Bhore Committee recommended primary health centers, but there was no prototype to indicate how they should work. Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran took up the challenge. The work initiated under her leadership in Gandhigram in late forties led to strategies for rural health which are similar to those recommended by WHO, and UNICEF, in attaining 'Health for All' by the year 2000\(^61\). This Institute is now functioning as one of the pioneering Institutions not only in India but in the whole world devoted to the cause of promoting community health and family planning. International organizations and the Government of India have sent foreign students for training in Health Education and Family Planning.

3.1.8 Family and Child Welfare Training Centre

The central social welfare Board asked G. Ramachandran to start a centre for training Mukhya Sevikas, Grama Sevikas and Bala Sevikas, for the southern region. So in 1967 a family and Child Welfare Training Centre was established at Gandhigram. Trainees from all the four southern states, Goa and Maharashtra came to Gandhigram for job-oriented courses of 10 months and for an orientation course of 3 months. In addition to the training programme, the centre was fully involved in developing Balwadhes around and in educating young mothers. Later this centre was shifted to Bangalore\(^62\).
The family and Child Welfare Training Centre are fully financed by the Central Social Welfare Board\(^6\).

### 3.1.9 Lakshmi Teacher's Training College

During the period of 1967, the Government of Tamilnadu encouraged starting Secondary Schools in a big way. To help and equip these Secondary Schools with trained teachers having the right attitude towards rural communities, Gandhigram took up the responsibility of training graduate teachers specially to teach Science subjects\(^6\). The Lakshmi College of Education, named after Smt. Lakshmiammal, mother of Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran, is an Institute for graduates offering programmes in teacher education leading to the award of B.Ed and M.Ed degrees of the Madurai Kamaraj University\(^5\). Graduate trained teachers specializing in pre-school education among other conventional academic subjects have gone out of Lakshmi College of education functioning as effective teachers in many parts of Tamil Nadu. Kottaipatty is the service village of Lakshmi college of Education. The Faculty and students visit the village periodically and undertake welfare activities\(^6\).

### 3.1.10 The Social Education Organizers Training Centre

The Social Education Organizers Training Centre was established at Gandhigram during the year 1953. It conducted regular courses for training
Social Education Organizers for the community Development Ministry and also innumerable short-term courses for teachers, educators and others to carry the message of Community Development to wider circles of people. G.Ramachandran worked as the first Honorary Director of Social Education Organizers Training Centre. The Social Education Organizers Training Centre has brought many people from many parts of India and from even outside India to Gandhigram. Students and teachers in the other departments also have gained from such experience and the vision of the unity of India and the whole human race has been brought closer to Gandhigram.

3.1.11 The Regional Hindi Teacher’s Training College

The Regional Hind Teachers Training College was established at Gandhigram in the year 1963 with a small number of students. The union ministry of education bore the full grant to run this training college.

3.1.12 The Hindi Bhavan

The Hindi Bhavan was started in 1953. An eminent educationalist and devoted nationalist Sree Kaka Saheb Kaletakar laid the foundation of Hindi Bhavan. The object of Hindi Bhavan is to spread Hindi among Non-Hindi people with out any confrontation of such Indian languages when the Gandhigram Rural Institute started in 1956. The Hindi Bhavan began to work
as a voluntary organization and a Hindi propagational wing of Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram. The boys and girls of this Institution as well as the members of staff and family participated to write the various examinations in Hindi from prathamik to visharad and Praveen conducted by Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, Madras\textsuperscript{72}. The Hindi Prachara sabha has recognized the Hindi Bhavan as one of the examination centers under it\textsuperscript{73}.

3.1.13 The Khadi Bhavan

As Khadi is the symbol of self-reliance leading to economic freedom and equality, Khadi Bhavan was founded in 1948\textsuperscript{74}. With just a small band of weavers it began functioning producing rough and thick handspun and hand woven clothing. While Khadi in other centers was largely for men’s wear Gandhigram specialized in producing sarees. The work was enlarged year after year\textsuperscript{75}. Gandhigram specializes in producing sarees which have won a good name and are so much in demand that inmates have often to forego their claims in favour of eager buyers from outside\textsuperscript{76}. With the coming of the Periyar Community Project with Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran as the Honorary Project Executive Officer, Khadi production received an impetus in 1953\textsuperscript{77}.

Poverty and destitution would go only with the advancement of employment opportunities especially to those who are under-employed and live in the countryside. Gandhigram has therefore created a separate trust to
look after this class of people and to provide them with an occupational base. The institution is known as Gandhigram Khadi and Village Industries Public Charitable Trust. Under Khadi Trust hand spinning and hand weaving were organized and run in about sixty villages. Especially in Kasi Palayam area which was experimenting with the Ambar Charka on a large scale. The Trust had begun a process of modernization in Khadi spinning and weaving process; creel stand, can winding, doubling, cizing, utilization of cards and Nepali loom form part of this modernization process.

Till the beginning of 1976, Gandhigram Khadi and village Industries Trust concentrated only on the expansion of Khadi programme. To make the institution broad-based and with a view to cover various types of artisans, a number of village Industries units have been recently started. The Khadi Trust Developed its own marketing network with show rooms in Madurai, Dindigul, Palani, Gandhigram, Tirunelveli, Ambasamudram, Kallidaikuruchi, Vikramasingapuram and Kasipalayam. It had also introduced mobile sales in all these towns. The Trust had not taken to the Khadi programme on a commercial basis. Instead, the Trust developed it more as a programme of cloth self-sufficiency inside Gandhigram.

