

Reimagining Indian Rural Development: Evolving Paradigms and Contemporary Perspectives”

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Abstract

The paradigm change in rural development planning in India from the First Five-Year Plan (1951–1956) to the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007–2012) is investigated in this paper. Rural communities still suffer with widespread problems including poverty, unemployment, and poor infrastructure notwithstanding great efforts. Emphasising important phases: broad-based agriculture and industries (1951–1981), poverty reduction and social welfare (1981–1992), and economic reforms and sustainable development (1992 onwards), the research shows the change of rural development strategies. To reach inclusive and sustainable development, the study emphasises the importance of ongoing adaptation and creativity in rural development planning.

Keywords: rural development, five-year plans, poverty alleviation, agricultural development, infrastructure, social welfare, economic reforms, decentralization, Panchayati raj institutions (pris), sustainable development

Introduction

‘Development’ albeit not ‘growth’ (cf. Sen, 1984) continues to be understood accordingly. In the same manner, development is not a goal rather it assists in reaching a goal or a collection of goals. Still, the powerful declarations of progress usually come from the establishment and project the same mixed results. To some, development is a collection of settings that eliminate limits for a human to develop his/her intrinsic skills to the utmost extent feasible and which permits without any form of hindrance to pursuit many goals. In quite a general definition of the phrase, development is the ‘process of becoming’ and a possible state of being’. If brought down to an individual’s level, experiences reaffirm the notion that development originates or starts from within and it cannot be begun exteriorly, may it be the case of individual human beings or family or society or nation at large (Singh, 2010). In a similar vein, development should neither be borrowed nor imposed and should promote the welfare of everybody in a particular society (cf. Singh, 2005). Development refers to the attainment of well-defined goals and objectives by a community. The goal of development is to steer the process of economic and social transformation in such a way that efficient and purposeful use is made of all human resources. For the achievement of the above specified goal planning is vital.

As far as rural development is concerned, it is an operational notion, which refers to the improvement in the living standard of the people in rural areas (Rao, 2005). It implies both the economic betterment of people as well a social reform. Increased participation of people in the rural

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development process, decentralization of planning, stronger enforcement of land reforms, and increased access to capital and inputs go a long way in giving the rural people better prospects of economic development. Improvement in health, education, drinking water, energy supply, sanitation, and housing along with attitudinal improvements also help their social growth.

Rural development has emerged as the most important among the different facets of rural studies. In the current context, it is not restricted to (physical) infrastructural development rather it also takes a long social welfare of the rural population comprising mainly poor cultivators, landless persons, agricultural laborers, and all kinds of marginal sections of the village community—the scheduled castes and tribes, and the women. The relevance of rural development and its research in the Indian setting is aptly expressed in the words of Mahatma Gandhi who once said that India lives in villages. In the present approach, the categorization of the term 'rural' is based not only on the demographic criterion but also includes the nature of economic activity, social elements, and the number of infrastructural amenities in a geographical unit. In the same way, rural development is seen as an integrated multi-sectoral process encompassing agricultural growth and the development of social utilities and services.

Though the worries for the rural areas predate Independence, one may see obvious shifts in method and breadth. From the First Plan to the Fifth Plan, the main concentration was on activities linked with agriculture and industries. In that situation, rural development financing was inadequate (3.8 per cent only of the budget in the First Plan) and modest growth in the subsequent plans. During this period, the rural development activity was performed mainly through the Community Development Programmes (CDPs) with the basic objective of raising agriculture productivity in a few select districts exclusively. Interestingly, attention to rural health, education, and industry was given in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Plans progressively. A major change in the focus of rural development could be noticed since the Sixth Plan in the form of provision for basic facilities to the rural poor. The following Plans gave more importance to communication, infrastructure, basic education, scientific and intensive agriculture, rural self-governance, advancement in technology, reduction of poverty and unemployment through REGS (currently called MGREGS), inclusive growth, and greater incentives for infrastructural and sustainable development.

