



Rural Reconstruction Programmes in India

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Abstract

The concept of Rural Development in India exists from the Vedic times; it is not a newfangled concept. Rural Development involves rebuilding of every aspect of human life which includes social, political and economic condition of a human being. Development of a country is predominantly divided into two parts: urban area and rural area. Thus, the development of both the area is necessary. India mainly focuses on the development of the urban area instead of rural area. In India About 69% of the country's total population continues to live in rural India . As we know that, the people of rural area have seen difficulties from the time immemorial, the time has come to give them their deserving rights. National Development is almost synonymous with the Rural Development. The government has taken an initiative to raise the standard of living of the rural people. Article 14 of the Constitution provides 'Rights to Equality' and therefore, we should give them their respective rights and relevant programmes. India cannot shine without the shining of the Rural India. This paper aims and highlights the historical background of rural development and reconstruction, pre and post rural development programmes in India, problems, challenges, opportunities and suggestion for rural development and reconstruction.

Key words: Reconstruction, Rural development, Programmes. Challenges, rural, opportunities, poverty and problems.

"Just as the whole universe is contained in the self, so is India contained in the villages." -Mahatma Gandhi

INTRODUCTION

Rural Reconstruction, as such is not a new topic to the developing countries, because many developing nations have been practicing and promoting rural development for decades and of course many of them have achieved significant success in their efforts especially in education, health care and family welfare, poverty eradication, self employment generation, farm management and production, rural technologies and so on and so forth.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Reconstruction Works in India:

In India, the work of rural reconstruction may be traced back to the middle of nineteenth century. Several eminent persons have contributed their might for rural development. It is necessary to know about their past attempts, which have given the present shape of rural development programmes. A historical account may give a clear understanding of the dynamics of the programmes and changes, which have occurred over the period. Rambhai (1959) Pandey (1967) categorized the activities of rural



reconstruction works into three well-marked periods.

- (i) The British Rule (1858 - 1919),
- (ii) The Experimental Period (1920-1950), and
- (iii) The Post-Independent Period to the present day.

Rural Reconstruction during British Rule (1858-1919):

British government took over the governance of India from a trading company called the East India Company in 1858, after the first attempt to gain Independence by the Indians in 1857 called the Sepoy Mutiny. The basic British policy in India was governing political philosophy of Great Britain and was not concerned with the socio economic development of the people. But the British government could not adhere to such a policy for long; it was the famine in India, which forced the British Indian Government to think about the people of India. The frequent recurrence of famines forced the state administrative machinery to seize the food grain stocks and make arrangements for the distribution among the famine-affected people. All this was done without any apparent legal sanction, motivated as the action purely was by determination to control profiteering and to alleviate rural suffering.

The Period of Experiments and Rural Reconstruction (1920-1950):

The period of experimental (or the National Movement period) is marked by various experiences on rural reconstruction works tested by the nationalists and social reformers. The Non-Cooperation movement, started by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920, was the first

political attempt in India to mobilize the villagers and realize the politics. The non-cooperation resolution was passed by the Congress in its Calcutta session of September 1920, articulated the approach to rural development by recommending hand spinning in every house and hand weaving which was an ancient and honorable practice of the people. Khadi became India's freedom dress, and its adoption by the Congress was the first genuine organized concern for the rural poor and the spinning wheel economy adopted by the Mahatma was the first popular exercise for rural development in India.

The Post-Independence Period (1950-onward):

The rural concern of the government thus by no means entirely absent under colonial rule, but it was only after the country's independence that rural development acquired a high level of priority. The dominant philosophy of our constitution is justice in the social, economic and political walks of life. Gandhiji was emphatic about rural India and because of his intervention, local self-government had found place in the Directive Principles of the state policy and rural reconstruction drawn the attention of central government and acquired a high level of priority in the Five Year Plans.

RURAL RECONSTRUCTION IN INDIA PREINDEPENDENCE

Rural Reconstruction in India before independence can be analyzed under two broad heads:

During the British rule, Britishers were not concerned with the socio-economic development of India and thus our rural economy severely damages resulting in the miserable conditions of



the ruralites. The primary concern of the administration was maintenance of law and order and collection of revenue, not the development. Thus colonial interests were primary objectives and the rural development was secondary.

