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RURAL DEVELOPMENT: INDIA'S WEAPON FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, Rural Development has gained worldwide attention especially among the developing economies of the world. In a country like India, where more than seventy percent of the population live in rural areas, rural development is a serious issue to be looked upon. The current strategy for development of Indian rural sector includes measures of poverty alleviation, wage programmes, self-employment opportunities, setting up of basic amenities etc. This article is an attempt to critically review the contribution of rural sector in the growth of Indian economy and analyse the role and contribution of the Government for Rural Development in India. An effort has been made here to look at the various dimensions of the Indian rural economy and how it is still the backbone of India that cannot be ignored.

KEYWORDS

rural development, sustainable development, self-employment, agro-based industries.

INTRODUCTION

Also known as countryside, rural areas have low density of population; agriculture being the primary source of livelihood. Planning Commission of India defines rural area as a town with maximum population of 15,000 having no municipal board.

Rural India is a major contributor to country's National Income with an indispensable contribution in agriculture, fishing, cottage industries, self-employment, services, construction etc. More than seventy percent of India's population live in rural areas and more than one third of the F.M.C.G. sales are accounted by this sector.

In the face of noteworthy advancement in industrial progress, Indian economy is still largely dependent on agro based activities. Agriculture is the source of livelihood for majority of the population living in rural areas. These families spend more than ninety percent of their earnings on rudimentary needs such as food, energy and basic health care. Significant chunk of the rural population who is unable to meet even these indispensable necessities fall under the classification of the poor.

Thus, in a largely agrarian economy like India, increase in the G.N.P. or per capita Income will not suffice. In order to raise the standard of living of the country as a whole, rural areas are to be kept under consideration. For improving the economic status of the population it is not enough to enhance the per capita GNP, but it is also necessary to ensure prosperity among the poor.

Advancement in industries and use of modern technology will generate help in development of urban sector of the economy but might result into a larger gap between urban and rural, rich and poor. Hence, in order to ensure a better quality of life and social justice, the issues of the poor need to be addressed. The following table shows the State wise proportion of Rural Population to Total Population percentage (2001 and 2011).

TABLE 1: STATE WISE PROPORTION OF RURAL POPULATION TO TOTAL POPULATION PERCENTAGE (2001 AND 2011)

States	2001	2011
Andhra Pradesh	72.7	66.6
Arunachal Pradesh	79.2	77.1
Assam	87.1	85.9
Bihar	89.5	88.7
Chhattisgarh	79.9	76.8
Delhi	6.8	2.5
Goa	50.2	37.8
Gujarat	62.6	57.4
Haryana	71.1	65.1
Himachal Pradesh	90.2	90.0
Jammu & Kashmir	75.2	72.6
Jharkhand	77.8	76.0
Karnataka	66.0	61.3
Kerala	74.0	52.3
Madhya Pradesh	73.5	72.4
Maharashtra	57.6	54.8
Manipur	73.4	67.5
Meghalaya	80.4	79.9
Mizoram	50.4	47.9
Nagaland	82.8	71.1
Odisha	85.0	83.3
Punjab	66.1	62.5
Rajasthan	76.6	75.1
Sikkim	88.9	74.8
Tamil Nadu	56.0	51.6
Tripura	82.9	73.8
Uttar Pradesh	79.2	77.7
Uttarakhand	74.3	69.8
West Bengal	72.0	68.1
All-India	72.2	68.8

OBJECTIVES

1. To review critically the contribution of rural sector in the growth of Indian economy.
2. To suggest measures to make the rural development process more effective.

CONTRIBUTION OF RURAL SECTOR TO INDIA'S ECONOMY

The rural landscape of India was largely agrarian till recent times but looking into the figures of contribution by the sector in industry and services the old traditional view has largely changed. According to the reports by National Council of Applied Economic Research, in the year 2014-2015, more than 58 percent of the rural G.D.P. is the result of the contribution of industry and services. While on the other hand agriculture contributes only around 42 percent of the rural G.D.P. Breaking this up specifically, industry contributes around 30 percent to the rural G.D.P. and the contribution of services to the same is around 28 percent.

The rural economy has transformed from an agrarian economy to one where manufacturing units are the major contributor to the sectoral income. According to the Central Statistical Organisation Economic Census, less than 20 percent of the non-farm rural workers are employed in the agricultural units while more than 80 percent work in non-agricultural units.

Rural economy is composed of a variety of economic activities. The major contributor to which is: Agriculture. Forest is another activity based on nature that is allied to agriculture. Village/Traditional industries that are mostly based on artisans also play an important role in the development of rural economy. Development of rural sector is indispensable for the development of Indian Economy.

AGRICULTURE

The contribution of agriculture to Indian Economy is prominent since ages. Though there is a significant fall in the figures from around 56 percent of the GDP in the year 1948 to around 18 percent in the year 2014, still the Indian Economy largely depends upon agriculture as it provides employment to a large percentage of total population.

The total production of agriculture sector was around \$370 billion in 2014. India is second larger producer of agricultural output in the world. It accounts for more than 8 percent of total global agricultural products. India is among the top five producers in the world of fruits, wheat, sugar, coffee, tea, oilseeds, groundnuts, tobacco, jute, cotton, spices, rice and vegetables. India is the largest fruits producer and the second largest vegetable producer in the world.