Eradication of poverty and the construction of a 'Hunger-free India' are the primary development issues of India in the new millennium. According to the UNDP and World Bank, of the estimated 1.3 billion impoverished people in the world with income less than one dollar a day, about 0.26 billion live in India with most of them (74 per cent) staying in rural regions (Rao, 2005). The percentage of rural people among the poor is worrying even after six and a half decades of independence with the execution of numerous Five-Year Plans and programs by the government and other agencies for the upliftment of the heart and soul of India. The words of Mahatma Gandhi, "India is to be found not in few cities but in the villages. Farmers and workers make India. Their prosperity alone may make India a country fit to live in" (as quoted in Singh, 1986), sound more relevant in this situation. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for most of the impoverished. Thus, sustained and broad-

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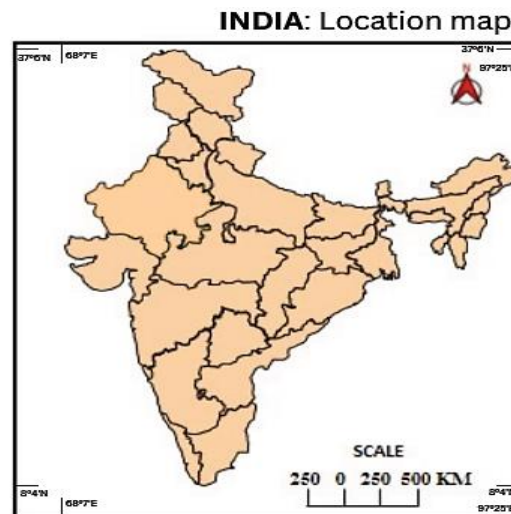
based growth of agriculture is a pre-requisite for rural development, and later, a vital condition for the overall socio-economic development of India.

The major purpose of this research is to make a critical attempt to comprehend the paradigmatic change in rural development in India from the perspective of the Five-Year Plans. Accordingly, the following debate is structured into two main sections followed by a conclusion. We begin with a quick review of rural development: a pre-independence outlook. Then, we try to debate and examine the rural development experience through Five Year Plans. This period is broadly sub-classified into three distinct phases: a period of broad-based agriculture and industries (1951-1981) which is further sub-divided as the 'pre-green revolution phase' (1950-1965) and the 'green revolution phase'; a period of poverty alleviation and social welfare (1981-1992); and, period of economic reforms and sustainable development (1992 onwards).

Geographical Introduction

Study Area; India

India is located in the North Hemisphere it extends between 68°7' East to 97° 25' East Longitudes and 6° 45' North to 37°6' North Latitude. India has 7516.6 km Coastline including Islands with the Arabian Sea in west, Bay of Bengal in the East and Indian Ocean in the South. India has Monsoonal climate. The Country has each and every second order and third order land forms that's why India has the great diversity in respect to every Geographical element. Total population of India according to 2011 Census is 1,210, 193, 422 persons, Rural population is 833,087,662, persons (68.8%). Urban Population is 377,105,760 persons (31.2%).



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Objective of the study

1. To critically assess the changes in rural development planning in India from the First to the Eleventh Five-Year Plan.
2. To identify key factors driving these changes and their impact on rural socio-economic conditions.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of rural development policies in addressing ongoing challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and infrastructure deficits.
4. To propose recommendations for future rural development strategies to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth.

Methodology

The investigation conducts an extensive method to examine India's fundamental transformations in rural development design. The research uses official Planning Commission of India documentation and records from Five-Year Plans together with government publications and primary sources. A review of academic journals alongside books and articles researching rural development in India provides a complete view of historical rural policy evolution. The research evaluates rural development program objectives and strategies and results from consecutive Five-Year Plans by exploring shifting priorities in funding and implementation approaches throughout history. The research evaluates selected rural development programs for their results while studying what elements determine their outcomes. Analysts evaluate rural development policies by studying data about poverty rates together with employment figures alongside measurements of infrastructure growth and agricultural outputs. Statistical analytical procedures seek to reveal trends and correlations that appear across multiple periods of time. The collection of qualitative data relies on interviews with policymakers and rural development experts as well as community leaders to uncover their observations about both implementation difficulties and systems outcomes during rural development initiatives. Through research, the study investigates how constitutional amendments combined with policy frameworks shaped rural development planning while advancing governance decentralisation and empowering local institutions. A systematic analysis of stakeholders who participate in rural development policy design occurs through research that examines central and state governments, along with NGOs, CBO organisations, and international agencies. The research explores particular themes, including poverty reduction along with social well-being and agricultural growth and infrastructure advancement, with the addition of gender rights to study these sectors in different planning seasons. Through the amalgamation of these research methodologies, the study presents detailed insights regarding India's rural development planning transformations together with insights about met and unmet objectives.