In order to encourage the educated unemployed to take the small enterprise, the Khadi Trust gave jobs through match manufacture, powerghani industry, brick and lime industry. They were provided with
packages of services which included supply of equipment and machinery, raw materials, technical services and the marketing of the goods under a common brand name$^{83}$.

Gandhigram community started Lakshmi Seva Sangam for the amelioration of penury in women. Its main objective is to provide occupations for women in cottage industries, dairy, printing etc. It started specially to provide employment to village women, producing varieties of consumer products like curry powder, shakthimalt, cottage matches, toilet soap, tooth powder, milk etc$^{84}$. With a view to provide continuous occupation to the tribals in the Sirumalai hills, the Lakshmi Seva Sangam established an Ayurvedic and Siddha Pharmacy unit. This Unit manufactures gulkhand, ginger murraba, oma water Ayurvedic hair oil, tooth powder, bath powder etc$^{85}$.

Gandhigram trust helped in organizing a Weavers co-operative society with a view to alleviate the suffering of the art weavers of Chinnalapatti. The art silk weavers were persuaded to take to cotton yarn weaving. The society is called ‘Soundram Samarasa Handloom Weavers co-operative Society’. The society is producing entirely cotton fabrics$^{86}$. With a view to generate income to the poorest sections in the villages, forty buffaloes were distributed to the indigent families around the Khadi centre at Gandhipalayam, one of the sub-centers of Gandhigram Trust. The milk was procured from these
families and converted into cream, milk and skimmed milk. This is one of the employment opportunities for the poor in the surrounding villages.  

3.1.14 The Kala Bhavan

For properly establishing the cultural and spiritual mooring of the children and students in different sections of Gandhigram, Kala Bhavan was started in 1960. Here free training is given to the boys and girls from Gandhigram Institutions in the field of music, dance, painting and drama. The Lecturers in the Rural Institute who possess appropriate qualifications impart training in an honorary capacity. The Kala Bhavan also undertakes music and drama performances and exhibitions in close collaboration with the Gandhigram cultural Committee. The cultural Committee was set up to take charge of community worship, programmes of music and drama, celebration of inter-religious festivals and to promote cultural talents among students and teachers from the four states in South India. The Committee works in close collaboration with the Kala Bhavan at Gandhigram. Kala Bhavan trains students in different fine arts like theatre arts and crafts. Students were trained by eminent artists and scholars like Prof. M.G. Gopalakrishnan, J.M.Dutta, S.P.Sreenivasan and Abani Haldar, Prof. G.Sankara Pillai, S.Ramanujan etc. A world class artist and film director Sri Adoor Gopalakrishnan, who was a student of Gandhigram, has
acknowledged his indebtedness to the kind of education that he received from Gandhigram

3.1.15 The Kumarappa Court of Village Industries

Village industries were started almost from the beginning of Gandhigram. A small workshop was started with carpentry and blacksmithy work. In the Village Industries court the following departments were functioning in those days a) Hand-made paper Unit; b) Hand-pounding of rice; c) Oil pressing in ghanies; d) Soap making; e) Carpentry; f) Specializing in making Ambar Charka and other equipments; g) Black-smithy; and h) Khadi weaving. The students of the Rural Institute who opt for village Industries as their special subject get their training in the village Industries Court. Electricity is utilized only to a certain point in the productive processes but the maximum use of the skills of human labour is emphasised. Village Industries Court is a production unit also supplying the need of Gandhigram community oil, soap and Khadi and rice.

3.1.16 The Co-Operative Consumers’ Store

For the benefit of Gandhigram workers and the surrounding villagers, Gandhigram Co-Operative Store was started in 1954. This is the fair price shop; controlled commodities are distributed to the people in the villages around. It also helps as a kind of practicing school for students taking co-
operation as their special subject in the Gandhigram Rural Institute. This has developed into a shopping centre for the whole Gandhigram community inside and the surrounding villages.

3.1.17 The Sarvodaya Co-Operative Agricultural Bank

In 1949 a multi-purpose Co-operative society was formed to help the staff of Gandhigram and the village farmers and Artisans. Later it was converted into the Sarvodaya co-operative Agricultural Bank in 1957 with limited liability. This Bank has now proved to be a boon to the farmers in the Gandhigram area. The Bank gives loans to the farmers on the security of crops and through a controlled credit process the producer is assured of a fair price for their produce. It furnishes facilities to farmers to store their produce safely and also undertakes the distribution of chemical fertilizers. It also helps in setting up of electric pump sets for irrigation, deepening of wells, purchase of cattle and putting up of cattlesheds. Through various savings schemes, thrift is mobilized in a practical manner. The bank has been playing an important role in the development and upliftment of the rural masses.

3.1.18 The Co-Operative Tenancy Housing Society

The Co-operative Tenancy Housing Society was started in 1957 to enable staff and workers to put up their houses on a co-operative basis taking
advantage of long-term loans from the co-operative Department. A number of houses have been constructed through the help of this society. The staff of Gandhigram were taking advantage of this scheme but now this has been wound up. 

3.1.19 Kasturba Hospital

Right from its inception Kasturba Hospital was striving its best to take health care to the doors of the hopeless and the helpless. It was therefore logical that the Kasturba Hospital underlined childcare and family welfare as its main plank of development. It was in this context that, much earlier to the government’s programme of family welfare, under the guidance of Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran, the Kasturba Hospital, had been counselling the limiting of families and bringing up of healthy children. The neighboring villages not only received medical aid and care but also the villages were taught about hygiene, prevention of diseases etc- with practical demonstrations. Further specialized services were given in different medical fields like Eye, Dentistry, Ear, Nose, and Throat, Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology. Auxiliary nurse Midwives training centre was started in the Hospital in 1957. Women are given training in conducting home deliveries especially in the rural areas in maternal and childcare, in family welfare and in family planning. Kasturba Hospital runs a multi
purpose health workers training for sixty students from nearby villages of Gadhigram

Kasturba Hospital continued its service as referral Hospital. It reached out to a very large area in Madurai District. The family welfare activities continued to get importance. To help extend its area of work, the Government of Tamilnadu sanctioned a mobile dispensary to the Kasturba Hospital. The Hospital is actively engaged in community health service in twelve villages around Gadhigram. A number of health workers has been trained and they are functioning in different parts of Tamilnadu. It is also having six primary health centres in Dindigal Taluk. For three years, 1970-1971, 1971-1972 and 1975-1976 the Kasturba Hospital was the recipient of national awards for good Family Planning work.