Different types of programme were introduced which are as follows:

□ **Sriniketan Experiment:** Early effort at rural development was initiated by Shri, Rabandranath Tagor in 1908 by establishing youth organization in the kaligram Prokana of his Zamindari. He tried to create a class of functionary workers who could learn to identify themselves with the people. This was a very comprehensive programme combining culture, health, education and economic aspects of village life together.

□ **The Martandam Experiment:** The aim of this project was to bring more abundant life to the 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 Martandam, about a hundred villages were covered through Y.M.C.A. centres in villages.

□ **The Gurgaon Experiment:** It was started by Mr. F.L. Brayne, Deputy Commissioner in the Gurgaon district of Punjab State as he was prompted by the backwardness, poverty and misery of the people. Introduction of this programme has improved seeds, implements, the methods of cultivation, etc. This project could not develop leadership in the villages that would continue working when the village's guides had left the villages.

Gandhian Constructive Programme/ Sewagram: The dream of the Gandhiji was to see the village as self - contained and self - sufficient. The problem of the rural people which he was aware, he wanted to remove that problem without any intervention of outside agencies. He wanted to solve these problems with local people and through local resources. Therefore, for the betterment of people he formulated 18 programmes, which includes the promotion of village industries, basic and adult education in rural sanitation, upliftment of backward tribes, upliftment of women, education in public health and hygiene, propagation of natural language. Love for the mother tongue, economic equality, organization of kisans, labour and students and so on. He gave special attention to revive crafts, especially spinning and weaving, traditional oil press, grain processing and leather work. Gandhian rural reconstruction activities were based on the principles of truth and non-violence. His ideas of rural reconstruction were adopted officially and resulted in the adoption of khadi and Village Industries Programme, the principle of Village Self-sufficiency and the faith in the Panchayati Raj and Sahakari Samaj Movement.

□ **Rural Reconstruction Programmes in Baroda:** The Maharaja of Baroda was a progressive and enlightened man and therefore, he started the Baroda experiment in 1932. This programme aimed at developing "will to live better" and a capacity for the self-help and selfreliance.

□ **The Firka Development scheme:** The Firka Development scheme of Madras was a Government sponsored scheme in 1946. This programme aimed at organizing the villages for a happier,



more prosperous and fuller life in which the individual villagers had the opportunity to develop both as an individual and as a unit of a well-integrated society.

POST INDEPENDENCE

In the post-independence era, the development of rural areas can be considered wisely through various programmes and schemes which have been launched by the government. The country adopted the planned development. The very first five year plan laid stress on agricultural development. It took a number of measures to bring more land under irrigation. Major irrigation Dams like Bakra Nangal, Hirakud, Nagarjunasagar, Tungabhadra were constructed which generated power for industrialization of the country and water for the irrigation. The Indian farmer, as a result, is now not exclusive depending on the monsoon.

Intensive cultivation of land is made possible through farm mechanization. Tractors are being produced in the country and these are available to the farmers everywhere. Farmers are also using threshing machines, deep boring and irrigation pumps which result in high yielding improved seeds, fertilizers and other inputs.

Three important programmes of rural reconstruction were introduced in India.

1. **The Etawah Pilot Project:** It was started in the year 1948 by Albert Mayor for the development of the rural areas of Etawah District in Uttar Pradesh. The main objective of this project was "to see what degree of productive and social improvement as well as initiative,

selfconfidence and co-operation can be developed.

2. **The Nilokheri Experiment:** K. Dey, the former Minister for Community Development and Cooperation was the founder of the Nilokheri Experiment in 1948, when nearly 7,000 displaced persons were rehabilitated in the Nilokheri town after the Independence. The scheme was also known as "Mazdoor Manzil" because of its principle 'he who will not work, neither shall he eat'. Under this programme, the main activities were a Vocational Training Centre run on co-operative lines and the Colony had its own dairy, poultry, piggery, printing press, engineering workshops, tannery and bone meal factory. People were given vocational training of their choice to run these Co-operative Enterprises Rights for education and medical care for the sick were also guaranteed.