Rural Development: A Pre-Independence View

The pre-independence Indian village community was founded on a simple division of labor. The farmers cultivated crops and bred cattle. Similarly, there existed a class of people named weavers,

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goldsmiths, carpenters, potters, oil pressers, washermen, cobblers, etc. All these occupations were hereditary and carried by tradition from father to son. Agriculture and industry were interdependent in villages. The subsistence style of agriculture was common throughout the period. The level of rural poverty and exploitation during the British reign is eloquently stated in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "Indeed some kind of cart might be drawn up to indicate the close connection between the length of British rule and progressive growth of poverty. That dominion began with open pillage and a land revenue system that collected the uttermost farthing not only from the living but even from the dead peasants. It was pure loot" (as quoted in Dutt and Sundaram, 2010).

Rural development has had a pretty lengthy history in India stretching to several decades before independence, however, it was arguably only after independence that fresh, concentrated efforts were made (Gaikwad, 1986). During the period of national struggle (after the 1920s), due to the active involvement of rural masses and a constructive push of the Indian National Congress, the colonial administration, individuals, and NGOs initiated a few beneficial actions for the well-being of rural poor, in various parts of the country. The significant experiments during 1920-1946 were:

1. Srinikethan Experiments of Rabindranath Tagore
2. Marthandam Project of Spencer Hatch of YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association)
3. Gurgon Experiment of F. L. Braye
4. Baroda Rural Reconstruction Movement of V.T. Krishnamachari
5. Various experiments of Mathma Gandhi
6. Firka Development Programme of Madras Government in 1946.

The Indian National Congress, under the inspiration of Jawaharlal Nehru, established the National Planning Committee (NPC) towards the end of 1938. The Committee proposed the state control over main economic activities and depute a planning commission for the planned implementation of developmental policies and programs in India. Besides the National Planning Committee (NPC), eight top industrialists of India created 'A Plan of Economic Development', which is popularly known as the Bombay Plan, followed by M. N. Roy's Peoples Plan. Though these are labeled only paper plans; their relevance rests in the fact that they spurred thinking about many areas of planning in India (Krishnamachari and Venu, 1977).

Rural Development Through Five-Year Plans

Poor economic, social, and infrastructural bases ruled India in the early 1950s. Economic growth of the country was less than one percent, with the seeming dominance of agriculture. Indian agriculture was confronted with the prevalence of the Zamindari system, a high degree of rural indebtedness, and poor institutional assistance. Five-year plans set the groundwork for big-scale public-supported developmental efforts in the country.

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In the then-modern approach, the classification of the term 'rural' was based on not only democratic criteria but also the nature of the economic activity, social elements, and the number of infrastructural facilities in geographical units. The main problems of development at the time of independence in India were mainly an underdeveloped economy with non-utilized or underutilized manpower and unexploited natural resources; large-scale poverty and multidimensional goal of poverty eradication; diversified social and regional system; and, rapid population growth.

Negligence of rural peoples led to a preponderance of famine and mortality, giving a wretched life to the rural poor who had suffered a lot under British rule and actively participated in the freedom movement. The independent India had launched a planned policy. Most of the developmental initiatives in India began with the establishment of Five-Year Plans beginning in 1951. The planning commission spelled out the four long-term objectives of planning:

1. To raise the output to the utmost possible extent to reach a higher level of national and per capita income.
2. To reach full employment.
3. To minimize inequalities of income and wealth.
4. To create up socialistic society based on equality and justice and lack of exploitation. (Dutt and Sundaram, 2010)

According to the Planning Commission of India, "planning is not a one-for-all all exercise for five years, it requires a constitutional watch on current or incipient trends, systematic observation of technical, economic and social data and adjustments of programs in light of new requirements" (Krishnamachari and Venu, 1977). To catch up with these aims, a thorough development plan is needed. Because 70 percent of the Indians are living in villages, their upliftment only would produce a prosperous India.