From the very beginning the importance of Family planning and Childcare were advised not only to people who attended the Hospital but also to the village of the surrounding areas. Later family Planning programme was given more importance. All methods of family planning were being implemented in this hospital. Temporary devices of contraception are being given free of cost to the public. As permanent methods of Family planning vasectomy for men and Tubectomy for women are being done. The Hospital forms the service wing of the Gadhigram Institute of Rural Health and Family Planning. Women Medical officers from the Districts of
Kanyakumari, Trinelveli, Ramanathapuram and Madurai are posted in this Hospital for special training in the modern techniques of Family Planning operations.

The Institute of Family Planning and the Kasturba Hospital have been doing meritorious service and have succeeded in reducing the birth rate in the Aathoor panchayat Area. The Hospital is an approved surgery centre for sterilization operations. G. Ramachandran took the initiative to collect the fund as donations and grants for the construction of buildings attached to Kasturba Hospital. They got an amount of Rs. 28,547/- to construct a Nurse Hostel. This amount was a gift from the Fund for Asia in the U.S.A, the authorities of which and G. Ramachandran had come in contact with each other during Ramachandran’s visit to U.S.A in 1955. Auxiliary nurse’s Training School arose as a necessary corollary to the work of the Kasturba Maternity Hospital.

3.1.20 The Gandhi Centenary School of Educational Crafts

The Gandhi Centenary School of Educational Crafts is an important institution started during the Gandhi Centenary year. This centre provides craft activities and practical and teaching work experience to different students and teachers of various departments and it also offers facilities of agro-implements to the surrounding farmer community. Gandhi Centenary
School educational crafts was opened on 7th October 1969 to give vocational training in wood and metal crafts\(^{116}\).

3.1.21 Rural Extension Training Centres

In 1952 Gandhigram decided to co-operate with the work of the community projects. One of the immediate results of this decision was the establishment of a village level workers training centre in Gandhigram\(^{117}\). It is later called the ‘Rural Extension Training Centre’. Here also G. Ramachandran played an important role. G. Ramachandran worked as the first Honorary Adviser of the Rural Extension Training Centre\(^{118}\). In the syllabus, agriculture is given greater emphasis. Students and teachers had organized very close contacts with selected villages. The trainees were divided into smaller groups and visited villages under their teachers. The trainees took their full share in Bhoodan work in the Dindigul and Usliampatti Taluks and in the Cyclone Relief Work in the Ramanathapuram district and thus won a good name for themselves and the institution. Such work was organized and treated as educational projects out of which came a fuller understanding of the realities and problems of rural life\(^{119}\). Gandhigram closed this institution in 1959 after creating enough trainees\(^{120}\).
3.1.22 Basic Teachers Training School

The training of pre-basic teachers was undertaken by the Kasturba Trust in Gandhigram and the training programme was initiated in the year 1947\textsuperscript{121}. It was in July 1949 that Gandhigram took over the Basic Teachers Training School under its direct management from the Tamilnadu Kasturba Trust\textsuperscript{122}. The course of training is for two years and of retraining for three months. In the full two-year course, the syllabus drawn up by the Hindustani Tamili Sangha, Sevagram was adopted by the Madras Government with modifications. The trainees took their share in the work of Cyclone Relief in Ramanathapuram district and assisted Shantisena when communal disturbances disfigured life in the same district. They also undertook Bhoodan work. Every month nearly 80 teachers from the basic schools in the compact area meet together in Gandhigram for a half day section to assess the work done, make plans of lessons for the coming month. Besides these monthly meetings, one day conferences are held once in three months. Teachers of each grade of Basic Schools sit together in groups to discuss lesson-plans and relevant matters arising from the syllabus etc. In 1955 the Regional Conference of Basic Education took place in Gandhigram. Among those who presided over some of these meetings were Sri.Kakasaheb Kalelkar, the then president of the Hindustani Tamili Sangh, Acharya Vinobaji, Prof. Humayun Kabir, and Sri.E.W. Aryanayakam.
In 1955 and 1956 the Travancore-Cochin Government deputed 50 selected graduate trained teachers for a course of special training in Basic education. G. Ramachandran took special interest and charge of this training programme. It is this first band of 50 teachers who are pioneering with the work of basic education in Travancore and Cochin. The Gandhigram Basic Teachers Training School was perhaps the earliest Co-educational training institution of its kind in this part of India.

3.1.23 Fellowship of Friends of Truth

In the view of G. Ramachandran Fellowship of Friends of Truth became a candle of light for all valiant seekers of the ultimate Truth of the absolute oneness of God and equally of the absolute oneness of the entire human family with in the love and mercy of God. The Fellowship of Friends of Truth is an International organization of the people belonging to various religions. Who accept the Gandhian Ideal of “Sarva-Dharmee-Samanatheva”, meaning the equal validity of the different great religious traditions of the world. G. Ramachandran took the initiative to start a branch of F.F.T in Gandhigram. Sri. S.K. George (life long friend of G. Ramachandran) was the first secretary of the Fellowship of Friends of Truth. Mr. Horace Alexander was the Chairman and G. Ramachandran was vice chairman of the Fellowship of Friends of Truth. As a result of the Fellowship of Friends of Truth’s activities in Gandhigram, boys and girls and
the young men and women grow up in Gandhigram without the slightest caste or communal feelings and with a generous understanding of the deep values of different religions\textsuperscript{129}.

