

AN OVERVIEW OF ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF VILLAGES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper made an attempt to give a bird view of dynamic nature of human being from an historical perspective and also justifies the dynamic nature of human being by various inventions to make his life better. Achievement of sustainability in food production itself is a wonderful chapter in the history of human being. The exhibition of human talent in different dimensions is lies with settled cultivation which assured sustainable food productivity. This piece of writing gives a brief note on origin and growth of rural settlement in India. India is land of villages and rural community is sustained from thousands of years in villages. Series of changes are entering into the Indian villages and 'self sufficient' Indian villages are converting into 'migrating villages'.

KEYWORDS: Indian Villages, Rural Settlement

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I. INTRODUCTION

What a psychological mindset of human being? He is hunting to know his own history! Various branches of natural and social sciences are striving to study the various aspects of human evolution. With the result of continues effort and unsatisfied curiosity, we have authentic sources towards various stages of human history. Study of human history demands intelligence, because human being is not just a biological animal. The fundamental needs of human being are not just restricted to food, shelter and sex. His intellectual rays didn't rush into a single direction. Centuries ago Aristotle said that 'man is a social animal'. The various stages of evolution of human being are not only the historic study of human biology but also

the chronological study of human social life. The historic evidences proved that, though human body can be sustained with the proper consumption of food, water and air, he needs companion to share his feelings. A brief note on human evolution may helps to describe the social needs of human being.

Earth is the distinct planet in our solar system, it's 'near-surface environments are the only places in the universe known to harbour life' (Britannica) and it has 4.54 billion years of long history. Planet earth is the kingdom of trillions of living beings, birth follows death, but the planet exists. The living beings are distinct from each other. 'The individual members of any given species vary considerably from each other, and some of that variation is due to genetic factors' (Hart 2007). 'Zoologists classify our species as part of the genus Homo, which in turn is part of the hominid family. The hominid family once included another genus (now extinct) called Australopithecus. One species within that genus was Australopithecus afarensis, which lived in East Africa about 3.5 million years ago, and from which the entire genus Homo is believed to be descended' (Hart 2007). The 'genus, Homo, originated about 2.5 million years ago and its earliest known species was Homo habilis. As all species of Australopithecus lived in Africa, Homo habilis must have originated there; and indeed, fossil remains of Homo habilis have been found only in East Africa' (Hart 2007).

'Homo erectus was the first hominid to spread out of Africa into Asia and Europe. They reached Central Asia at least 1.5 million years ago. Homo erectus was the first of our ancestors to use and maintain fires. This advance was made at least 1.6 million years ago. About 100 kya a new variant — Homo sapiens sapiens (or "HSS") — arose in sub-Saharan Africa. This new variant is important because it eventually spread throughout the entire world, displacing all other variants and as a result all humans living today are members of that subspecies. Homo sapiens sapiens — the human species — originated in sub-Saharan Africa sometime between 100 and 130 kya, and for many years thereafter almost all human beings lived in Africa. Eventually though, some of them migrated out of Africa and by 13 kya humans had settled every continent except Antarctica' (Hart 2007).

It's very much clear that human being passed several stages to reach the present state. The chronological order is Dryopithecus, Ramapithecus,

Australopithecus, Homo Erectus, Homo Sapiens Neanderthalensis and Homo Sapiens Sapiens (HSS). Based on the physical characteristics which are the outcome of vary in environment and genetic factors, human race is categorized into Caucasoid, Mongoloid, Negroid and Australoid. 'It is geographic separation that has caused the group to be an isolated breeding population' (Hart 2007). The technique and dimension differ from domain to domain to identify the chronology of human evolution, 'geologists define past eras and epochs by rock strata and the fossils they contain. Archaeologists, on the other hand, define periods by means of human artifacts (most often stone implements, since wooden artifacts tend to decay relatively rapidly) (Hart 2007).

II. FOOD - THE BASIC AMENITY

Food is the fundamental need of any living being to survive and all living beings on the earth planet are sustaining on their own food chain system. Nature gives an equal opportunity to fulfill this basic need to each and every living being. Even the food chain system is structured in such a way to balance the trillions of living beings. Human being is a distinct animal in the kingdom of living beings. After bundles of distinct characteristics, food is the mandatory fuel to activate human body, 'of the many constitutional wants of man that of food seems to be the most imperative' (Cancalon, 1857). The scientific mindset of human being enabled him to bring series of changes in terms of production, storage and consumption of food throughout the ages. Hunting and gathering were the basic source for food of early age human being. 'Fire' brought a significant change in the aspect of food consumption. 'Homo erectus was the first of our ancestors to use and maintain fires. This advance was made at least 1.6 million years ago... It seems likely, therefore, that it was only due to its mastery of fire that Homo erectus was able to move into such regions as Central Asia, northern China and Europe' (Hart 2007).

Roaming from place to place was common phenomena due to scarcity of food. The group bondage exists even in the nomadic mode of life of human being. 'Most bands consist of nomadic hunter-gatherers. Within a band, the males and females have different roles' (Wilson 2000). The self regulated norms protected them from internal harmony and external dangers. Due to limited population of human race, wide geographical area, lack of clear cut landmark and scarcity in transportation, the

interaction between groups was limited among nomadic human race. Cooperation among the group members and conflict between groups was normal phenomena in the nomadic life of human being.