This would depend on the development of the rural economy in terms of broad-based agriculture, non-crop including animal husbandry, fishing, and forests, and non-farm rural economy; augmentation of the resource base, productive use of resources, and widespread process of growth leading to distribution of the benefits to all. The fast expansion of jobs and income and a basic minimum needs approach would comprise the essence of the rural development strategy (Rao, 2005). Larger problems of right to labor and development will also be involved. Accordingly, rural development is judged in terms of the reduction of poverty in its different forms, inequality, food security, unemployment, and discriminatory behaviors in a society marked by socio-economic inequities.

A paradigm shift in the policy of rural development has also taken place in the sense that the poor are seen as potential resources, forming an integral component of the development strategy, and not as a burden (Prasad, 2009). Development methods under Five Year Plans focussed on the attainment of high growth and elimination of poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, and social inequity. The Five-

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Year Plan emphasizes the significance of rural institutions in accomplishing these development goals while recommending strategies for building up the institutional strengths.

Shifts in policy focus and paradigms that have taken place during the last five and half decades of India's rural development are detailed here concerning the Five-Year Plans of India.

Period of Broad-based Agriculture and Industries (1951-1981)

Indian planners paid great attention to implementing agricultural developmental plans for rural development in this period. This period of rural development is categorized into the 'pre-green revolution' phase and the 'green revolution' phase.

- **Pre-Green Revolution Phase (1950-1965)**

The targeted purpose of the first plan was big-scale agriculture output. Near about 43 percent of the country's geographical area was devoted to agricultural operations in those decades. The plan attempted to create land policy, even if its implementation had considerable regional disparities. Indian agriculture was confronted with the presence of the Zamindari system, high levels of (rural) indebtedness, insufficient institutional support for agriculture, etc. The main emphasis in this phase was on institutional and agrarian reforms. Immediately after independence, India eliminated the Zamindari system giving occupation rights to 20 million statutory tenants who cultivated 40 percent of the operated area (Varughese, 1993). The fundamental aims of the agrarian reforms to remedy the structural imbalances hampering modernization were only partially realized. Gross inequities in the agrarian economy and rural society continued to prevail.

Rural restoration projects of the pre-independence era prompted the ambition to embrace the 'whole village development' method in the 1950s. As a sequel to the proposals given by the 'Grow More Food Inquiry Committee' under the chairmanship of V.T. Krishnamachari, an extension system was established to provide support to the farming community and organize all activities of rural life with active participation of people. The Community Development Programme (CDP) was developed in 1952 with a concentration on the utilization of scientific knowledge in agriculture and associated activities and formulation of micro-level plans with people participation. The development of three essential democratic village institutions – the school, the cooperative, and the panchayat was the core component of the CD strategy (Rao, 2005). Though the development plan benefits all the economic sectors and social sectors; less privileged portions were prioritized. About 15per cent of the plan monies were dedicated to agriculture (including CDP) during this period. The poor preparation and restricted capacities of local administration and institutions resulted in limited outcomes only. CDP has very poor performance in rural communication, education, health, housing, and social welfare. However, the introduction of CD blocks was an effective measure in getting the government close to the people.

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The financial allocation of rural development through CDP was only 3.8 percent. The fundamental purpose of CDP was to engage the local manpower and make a concerted effort to upgrade the level of rural life. CDP, which was turned permanently into a program of intensive development of selected areas, also contributed to increasing farm production. Share for rural and small-scale industry in it was barely 1.3 percent. And, the social service sector was entirely neglected.

In the second five-year plan there was not only a strong pro-industry bias in policy-making but there was an underlying theme of pro-poor and pro-village sentiment also that determined the development policy, which emerged from the Gandhian influence on Indian thinking and freedom movement (Second Five Year Plan, 1956). During this period, foundations were established for the establishment of a democratic structure of society. The state assumed the burden of boosting the process of development of an economy damaged by war and partition vulnerabilities to food deficits. Planning was seen as an instrument to develop the backward agricultural to change the economy and mainstream the poor to correct structural rigidities and augment the productivity level of major economic sectors (Rao, 1999). Institutional reforms comprised the key plank of this period, notably for the wide-based agriculture and rural development.