3.1.24 Kalvi Kazhagam

The Kalvi Kazhagam was the study circle of Gandhigram. The Kazhagam was inaugurated on 25.12.52. Under the chairmanship of G. Ramachandran this Kazhagam functioned and he took a keen interest in drawing out the mind of many members in a fearless manner. The Kalvi Kazhagam has become the intellectual forum in Gandhigram\textsuperscript{130}.

3.1.25 Department of Extension

The main aim in establishing Gandhigram was to bring out a change in the social, cultural and economic life of the people in the surrounding villages. The Department of Extension adopted a number of villages and took up activities for their development. These activities expanded year after year\textsuperscript{131}. Extension work was inherent in their programme from the very beginning of Gandhigram. The major village problems like drinking water, irrigation, school buildings, sanitation and health etc were discussed and checked by the Department. Firstly, the Villages like Chettiapatti, Thoppampatti, Murugampatti, Koolampatti, Vannampatti, and Panjampatti were adopted and Extension workers were sent to these
villages. The emphasis was on eradication of poverty through generating employment opportunities and controlling the size of families. To these were added other components like adult education, welfare of women and children, organization of the poor through village Associations and Mother Sangams. Thus the Attempt was towards an integrated development of the villages.

The adult education programmes motivated villages to organize human infrastructure in some of the villages in the form of village welfare Associations. Such Associations were constituted in many villages and were registered under the society registration Act. Each family in the village becomes a member in the village welfare Association. The village welfare Association met often to discuss the problems and situations of their villages and individuals in them and take appropriate measures to avail themselves of the many benefits offered to them, through various development schemes initiated by the Government agencies, banks and other non-Government agencies. As a result much awareness could be developed among the people.

Each faculty in Gandhigram had adopted certain villages. The faculty and students visit the village periodically and undertake some welfare activities. They hold meetings once a month to review the work done in villages, discuss problems and strategies and plan the work for the next
month. These monthly meetings help to have a free and frank discussion with villagers, interact with them on equal terms and exchange experiences useful to the workers in Gandhigram and villages\(^\text{136}\). Department of Extension was the guide for these various activities.

### 3.1.26 The Constructive Workers Home

Under the presidentship of G. Ramachandran a conference of Constructive Workers was held in the Gandhinikut Aashram at Kallupatti. This conference decided to organize a Constructive Workers’ Sangham. The Constructive Workers’ Home belongs to this Constructive Workers Sangham. The objective with which the Constructive Workers’ home started was to provide a residential meeting place for Constructive Workers in Tamil nadu. Training camps were conducted under the auspicious of this Home for students, Gramasevikas, Constructive Workers and Bhoodan organizers\(^\text{137}\).

### 3.1.27 Shantisena

Shantisena is a non-violent army to meet the threat of organized violence\(^\text{138}\). G. Ramachandran by 1953 returned from Wardha with practical experience in Shantisena organization and started its branch in Gandhigram in the same year. Shantisena, a seminal concept of Mahatma Gandhi was given concrete shape by G. Ramachandran\(^\text{139}\). During the period of G. Ramachandran and Mrs. Soundram, the Shantisena was integrated right in
the academic and extension programme.\textsuperscript{140}\textsuperscript{140} G. Ramachandran, realizing that the youth in the university are the first batch to be initiated into the programme put the Shantisena at the centre of educational experiment and offered rich potentialities for the successful implementation of the programme\textsuperscript{141}.

The Santisena was built up with the following principles:

1. To inculcate in the youths, faith in non-violence and in the supremacy of the moral law.

2. To introduce into the student community a sense of collective discipline: love for voluntary social service.

3. Interest in active outdoor life and an understanding of a unity of India and of mankind.

4. To keep a well trained, disciplined “task force” of non-violent soldiers to meet emergent situations inside and outside Gandhigram.

5. To inculcate faith in the dignity of manual labour by organized shramdan programme.

G. Ramachandran bestowed great attention on the development of this programme and resisted all attempts of the state and central governments to replace the Shantisena by the NCC/ACC during the Chinese aggression.
There is no NCC training programme in Gandhigram and its place has been given to the Shantisena.

The Gandhigram Rural Institute introduced impressive programmes through Shantisena and it became an effective instrument of conflict management, youth leadership and meaningful extension activities. The students of the Rural Institute get training in Shantisena. It stands for collective discipline and is distinct from individual principle. The Santi Sainiks are given training in physical exercise, group games, first aid and home nursing, fire fighting, watch and ward duties, group exercises, asana etc. Every Saturday they hold a Shantisena rally which is followed by two hours of physical work. Common work projects inside Gandhigram and in the surrounding villages are also undertaken. Participation in such work is obligatory for all. Gandhigram is a campus without a compound wall; members of the Shantisena do sentry duty throughout the night and day in small groups. The Gandhigram Shantisena earned a good name for its work in Cyclone Relief in 1956 and later in the Communal disturbances in the Ramanathapuram District.