3. **The Bhoodan Movement:** The objective of Bhoodan campaign was to prevent the emergence of bloody revolution by solving the land problems in a peaceful way. The real intention was to create the right atmosphere so that the progressive land reforms could follow. Therefore, it was noted in the First Five Year Plan that the experience of early rural reconstruction schemes reveals different schemes which forced the villagers and as such there was no enthusiasm among them and there was a lack of initiative for the people which are very essential for the success of the schemes.

PROGRAMMES LAUNCHED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

As Gandhiji has quoted that, "If villages prosper the country will prosper, if villages, sink the country will sink",



emphasizing on this line, for the development of India, village has to be developed. Poverty and unemployment are two major problems which India faces. Department of Rural Development has implemented a number of programmes in the rural areas through the State Governments for the poverty reduction, employment generation, rural infrastructure habitant development, provision of basic minimum services. The policy makers have realized the importance of rural development and have been implementing a host of programmes and measures to achieve rural development objectives.

1. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY): As rural roads are vital for the economic growth and measure for poverty alleviation in the village, Government has launched a 100% Centrally Sponsored Scheme called the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

2. Swarjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY): It is the single self-employment programme for the rural poor. The Yojana which came into effect from 1.4.1999, has been conceived as a holistic programme covering all aspects of self-employment like organization of rural poor into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their capacity building, training, planning of activity clusters, infrastructure development, financial assistance through bank credit and subsidy and marketing support etc.

3. Rural Housing (Indira Awaas Yojana): Housing is one of the basic requirements for human survival. Therefore, construction of houses was included as one of the major activities under the National Rural Employment Programme which begun in 1980. The Government of India, in 1998 announced a National Housing and Habitat policy which aims

at providing "Housing for all" and facilitating the construction of 20 lakh additional housing units (13 lakh in rural areas and 7 in urban areas) with emphasis on standing benefits to the poor and the deprived.

4. DRDA Schemes: In order to strengthen the DRDAs and to make them more professional and effective, a new centrally sponsored scheme, namely DRDA Administration has been introduced from 1st April, 1999 based on the recommendations of an inter-ministerial committee known as Shankar Committee. The scheme replaces the earlier practice of allocating a percentage of programme funds to the administrative cost. Under this, a separate provision has been made to meet the administrative expenses of the DRDAs who are expected to effectively manage and implement the schemes.

5. Training Schemes: Training has gained an important position in the rural development activities concerning various poverty alleviation programmes. As training, research and development are closely linked, continuing education of both policy makers and programmers implements is imperative. Towards facilitating this, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) has conducted training programmes, workshops, seminars and international programme. In addition, extensive support has been provided to a number of training and research institutions dealing with issues related to rural development.

6. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP): The programme was launched by the Centre in March 1976 as a major instrument of the government to alleviate poverty. Its main feature was to enable selected families to cross the poverty line in a given time-frame by



taking up self-employment in various activities like agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, weaving and handicrafts and services and business activities.

7. Food for Work Programme (FWP): This programme was introduced in 1977 by the then Janata government with the objective to provide employment to the unemployed/underemployed village persons during the slack season. The wages paid to the workers were in kind, i.e., food grains.

8. National Rural Employment Programme (NREP): This is redesigned programme of FWP, planned for creating additional employment opportunities in the rural areas with the help of surplus food grains. This programme was especially for those rural people who largely depended on wage employment, but had no source of income during lean agricultural period. Later on, this programme was merged with Jawaharlal Rozgar Yojana (JRY).

9. Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP): Special schemes were formulated by some states such as Maharashtra and Gujarat to provide increased employment opportunities for the rural people, especially landless people.

10. Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY): This programme came into existence in April 1989 with the merger of the NREP and the RLEGP. Under this scheme, it was expected to provide at least one member of each poor family (BPL family) an employment for 50 to 100 days in a year at a work near his/her residence. About 30 per cent of the jobs under this programme were reserved for the women. The scheme was implemented through Village Panchayats.

11. Antyodaya Yojana: The Hindi word 'antodaya' is a combination of two words- ant meaning end or bottom level and udaya meaning development. Thus, as a whole, it implies the development or welfare of a person standing at the end of that queue (lowest level), that is, the poorest of the poor.

12. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS):

After independence, for the development of rural society, particularly to develop the socio-economic life of the rural poor, many schemes and programmes were launched from time to time but unfortunately the fruits of these programmes reached to a very low proportion of these people. It was estimated about 70 per cent of rural population was still deprived of the basic necessities of life. For the purpose of extending the benefits to rural people, a new scheme was launched and legislation was enacted under the name of 'National Rural Employment Guarantee Act' (NREGA). It guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work.

PROBLEM FACED FOR THE RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

The problems faced by the rural people in the rural development are as follows:

1. The financial, manpower, managerial resources devoted to the implementation of rural

development programmes are utterly inadequate.

2. Better implementation of rural development programmes can be ensured only if those responsible for actual



implementation are paid reasonably well, appropriately trained, and sufficiently motivated. But this has not been done as yet.

3. It has been observed that the objectives of one programme conflict with those of others, and there is no institutional mechanism for reconciling them. Consequently, many programmes have utterly failed in fulfilling their objectives.

4. In many cases, instruments of rural development are not properly selected, and their levels are not consistent with the objectives they seek to achieve. This results in the wastage of valuable public resources, and unnecessary delays in achieving the objectives.

5. The aspect of development, i.e., honesty, hard work, helping others, thrift and such other virtues indirectly help in the economic development and to which much attention has not been paid.

6. Illiteracy is one of the major factors which arrest the rural development in India.

7. The political parties who play a vital role in the development of rural areas are guided more by the party interests than by national interests.

Therefore, removal of all these barriers can accelerate the process of rural development in India. The role of governmental and non-governmental organizations in this regard is, indeed, commendable. If we all work together, we can surely achieve success and can make Gandhiji's dream a reality.

Challenges of Rural Development And Opportunities

The real scenario is that rural India is faced with multiple developmental challenges. The critical ones include:

- **Population:** Increasing population which causes severe pressure on natural resources and the environment.

- **Natural Resources:** Depleting natural resources, resulting in insecurity of food and employment, compelling about 40% of the rural population to live in poverty.

- **Pollution:** Pollution of the environment and climate change, are causing shortage of clean drinking water and creating adverse impact on agricultural production.

- **Education:** Poor access to education, resulting in low literacy and unemployment of the youth. While the average literacy rate in rural areas is around 50-65%, it is as low as 20-25% among women in backward areas. Education of girls was felt to be unnecessary in the past and this has seriously affected their quality of life. Illiteracy has also hindered their development due to lack of communication with the outside world.

Health: Poor health status due to lack of clean drinking water, hygiene, sanitation and drainage facilities; inadequate health care facilities, leading to high child mortality and morbidity; loss of labour productivity, economic loss, indebtedness and poor quality of life; The rate of infant mortality in rural India is marginally higher than in the cities on account of poorer access to safe drinking water, sanitation and health care support.

- **Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure for receiving timely information on development opportunities, market demand and prices for agricultural commodities, new technologies, forward and backward linkages, credit facilities and development policies of the government.



• **Globalization:** Liberalized trade regimes as well as more integrated and consumer driven agricultural and food markets are globalising rapidly and driving innovations, forcing farmers to adapt or lose out. Poor farmers do not have the capacity face the cut throat competition and hence they are bound to perish.

SOLUTIONS / SUGGESTIONS

Assured Livelihood: While promoting various development programmes, the main objectives should be is to help the target family to come out of poverty, with in a shortest period. The dairy development programme has a gestation period of 3-4 years, till the newly born calf comes into milk production. In land based development programmes the gestation period may vary from 2 to 6 years, depending on the type of farming systems practiced by the farmers. In case of arable crop production, the gestation period is short due to short rotation crops while the fruit and tree crops take 5-6 years to generate income. While promoting this income generation activities there are two critical factors which affect the success of the programmes.

Women Empowerment: Involvement of women in all the development programmes right from the stage of project planning is essential. Although women represent 50% of the population, they also have the major responsibility of grooming children and procuring the basic needs required for food, fuel and fodder securities. Active participation of women in development programmes will help to identify their problems and reduce their drudgery.

Environmental Protection: In all the development programmes conservation of the natural resources and protection of

the environment are essential, as these are critical for sustainable development. This is particularly important, while dealing with the poor as their primary objective is to earn their livelihood and the development organisations have the obligation to carefully design the programme to ensure environmental protection with income generation activities.