The introduction of village and small-scale businesses supplied non-farm employment in rural areas. The percentage of the agriculture sector in GDP dropped from 59.2 percent in 1950-51 to 47.2 percent in 1965-66. The performance of agriculture was variable and determined by seasonal weather. Limited access to financing for a large number of small producers resulted in low productivity in agriculture (Rath, 2003). Lack of scientific understanding and technology also contributed to poor performance of agriculture and industries. As a result, the living level of the population did not improve during this period. Though efforts from the government were little only, a wide range of initiatives of voluntary organizations had beneficial impacts and resultant improvements in crude birth rates, crude death rates, and infant mortality rates. Poverty in rural India during this period was significant and varied, corresponding mostly with the performance of weather-dependent agriculture.

- **Green Revolution Phase**

Rural development in this age is committed to improvement in agricultural production. Strategies were mainly growth-focused even at the cost of institutional improvements. Continuous droughts and the consequent food crisis strained the poor man's shoulders. It led to qualitative and quantitative shifts in development perspectives. The HYV seed-water-fertilizer technology (popularly known as 'green revolution' technology) was introduced to address the food problem. Based on the Jha Committee Report (1964), a comprehensive agricultural policy was established with the motto of production of basic products and control of inflation. The components of the policy included a minimum support price (MSP) and, a public distribution system (PDS), among others. Spatial imbalance in the implementation of land reforms is a key

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challenge for rural development. In between three years (1965-68), annual plans are implemented due the economic structure of the country is damaged due to the ensuing war with China and Pakistan and the value of the Indian rupee declines substantially in the world market. The government had devoted considerably more priority to the effective implementation of agricultural projects for boosting production, efficient marketing, and effective distribution (in rural areas). The area development initiatives, launched in the 1970s, were aimed at reducing inequities and reduce poverty. The 'Food for Work' (FFW) project was started in 1977 to promote work prospects and decrease the food gap for the poor (Dholakia, 2003). The diversification of agricultural and rural activities benefited the weaker sections (SCs/STs) and decreased the influence of the social exclusion process that had been existing for generations.

The 'Minimum Need Programme' (MNP) implemented in 1974 concentrating primary education, primary health, drinking water supply, supplementary nutrition, rural electricity, rural roads, and public distribution system brought about some improvements in the quality of life of rural people. The nationalization of banks initiated in 1969 was considered a concrete step in the direction of socio-economic democracy and as a measure to boost the access of small and marginal farmers to institutional credit. As a natural consequence, the flow of finance to agriculture has gone up since 1969 (Rao, 2005).

The technological and institutional developments have not benefited the backward regions and the poor cultivators. The small farmers were excluded from this growth process to a significant extent, especially in poverty-stricken areas where agrarian reforms did not have any appreciable impacts. With time, regional inequality in agriculture growth has widened in the country. And, there were notably large variances in consumption patterns between rural and urban areas.

The level of unemployment gradually climbed due to significant population expansion. Both, the farm industry and the non-agriculture sector were unable to absorb the expanding number of work seekers. Rural poverty was still high it was 54 percent during 1972-74 and had reduced just somewhat to 51 percent by 1977-78. Life expectancy was about 42 years in the mid-sixties and had gone up by 10 years throughout 15 years period ending in 1980 (Aminuzzaman, 1993).

The progress demonstrates that until to 1980s rural development meant just agriculture development and agrarian reforms. But that could not secure accessibility to food—the most basic concern of all human beings, particularly the (rural) poor. Besides, rapid advances in education, infrastructure, health, etc. are vital for the uplifting of the poor and assuring a better life for them. However, a poor level of education leads to the perpetuation of intrinsic social ills in Indian rural society. Because of weak infrastructure, tertiary and secondary sectors to keep away from rural areas.

Period of Poverty Alleviation and Social Welfare (1981-1992)

A major change in Indian planning is visible with the execution of the 6th plan (1981-1986). Welfare

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concerns were reflected to a greater extent in the agriculture and rural development strategies of the state during this decade. For the first time in the planning history, rural development obtains independent plan allocation. In the light of high degree of poverty and a huge backlog of unemployment, the development perspectives of the eighties laid greater emphasis on the reduction of poverty and removal of unemployment and underemployment as well as improving the efficiency of infrastructure and different sectors of the economy.