The founding of Shantisena was an attempt to promote a peaceful life together. Gandhigram Shantisena founded in 1953, it was based on the principle of inter-religious worship, faith in non-violence, hard collective training in marching, drilling, Sareera Shramam, village service and ideal of
Jai-jagat which had come from Acharya Vinoba Bhave. These members of Shantisena rendered these services not only in Gandhigram but also in the whole of Tamilnadu. An example to their selfless service is cited below; one day when the inmates of Gandhigram were taking rest, suddenly an unusual red color splashed on the sky. It was immediately identified as a fire at a nearby village Thoppampatty. Suddenly almost everyone from Gandhigram rushed to the spot. On reaching there, it was found that a big hay stack was under fire as a sequel to conflict between caste Hindus and Harijans there. The courageous and sincere efforts undertaken by Shanti Sainik Communal amity was restored between the caste Hindus and Harijans in Thoppampatty village. In 1956 again Shantisena members of Gandhigram Community and workers played a significant role in the rehabilitation and welfare programme for men, women and Children for East Ramnad District, a coastal area which was affected by terrible tidal waves and gales.

The Gandhigram Rural Institute is the only university which follows the Gandhian vision of Shantisena, training students in non-violence and solving conflicts through peaceful methods and management. Gandhigram Shanti Sainiks are engaged in cleaning roads, common play grounds and the overhead tanks and in creating awareness to people on health and sanitation.
Everybody by virtue of his/her being in Gandhigram is a Shanti Sainik. Gandhigram took up the Shantisena programme in a big way and made earnest effort to develop a comprehensive youth training programme in non-violence and conflict resolution. G. Ramachandran himself initially took care of this programme and extended his full support to make this a very attractive programme. So much so, for a number of years, the Shantisena Training Programme remained as one of the most important and attractive programmes of Gandhigram. G. Ramachandran would say that Shantisena was his first love and verily it was.

The importance G. Ramachandran attached to the Shantisena could be illustrated here from one example. The Shantisena volunteers used to be in charge of the watch and ward duty and management of crowd and taking care of discipline during the visit of even the president or the Prime Minister of the country to the campus was the responsibility of the Shantisena. During the visit of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1957, the security persons suggested that the Prime Minister’s security would be their responsibility and students would not be involved in this. G. Ramachandran insisted on the Shantisena as usual taking care of the watch and ward duty of the campus and he said that no uniformed policeman would be allowed in the campus. The protocol and the security people found this unacceptable and there was an impasse and the matter reached the Prime Minister and he ordered that the tradition of
Gandhigram complex be maintained and their practice of not allowing policeman in uniform be strictly adhered to and no violation of this be allowed. Hence as a face-saving and practical step, plain cloth policeman wearing the Gandhi caps and the white dress of the Shantisena volunteers were allowed to be present in strength and be stationed wherever they thought by should be stationed. The tradition continued till recently\(^\text{152}\).

G. Ramachandran took a stern decision when the Government of India tried to replace the Shantisena with the NCC. He replied that he would gladly close down the Gandhigram Rural Institute then rather than introduce military or Para military training in Gandhigram. The matter reached the Prime Minister who again ruled that Gandhigram should be left alone\(^\text{153}\). All these events show G. Ramachandran's affection and commitment towards Shantisena. The Shantisena also went into Bhoodan and Gramdan work. Nearby 200 members of the Shantisena walked about 800 miles in the Dindigal, Palani and Nilakottai Taluks collecting 12 Gramdans, 335 more acres of land and about Rs.30,000\(^\text{154}\). The entire organization and work of the Shantisena was under a committee headed by G.Ramachandran\(^\text{155}\). Gandhigram is the only university in the country and perhaps in the world which by its character and constitution has established Shantisena. Every one of its international visitors is particularly impressed by this entirely unique and distinctive programme\(^\text{156}\).
3.1.28 The Rural Institute of Higher Education

The crowning glory of Gandhigram came when Gandhigram was ten years with the starting of the Rural Institute for Higher Education. The founders of Gandhigram were seriously thinking to start a Vidyapeeth like those started in the earlier days of the Gandhian revolution. To provide Higher Education to the students who came out of the Post Basic School and with a view to provide opportunity for the Rural youth and train them for service in rural areas "The Gandhigram Rural Institute of Higher Education" was started in 1956 with faith in Mahatma Gandhi’s Revolutionary concept of ‘Nai Talim’, under the guidance of G. Ramachandran. Just then the Government of India came up with a proposal for setting up institutions for Rural Higher Education. Gandhigram was selected as one of the centers of experimentation on linking up rural development with Higher Education. Gandhigram Rural Institute was to implement the same in Higher Education along the lines indicated in the reports of the Government of India. The Rural Institute was inaugurated on 17th August, 1956 by the then President Dr. Rajendra Prasad. G. Ramachandran was made as the Honorary Director of the Gandhigram Rural Institute. The Rural Institute came to occupy that tier in the programme corresponding to the university level.

There were three colleges in the Rural Institute: (a) The college of Rural Services which offered three diploma courses; (b) The college of Post-
Graduate Studies which offered post-Graduate Diplomas in Rural Sociology and Community development; and (c) The college of Agricultural Science, which offered a two year certificate course in Agricultural Science\textsuperscript{160}. Two year Post-Diploma course in Community Development was the first of its kind in India. The college of Rural Services has a three-year course after a preparatory and those who pass get their Diploma which is equivalent to the B.A. Degree of any university and the Post-Diploma course is equivalent to the M.A. The course of studies in the Rural Institute represent a new and daring experiment in Higher Education in the rural areas, integrating academic studies with village extension and rural research\textsuperscript{161}. The college of Agricultural Science trains the students for agricultural work and an offered two year job oriented certificate course in agriculture. The students who come out from the college are absorbed in the Government Agricultural Department and sugar Factory immediately. The College of Sanitation provides education for village sanitation and health education.