DAIRY AND LIVE STOCK

Operation Flood was the largest Dairy Development Program launched in the year 1970. Implementation of this program was responsible to a large extent for rapid growth in the dairy production in India. India is the top-most dairy producer in the world with more than seventy million farmers engaged in dairy production resulting into more than ninety million tons of milk from animals. Though India leads in dairy production but the major share of the market is in the hands of unorganised players and the share of organised sector is very small.

Livestock also contributes to the GDP of India being a part of agriculture and allied activities. It is an important source of high quality food such as milk, poultry etc. A large proportion of the rural farmers are engaged in dairy and livestock activities, especially women. Livestock including cattle, buffaloes, sheep, poultry birds and goats play an important role in the socio-economic development of rural India.

FISHERIES

One of the important sectors of food production is Indian Fisheries and aquaculture engaging more than fifteen million people of the country. India produces more than six million tons of fisheries per annum. Since a large portion of the fisheries market is under the unorganised market, there is a vast potential to development of this sector.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJNA**

Launched in the year 2000, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna is a funded scheme sponsored by the Central Government to connect the Rural India through roads throughout the year. This scheme has helped in the development to the rural areas as it has constructed new roads in numerous villages of India and has improved the inter village connectivity. Introduced by the former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee the scheme aimed at providing connectivity to a number of villages of India. Later in the year 2005, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna became a part of scheme- Bharat Nirman.

INDIRA AWAAS YOJANA

Housing is one of the basic necessities of life. More than a mere shelter, a house gives a sense of security, ownership and psychological satisfaction. Indira Awaas Yojana is a public housing programme for the families who are houseless or those who are living in derelict houses. This programme gives financial as well as technical assistance and enables the poor or those living Below Poverty Line to get their houses. Panchayats of the villages also play an important role in planning and implementation of the Indira Awaas Yojana.

MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT-2005

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a programme that aims at guaranteeing the Right to Work. The objective of the scheme is to enhance employment security in rural areas by giving at least hundred days of wage employment in an accounting year to every family whose adult members agree to do unskilled manual work. MGNREGA also aims at construction of capital assets such as flyovers, roads, canals etc. Payment of minimum wages is guaranteed under this scheme and employment is provided within five kilometres of the worker's place of resident. This scheme also helps in reducing social inequality, empowerment of rural women, reduction in rural-urban migration, environment sustainability etc.

NATIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Administered by the Ministry of Rural Development, National Social Assistance Programme aims at raising the standard of living of the society, improving public health, providing free and compulsory education to children. National Social Assistance Programme, comprises of the following schemes:

- Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS),
- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS),
- National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS),
- Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) and
- Annapurna.

SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS MORE EFFECTIVE**ASSURED LIVELIHOOD**

The primary aim of any Rural Development Programme is to bring the poor families out of the vicious circle of poverty. Various schemes adopted by the Government strive to provide employment to the rural population. The gestation period of various employment activities differs depending upon the nature of activity leaving the poor unemployed for certain number of months or years. Thus, the poverty alleviation programmes should be designed such that they enable the poor families to come out of the poverty trap. Integrated programmes should be introduced so that substantial income throughout the year could be earned.

RURAL FAMILY AS THE BASIC ELEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT

One of the ways of making the rural development programmes more effective is treating individual rural families as a basic element of development. The development programmes should identify the families that are in need of support in order to fulfil the basic necessities of their lives. Instead of considering village as an element of development, where the dominant section of the society rule over the poor, individual families should be considered as developmental elements. This will ultimately lead to lessen the wide gap between rich and poor.

INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN

Women's key position in the process of Development can be recognised extensively. Women constitute to around 50 percent of the total population and work for two third of the total hours worked. Women Empowerment is necessary for the Integrated Rural Development as they play a major role in the upbringing of children as well as procurement of the basic necessities of life. The need of active involvement of women in development programmes has been pointed out even by recognised International bodies.

IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY OF LIFE

Rural Development programmes should be focussed towards ensuring better quality of life. Livelihood programme should be blended with moral development activities, health care and education. The rural families should actively participate in community development, environmental protection, anti-alcohol and anti-gambling programmes etc. To ensure happy and stable society, along with adequate income, moral values play an essential role.

PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT

Rural Development programmes should be designed carefully to achieve the dual objective of development as well as environment protection. Protection of environment and conservation of natural resources should essentially be built in the various developmental strategies. Sustainable Development could only be achieved by keeping environment along with the other objectives. The primary aim of the rural households is earning livelihood and therefore it becomes indispensable to bring environment into one of the objectives of rural development.

CONCLUSION

Around 25 percent of the world's rural population lives in India. Though various schemes have been introduced by the Government to attain a sustainable livelihood, however, more than 50 percent of the rural population, who holds less than 5 percent of the total land, are unable to earn their livings. Therefore, it is essential to promote integrated development programmes with special attention on small and landless farmers. Water resource development, livestock management, improved agricultural activities, horticulture, agro based small industries etc. should be a part of rural development programmes. Rural development policy needs to keep up. Thus, different strategies for different enterprises could result into a sustainable rural development.

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