The progress of social development during the previous time was not outstanding and inadequate to the aspirations and needs of the economy. The provision of basic services and gainful employment through the increase of productivity in all sectors were some of the primary objectives of the state (Datta and Sundaram, 2010). The rapid increase in subsidies also permitted better agricultural growth but the benefits were largely utilized by the wealthier farmers. Introduction of the Training and Visits (T&V) system of extension in the command area and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in tribal and backward areas facilitated greater dispersion of agriculture technologies and farm practices. The Plan had placed increased attention on ecological security.

Household and small-scale industries supplied additional work options and facilitated diversified occupational patterns. Upgradation of skill and technology and production-oriented marketing under the village and small-scale sector led to the formation of a wider entrepreneurship base and greater employment for the rural workforce.

A variety of development programs were carried up under the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). Shift took place from traditional agriculture to technology-based agricultural methods. Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) were enhanced by inducting the ideas of the Mehta Committee (1978). Empowerment of socially and economically vulnerable sections through reservations in PRIs and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) unfortunately had minimal success (Prasad, 2009).

The Plan proposed rural electrification, drinking water within the premises of 1.6 km, rural dwellings, elementary education, and basic health services through the Minimum Needs Programme (MNP). 50 percent of rural road connectivity was targeted during the plan period. Incentives to enhance cooperative movement and aim for the extension of new technologies and scientific agriculture to the farmers were offered. Plan financing was granted for crop insurance. For the alleviation of rural unemployment and poverty, budgetary allocation for National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) was made. It gave a fresh life to rural industry through export promotion policies. For the improved rural economic growth dairying, horticulture, and fishing have gained more importance.

With a sustained boost to social welfare and rural development like the previous programs, a frontal attack on poverty, unemployment, and regional imbalances carried on. More attention was paid to technically mobilizing the rural areas and introducing excellent vocational institutions, educational centers, and employment training centers in rural areas. The Sixth Plan period witnessed a steady

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dissolution of the CDP. Greater attention was paid to adult literacy and health care services including the creation of maternity and child health centres.

The Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) was beneficial in improving the quality of life of the rural poor and also for the control of population increase. However, the allocation for MNP was found to be inadequate. PDS was effective in states like Kerala, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh but reportedly in poor backward states like Bihar, Orissa (now Odisha), and MP. Special projects encompassing self-employment programs (IRDP, DWCRA, TRYSEM, etc) and wage employment programs (NREP, RLEGP, etc.) for the rural target groups. Socio-economic infrastructure was developed besides providing large jobs. Food grains given under these schemes aided in alleviating food insecurity among the impoverished to some extent. In 1989-90, the two initiatives were amalgamated into a new one—Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, JRY (Bandhopadhyay, 2000). All these poverty alleviation measures, along with improved sector performance led to a rapid fall in rural poverty from 53 percent in 1977-78 to 39 percent by 1987-89.

The state initiatives towards social development benefited the low-income classes to some extent in terms of progress in literacy, housing status, and access to facilities like safe drinking water and electricity.

Period of Economic Reforms and Sustainable Development (1992 onwards)

The early 1990s witnessed enthusiastic improvements in the economic sector globally. Thus, one may find the decade involved with growing liberalization, privatization, and globalization of the Indian economy. Reforms in agriculture and other areas were initiated. In the rural environment, a fundamental paradigm shift was that of the revitalisation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). As a sequel of the G.V.K. Rao Committee report (1985) which studied the organizational difficulties concerning the rural development and poverty alleviation projects the Government of India had done constitutional reforms (73rd and 74th) for the establishment of PRI. Constitutional amendments include the establishment of a District Planning Committee with representation of rural and urban populations (Rao, 2005). Gramsabha gives the possibility of a face-to-face democracy. Through PRI, the active participation of women in the process and their empowerment in rural regions was planned.

The rise of self-help groups (SHGs) as major institutions for poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor, primarily women, is remarkable in this era. The state-sponsored rural development programs, NABARD initiatives, and NGO tactics have all aided in strengthening the activities of SHGs (Tenth Five Year Plan, Approach Paper, 2001). Ninth Plan onwards agrarian reforms, viewed as an intervention to poverty reduction and sustainable rural development, were brought back in practice (Pant, 2003). Given more effective efforts for the proper distribution of excess and government land among landless, poor, and SCs/STs. Water and land management difficulties have surfaced as a critical challenge for future agriculture expansion. Diversification of agriculture through the promotion of horticulture, fishery, cattle, etc. supported in rural regions with government aid.