The Institute endeavours to experiment with the integration of academic study with productive work, community life, action research and developing the village around. Both the individual development of the student and integrated development of community are strove through this education\textsuperscript{162}.

The Rural Institutes were conceived to be a new system of education with its focus on integration of education with productive work and to
preparing the young to face the challenges of the country under transition through the blending of the educational resources, academic excellence, spirit of enquiry, scientific and technological advancement within manageable limits, extension and research, mostly on the American pattern of community colleges. The Rural Institute was committed to the principle of providing a liberal and practical education in those pursuits of life relevant and necessary for an organized peaceful and affluent rural society. It was dedicated to the development and enlightenment of young men and women especially from rural areas with responsibility for the future leadership.

The service programme of the Rural Institute covers 25 villages and consists mainly of providing housing facilities for the weaker sections, organizing and running pre-school education programmes developing agriculture, conducting adult education on classes and initiating subsidiary occupations. In addition to health surveys environmental sanitation, work in collaboration with the Panchayat unions, protected water supply projects, immunization programmes for children, and inoculation and vaccination for adult rural population were conducted under the guidance of Rural Institute. Backward and scheduled caste students get the state Government scholarships and fee concession. The TVS charities and Goenka Trust help thirty bright students with scholarships every year. The sons and daughters of freedom fighters are given scholarships by the state Government.
Research and extension activities give the Rural Institute a significant point of healthy departure from the traditional colleges. The location of the Rural Institute in Gandhigram with its long experience in rural reconstruction work had its logical impact on its development\textsuperscript{167}. The students went to the village to study the rural problems and undertook individual investigation related to the subject of specialization\textsuperscript{168}.

Faculty improvement is one item of Gandhigram Rural Institute. The development of faculty itself was planned. Even within the limited financial resources, teaching schedules were adjusted and special leaves for consultation and research were arranged for the faculty. The faculty members were encouraged to do independent research and publish research reports and monographs in addition to guiding students on research problems\textsuperscript{169}. For the development and improvement of this institution, the Director G. Ramachandran knocked at every possible door for help\textsuperscript{170}.

The Institute has designed its academic programme to develop basic skills and understanding the areas of Rural Science, Integrated Rural Development, Agriculture and Public Health, keeping the academic standards on a par with those obtainable in other universities\textsuperscript{171}.

The Gandhigram Rural Institute has introduced the Gurukula system. In it a teacher takes personal care of a group of students and also gives them tuition under the modern tutorial system\textsuperscript{172}. The Gandhigram Rural Institute
slowly and steadily grew in strength and depth under the leadership of G Ramachandran. It acquired a special reputation for unifying the synthesizing academic learning, productive work and village service. The Gandhigram Rural Institute's struggle to achieve this distinction is a Saga in itself. When all the other Rural Institutes in the other parts of India tried to affiliate themselves with the neighboring universities, Gandhigram Rural Institute alone stuck to its gun and it was G Ramachandran's personnel influence, leadership and vision which saved the institute. He pointed out that it would not be possible for the Gandhigram Rural Institute to compromise on its ideals after having been party to an experiment for over 20 years. The Institute has developed many models and it could not abandon its social commitment to the surrounding forty villages when it was doing extension work and integrated rural development. Hence he suggested to the government to accord the status of a university to Gandhigram Rural Institute. The central as well as the state government appreciated the work and progress of this institution.

Recognizing the 20 years of yeoman service rendered by the Gandhigram Rural Institute in the field of Rural Higher Education the government of India, on the recommendations of the University Grants Commission has accorded the status of a Deemed University to this institute on 3rd of August 1976 under section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act 1956. This is the only institute among the 14 rural institutes started under
the scheme of Rural Higher education in India that has developed into a
deemed university. It was a dream coming true. India’s first village
university along the lines Mahatma Gandhi’s vision had come into existence,
as a personal triumph of G Ramachandran’s perseverance, uncompromising
efforts to march ahead. It was an unbelievable achievement.

G Ramachandran was the Director of Gandhigram for 15 years and
Hon-Director of Gandhigram Rural Institute for 20 years. As founder director
of the Gandhigram Rural Institute, he became the first Vice-Chancellor for a
period of 3 years from 1976 to 1979.

The Institute stands for Gandhian ideals in education with the
following objectives:

1) To provide such instruction and training in all branches of learning as will
promote a casteless and a classless society through non-violent means;

2) To provide for research and for the advancement and dissemination of such
knowledge: and

3) To function as a centre for extension work leading to integrated rural
development.

3.1.29 Gandhigram Rural University

The Institute as a Deemed University was inaugurated by the then
prime minister of India Smt. Indira Gandhi on 8 March 1976. Smt. Indira
Gandhi who came down to Gandhigram to inaugurate the university mentioned in her address the significance of the Gandhigram experiment and the hope of the nation to see that a new type of education is developed in the country as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore. The education pattern of Gandhigram University is woven implicitly around teaching, research and extension of integrated Rural Development, campus, community life and sanitation and Shantisena that train students for leadership and collective discipline and inter-disciplinary instructions in various courses are focused on this aspect of education. Twenty years of hard and selfless work ultimately resulted in a unique opportunity for the Gandhigram Rural Institute to develop its own curriculum, design purposeful courses aimed at giving insight and skills to the future personnel for rural development and to conduct its own type of examinations to assess the knowledge and competence of the students who go out of its portals. After attaining the status of a Deemed University the Institute awards the usual Degrees like B.A. B. Sc, M.A, M. Sc, M. Phil etc like other Universities. But the nature of the subjects taught in the Gandhigram Rural Institute is slightly different and job-oriented. The subjects are mostly based on integrated Rural Development and research.
The following are the courses offered by the Gandhigram Rural University:

1. Under-Graduate Level:

B.A. Degree Courses with specialization in a) Co-operation, b) Rural Industries and Management, and c) Development Administration.