Blending Development with Research and Training: For effective implementation of various development programmes, the development programmes should be supported by applied research and training activities. The development programme without research back up is outdated and any research programme without development and extension outlets is academic. Training of the field functionaries and farmers is essential for effective transferring

of technologies from laboratories to the field. Water Resource Development: Development of water resources and wastelands are other important activities, having good potential for supporting the livelihood. However, with watershed development alone particularly the small

farmers owning poor quality land cannot take advantage as they do not have the capacity to invest in land development and critical agricultural inputs. Hence they do not take active part in such programmes. Therefore the strategy should be to combine watershed management with development of low productive agricultural lands and wastelands owned by the weaker sections of the society.

Level of Infrastructure Development: Development of physical as well as social infrastructure plays an important in the overall advance of the rural economy by



directly contributing to employment generation and asset creation. Improved network of physical infrastructure facilities such as well-built roads, irrigation, rail links, power and telecommunications, information technology, food storage, cold chains, market-growth centres, processing of produce and social infrastructure support, viz., health and education, water and sanitation, and veterinary services and co-operatives are essential for the development of the rural economy, especially in the era of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG).

Indigenization of Social Research: Most of our learning in the higher institutes is based upon hypotheses, concepts and theories evolved by western scholars including rural sociologists, which has limited application to our rural development. In the context of rural development, indigenization of concepts and theories are essential for understanding and resolving the issues that confront state governments, Panchayati Raj Institutions and stakeholders. This calls for Indigenization of social science research, particularly relating to rural areas. Such an approach, if adopted in social science research, is likely to provide solutions to problems of bringing about rural transformation at a faster pace.

Corporatization of the Rural Economy: Corporatization of the rural economy becomes more relevant in the changed globalized system, where market requirements of quality produce have to be met. The entry of the corporate sector will also help the farmers to diversify crops from wheat and rice to other crops. This can be done by providing awareness about quality inputs and their judicious use, ensuring their crop procurement,

refrigeration, carrier, grading, cleaning, packing, branding and also helping in research and extension. The recent field experience of CRRID (Centre of Research and Rural Industrial Development) with Mahindra Subh Labh Services Limited (MSSL), Mumbai, showed that the farmers of the state are showing a keen interest to grow crops according to the requirements of the corporate sector, provided it protects the existing minimum returns and assures marketing of the produce.

Formation of a Globalized or Model Village: A model village is perceived as a village having all modern physical and social infrastructure facilities. A model village will facilitate human resource development through better education, health and training and generate employment avenues both in secondary and tertiary sectors. Initially funds for infrastructure building will have to be mobilized from government as well as non-government sources, such as non-government organizations, international funding agencies, non-resident Indians (NRIs), religious Institutions and other sources besides the village's income from its own sources. Consequently, for the maintenance and sustainability of public services, user's charges could be levied according to the social and economic position of the households. According to the concept of a globalized village, each village will be connected with modern information technology for better dissemination of information. This type of a village will have the potential of producing human resources catering to national as well as international requirements.



CONCLUSIONS

The spirit of India lives in villages and only by changing the face of rural areas, we can hope for a better future for the state and nation as a whole. If we have to meet the target 9% annual growth of GDP then it is essential to sustain an annual growth of 4% in the agricultural sector. This is important for ensuring that growth is more inclusive. Although agriculture contributes only 19% of India's GDP, it is the main source of income for 58% of the rural population. Agriculture has significance on food security and prices of goods and therefore on money wages. Further, agriculture has a strong multiplier effect because of its impact on rural income, demand and its supply of raw materials to several industrial sectors. The inter link between agriculture and industrial sector is so strong that if there is a 1% fall in agricultural growth, it will pull back industrial growth and GDP by 0.52%. If sustainable economic development has to be achieved it is essential that rural development must be a priority. For rural development modernization of agriculture is the most important requisite. This will lead to improvement in the economic conditions of the rural masses. The increased

purchasing power of the rural masses will provide larger market for the products of the manufacturing sectors. It is essential to Greening rural development which refers to a variety of activities that regenerate and conserve the natural resource base, innovate and use clean materials, technologies and processes to create environment-friendly products, livelihoods, enterprises and jobs. India will grow only when rural India marches in tandem with the urban India.

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