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With the establishment of Indira Avas Yojana (IAY), Pradhanmantri Gram Sadak Yojana, etc. infrastructural facilities developed in rural regions. And, elementary education received increasing priority during this plan time. However, the main purpose of the 9th Plan was agricultural and rural development with the view of producing employment.

The 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007) aimed at changing the national economy into the fastest growing (of the world) based on a consistent 7 percent GDP growth during the last decade. It envisioned the creation of more investor-friendly flexible economic reforms and a congenial investment environment, providing encouragement to private sector involvement, setting up state-of-the-art infrastructure, capacity building in industry, corporate transparency, mobilizing and optimizing (all) financial resources, and implementation of friendly industrial policy instruments, among others. The 10th Plan began Bharat Nirman and rural highways for generating improved rural infrastructural facilities. It also initiated the process of sustainable use of land and wasteland reclamation for agriculture. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) was introduced for good quality education. 11th plan continues with a 9 percent growth rate. A program like Mahatma Gandhi the Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGREGS) was developed to provide additional aid to the poor, ensure inclusive growth, and give stronger incentives for infrastructure and sustainable development in communities. The unemployment level had risen over this period. The unemployment rate of males and females was 5.6 and 5.6 percent respectively in 1993-94 and grew to 7.2 and 6.8 percent, respectively in 1999-2000. But for the rise in real earnings, poverty would have gone even more. It was planned to provide universal coverage of primary health care, primary education, and safe drinking water by 2000 (Rao, 2003). Under the social sector development, projects were created to aid the vulnerable and the destitute.

Towards strengthening the absorptive capacities of the population, especially the underprivileged, major investments in social sector development are pre-requisite. Simultaneously, increased efforts need to be made to evolve appropriate capacity-building methods to not only enhance the skill but also empower the people.

Conclusion

Based on the above brief analysis, it can be claimed that there is an evident paradigm shift in rural development planning in India. The adjustments have been in reaction to the developing national requirements during the recent six decades. The Crux of the transformation rests in the fact that the Indian state has been reviewing its role. Recently, thinking has evolved to the effect that the function of the state should transform into that of facilitator by dispensing with needless restrictions and rules. The social duty of the state, however, demands that it plays an effective role in social programming and in monitoring and assessment and establishment of a system of checks and balances. This will not only aid in preventing distortions and disputes in society but also assure general protection of the welfare of the people, particularly the impoverished (Rao, 2005). Most of the governmental programs are for enhancing the quality of life of the people. Quality of life is a multi-dimensional concept encompassing the economic opportunities available to the people as well

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as their ability to take advantage of these opportunities and the existence of living conditions that permit a healthy and productive life (Approach Paper, 9th Five Year Plan, 1997). Eradication of poverty and provision of basic minimum services are the vital parts of any effort to improve the quality of life. No developmental process can be sustainable unless it leads to observable and wide-sphere improvement in the relevant areas.

India's dedication to its overall development is reflected in the words of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh (2007) "India's commitment to planned economic development is the reflection of our society's determination to improve the economic condition of our people and an affirmation of the role of the government in beginning about this outcome through a variety of social, economic and institutional means" (11th Five Year Plan: Vol. 1, 2007).

Alleviation of rural poverty has been one of the key aims of planned development in India. Even since the inception of planning, the policies and programs have been developed and updated for this purpose. The subject of rural poverty was brought into clearer focus during the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-85). The Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90) likewise promoted progress with social fairness. It was discovered that a sustainable approach to rural poverty alleviation had to be built on growing the productive work prospects in the process of growth itself. Rural poverty is intrinsically related to low rural productivity unemployment and underemployment. Hence, it is vital to boost productivity and increase employment in rural areas.

Quick growth will be required to lower the number of poor and sustainable poverty reduction for growth to benefit the poor proportionately. It will have to be accompanied by more rapid employment expansion than heretofore, higher investment in health, education, water, sanitation, and child nutrition than so far, and specifically targeted poverty reduction measures. Even though all these endeavors are perfectly obvious in intention, the task should be done at the grassroots level (for the rural masses). Political and administrative willpower is important for such. The core of India's political gravity has been progressively drifting away from the center to the states over the last two decades. Good governance in the states is vital for a thriving India and tracking it is a good measure of the health of the nation.

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