2. Post-Graduate Level:

M.A. Degree courses with specialization in a) Rural Development, b) Rural Sociology and Panchayat Raj, c) Rural Economics and Extension Education.

M. Sc Degree courses with specialization in a) Home Science, b) Applied chemistry; and c) Applied Physics

M. Phil Level:

Two year M.Phil Course in micro-level planning and M.Phil course in Gandhian Thought and peace sciences were started in 1983.

Diploma Courses:

a) Two year diploma course in Agricultural science;

b) One year diploma course in Sanitary Science and

c) Two year diploma course in Khadi and Handloom Technology and

d) One year diploma course in Biogas and Renewable energy.
In addition to the above, research facilities have also been offered to those who are interested to do research in the Ph.D. programme. Today Gandhigram has grown from Crèche to Ph.D. level.

Gandhigram Rural Institute employment Bureau was started in the beginning of the academic year 1980-81 with the main objective of helping the students of the Rural Institute. Now, Gandhigram Rural Institute has VII Faculties. They are a) Faculty of Tamil, Indian Languages and Rural Arts; b) Faculty of English and Foreign Languages; c) Faculty of Rural Social Sciences; d) Faculty of Rural Oriented Sciences; e) Faculty of Rural Development; f) Faculty of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry; g) Faculty of Rural Health and Sanitation.

The Gandhigram Rural Institute has been organizing adult Education programme. The aim of this adult education programme is abolition of drinking habits, untouchability, savings, evils of dowry system and encourage the cultural activities. The assessment pattern of Gandhigram Rural Institute is fifty percent internal and fifty percent external with village placement and submission of dissertation on the basis of a field study are made obligatory. The fifty percent internal marks, a revolutionary step at that time, was based on the integrity of the teacher and the continuous assessment of the students on the basis of their day-to-day performance. The idea was to eliminate what G. Ramachandran would always say “the policemen’s examination” and
awarding marks on the basis of one or two terminal examinations. The courses were fully Semesterised. This was a revolutionary step in the Seventies, when hardly any Indian University was willing to take up such a step.

The constituents of the identity of the Gandhigram Rural Institute are:

- background of the freedom movement;
- heritage of Gandhian Constructive work;
- need based academic study;
- applied action research;
- socially useful productive work;
- intensive extension service;
- residential community life;
- gurukula group system;
- individualized teaching and learning;
- training in Shantisena;
- quest for Sarvodaya Social order (i.e. a casteless and classless society in accordance with the Gandhian ideal of non-violence and integrated rural development);
- building national unity and integration; and
promoting international understanding and world peace.

Gandhigram has gradually developed into the Sevagram of the South. The realization of Ramachandran's long cherished dream of establishing a Gandhigram from where would radiate the message of the Mahatma Gandhi was largely due to the support he had from his wife Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran and a team of committed workers\(^\text{193}\). G. Ramachandran's most dependant allies in his great mission were the remarkable and untiring Sri. V. Krishnamurti, Prof. R. Srinivasan, Prof. V. Rangarajan, Dr. Sivasubramaniam, Sri. Nanjunda Rao, Ms. Sarala, Prof. R. Subramaniam, Mrs., Lalithambika, and Dr. M. Veluswamy etc\(^\text{194}\). Gandhigram has crossed several milestones since its inception in October 1947 and has grown into a sprawling complex encompassing various institutions functioning under the main organization.

The high ideals of Gandhigram attracted great scholars not only from India but from different parts of the world. British Labour party leader Aneurin Bevan Mr. and Mrs. Chester Bowles, Doctors Douglas Ensminger, Champion Ward and Wilson of the Ford Foundation, American Ambassador Mr. George V. Allen, British High Commissioner Mr. Malcolm Macdonald and Dr. Martin Luther King etc were the few who visited Gandhigram\(^\text{195}\).

The Government gave complete freedom to the Gandhigram Rural Institute in the formulation and the composition of its bodies. It gave Gandhigram Rural Institute even the freedom of choosing its own chancellor.
by the Senate and the nine members Syndicate was dominated by the academic community of the Institute. The constitution, and rules and bye-laws which govern the Institute have been drafted in such a way that would ward off a possible take over of the campus by political leadership or any particular lobby\textsuperscript{196}.

Under the leadership of G. Ramachandran the community life inside the campus was an expression of the joyous and beautiful world of Shantiniketan and the productive meaningful world of Mahatma Gandhi. It attracted very soon the attention of staff and students from all parts of India. It was hailed as a very bold experiment in translating the Gandhian vision of social transformation and the Tagorean passion for orderly development through education, arts and cultural rejuvenation\textsuperscript{197}. There were no cooks, no cleaners, no scavengers and nobody to serve. Students managed everything under the guidance of staff. There were plenty of scope for amusement, sports and creative expressions. The important item that stood out in this context was what was known as the ‘Aam Sabha’, the students’ parliament, which used to meet once every month regularly to debate on students’ problems without fear or favour.

To keep the principle of decentralization, the following institutions are functioning at Gandhigram now\textsuperscript{198}.
1) The Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed University) whose main objective is Rural Higher Education.

2) Gandhigram Trust which is engaged in evolving development strategies for the under-privileged in rural communities through the Children’s Home, Kasturba Hospital, Primary and Higher Secondary school, Lakshmi Teachers Training College, Kasturba Sevikashram and Avvai Ashram.

3) Khadi and Village Industries public Charitable Trust which is engaged in the rehabilitation of artisans and craftsman. Its main function is to develop Rural Industries.

4) Lakshimi Seva Sangam has an Ayurveda and Siddha Pharmacy unit. Its main function is rural workshop and Nature medicine.

5) The Gandhigram Institute of Rural Health and Family welfare Trust whose main function is Rural Health and Family Welfare.

Gandhigram has slowly and steadily grown into a vast complex of Gandhian Institutions. It is today one of the biggest Gandhian complexes in India. The courses offered in Gandhigram have attracted students from various countries of the world, particularly Asia and Africa. This gives the institution an international character and Gandhigram is like a Mini World. Gandhigram Rural Institute stands for a casteless and classless society in accordance with the Gandhian ideals of equality. The basic emphasis is on
moral and social values without which no nation can really progress. Through Sarvodaya prayers and other cultural and Spiritual programmes Gandhigram instills higher values in the student.

G. Ramachandran was as a beacon for the development of the Gandhigram Rural Institute as a Rural University. For honoring his yeoman services the Gandhigram Rural University has named its library as ‘Dr. G. Ramachandran’s library’. Signifying the complete identification of G. Ramachandran with the institute, Gandhigram Rural Institute was everywhere endearingly described as “G. Ramachandran Institute”. As a token of its gratitude and appreciation for his work, the Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed University) conferred Honorary Doctoral Degree at the XIth Convocation on 9th April 1989, on G. Ramachandran.

The Golden Bridge which G. Ramachandran was trying to lay in Gandhigram had at its base the hard realities of Indian life as understood by Mahatma Gandhi and the cementing force as emphasized by Rabindranath Tagore. Gandhigram became the ‘Sabarmati’ and the ‘Shantiniketan’ of the south, both a miniature India and an international centre of liberal education, crafts, rural re-construction, productive work and women’s rehabilitation with a sprinkling of volunteers and trainees from different parts of India. Gandhigram Rural University today wants to make its contribution to the
building up of a war free world in accordance with the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.

3.2. Conclusion

G. Ramachandran as a Gandhian and Gandhian constructive worker tried to establish Gandhian ideology and Gandhian constructive programme in Gandhigram. He was the founder of Gandhigram. In order to establish this he was ably assisted by his wife Mrs. Soundram Ramachandran and a number of dedicated colleagues. Gandhigram is a meeting place of Gandhian vision of education and Tagorean vision of education. The establishment of the Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad was the expression of the determination of Mahatma Gandhi to prepare a generation of people who would be ready to sacrifice even their lives to the realization of the Gandhian objectives. Likewise Gandhigram is a laboratory where Gandhian and Tagorean vision of education are experimented. Gandhigram is one that takes many efforts and it has now acquired a special reputation of unifying and synthesizing academic learning, productive work and village work and in making this experiment the leadership G. Ramachandran provided was inspiring and matchless. G. Ramachandran tried to establish a casteless and classless society through non-violent means and he has succeeded in his task by establishing the Gandhigram and its growth. Mahatma Gandhi is gone, but a spark of his spirit lives here, Gandhigram serves as a nucleus of rural upliftment and Sarvodaya work. G.
Ramachandran firmly believed that the British system of education neglected the rural areas. The great values of truth, beauty and goodness embedded in the ancient rural culture of India should be rediscovered and re nourished as part of the foundation of a Rural University which should be rooted in national realities and reach out to fulfill national needs. With this idea in mind he worked for the propagation of the Basic System of education chalked out by Mahatma Gandhi.
NOTES


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18. Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 16.


39. G. Pankajam, 'Amma and educational service', *In the service of Humanity- A Tribute to Dr. Soundram*, Gandhigram: p.29.


50. Ibid., p. 47.


55. Ibid., p. 48.


59. V. Lokasundari, Our Amma, op. cit., p. no is not given.

60. The Gandhigram Institute of Rural Health & Family Welfare Trust, News letter, Gandhigram October 1984, p. 3.

61. P.R. Dutt. ‘Dr. Soundaram, A Path Finder in Rural Health’, op. cit., p. 3.


64. Ibid., p. 8.

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70. Gandigram sixteenth Anniversary, p. 20.

71. Gandigram 10th Anniversary Souvenir, Gandhigram: 1957, p. 79.


74. Ibid., p. 67.

75. Three Decades of Work-1947-77, Gandhigram, p. 11.

76. Gandhigram 10th Anniversary Souvenir, Gandhigram: 1957, p. 68.

77. Ibid., p. 67.


82. Gandhigram 10th Anniversary Souvenir, Gandhigram: 1957, p. 68.


84. Three decades of work, op.cit., p. 19.


86. Khadi and village Industries public Charitable Trust, op.cit., p. 81.

87. Ibid.


89. Dr.N.Radhakrishnan, op cit., p. 14.


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106. *Avvai Rural Medical service*, Kasturba Hospital, Gandhigram: 1973 p. 104


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114. Ibid., p.54.


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119. Ibid., pp.57-59.


121. Ibid., p.2.


123. Ibid., p.33.

124. Ibid., pp.30-33.


129. *Ibid*.


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143. Dr.M.William.Bhaskaran, *op.cit.*, Forward(page number is not given)

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149. Ibid.

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151. Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 22.

152. Ibid., p. 24.

153. Ibid., p. 25.


155. Ibid., pp. 89-90.


159. Ibid., p. 36.

160. Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 11.

161. Ibid.

162. Gandhigram Silver Jubilee Souvenir, pp. 41-42.

163. Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 18.
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165. Dr N Radhakrishnan, op.cit., p.12.

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167. Ibid., p. V.

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200. GRI *Seventh Annual Convocation Address 1985*.


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