III. SHIFT FROM 'NOMADIC' TO 'SETTLED LIFE'

Shift from nomadic to settled life, brought a significant change in the life of human race. Neolithic age brought significant change in human life. 'The Neolithic Revolution completely changed the whole manner of living of those peoples who adopted farming' (Hart 2007). The Neolithic man is considered as an intellect compare to early human race. 'The idea of planting crops, protecting them, and eventually harvesting them is not obvious or trivial, and it requires a considerable degree of intelligence to conceive of that notion. No apes ever conceived of that idea, nor did Australopithecus, Homo habilis, Homo erectus, nor even archaic Homo sapiens. It seems unlikely that such a notion could be originated by a group of humans with an average IQ of about 70' (Hart 2007). 'The Neolithic Revolution began about 11 kya (kilo years ago) in the Middle East, in and around the region now called the "Fertile Crescent." The first plants to be domesticated were emmer wheat, einkorn wheat and barley. The wild ancestors of all three of those crops still grow in the Fertile Crescent today. At Abu Hureyra, in northern Syria, wild einkorn wheat was being harvested as early as 12 kya and all three crops were being deliberately planted by 10.6 kya' (Smith 1998).

'Within a few centuries, use of the three crops had spread to other parts of the Fertile Crescent and southern Turkey. From the Fertile Crescent, knowledge of agriculture spread in three main directions; into Anatolia (quite early), and thence into Europe ; into Egypt and Ethiopia, and from there into the rest of Africa ; into Iran and India' (Smith 1998). Rice crop 'was invented independently about 9 or 9.5 kya in the Yangtze River basin in central China' (Smith 1998). Gradually 'rice farming spread into southern China, and thence into Southeast Asia, India, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Agriculture using millet as the main crop developed in northern China about 8.4 kya' (Smith 1998). When it comes to the roots and tubers domesticated in the Neolithic age 'were yams (in sub- Saharan Africa), potatoes and manioc (in South America) and sweet potatoes (in Mesoamerica). Among the earliest fruits cultivated were olives, dates, figs and grapes. These fruits were first cultivated in lands

bordering the Mediterranean, although the ranges of the wild species were much larger' (Smith 1998). Some of the other notable food crops grown in the Neolithic age were 'peas, lentils, soybeans, lima beans, chickpeas, sugar cane, pumpkins and peanuts. In addition, various fibers — including cotton, flax, and hemp — were cultivated. Beer and wine were being made by 6 kya (= 4000 BC), but distilled beverages were not made until much later' (Smith 1998).

Plough, 'with this instrument 'man's nomadic mode of life ceased' and 'man could develop stable agriculture, the basic source of assured food supply' (Desai 1990). 'Several inventions were designed to increase the productivity of farmers. An important one was irrigation, which was being used in the Middle East by 7.5 kya. Crop rotation was employed by 6.5 kya in both Europe and the Middle East. Plows were being used in the Middle East by 6.5 kya and in China by 5 kya'(Smith 1998). The surplus agricultural production enabled human being to become a real social animal. The real potentiality of human being well exposed with the support of settled cultivation. The social life got new touch and intellectual hungry increased. The brain babies of human being such as astrology, philosophy, history, science and technology were opened their eyes. 'Due to greater productivity of agriculture, a section of the community could be liberated from the necessity of participating in food production and could therefore concentrate on secondary industrial or ideological activity. This gave momentum to the growth of technology, arts, science and philosophy' (Desai 1990).

The settled cultivation was not only ensured food security to human being but also enabled him to construct the social network. The shift from 'starvation for food' to 'starvation for knowledge' made possible with the settled cultivation. 'Without settled agriculture and animal husbandry, not only could the world's population never have reached its present alarming numbers but there could have been no cities and none of the intellectual and artistic achievements that city life has fostered' (Mair 1991). Human being is an 'intellectual animal'; it's not just because of his strong memory power. He is distinct in animal kingdom not only because of his physical appearance. The way of life made him distinct in the kingdom of living beings. Settled cultivation was the mother of origin and growth of villages, villages are the pillars of urban settlement.

IV. VILLAGE - EMERGENCE OF NEW WAY OF LIFE

Village 'includes both the cluster of houses and the surrounding lands cultivated. Such a group has always a local name and known limits' (Powell 2003). Collective life of human being with the help of settled cultivation was the milestone in the history of origin of village. A.R. Desai states that 'the rise of the village is bound up with the rise of agricultural economy in history. The emergence of the village signified that man passed from the nomadic mode of collective life to the settled one. This was basically due to the improvement of tools of production which made agriculture and hence settled life on a fixed territorial zone possible and necessary' (Desai 1990). When we look back to the history, different kinds of people were 'living in different parts of the world, different types of villages emerged with the rise and spread of agriculture. This was mainly due to differences in geographical environments in which those people lived' (Desai 1990). But even though villages appeared across the world with the advent of agriculture, they are distinct in terms of agricultural production and newly emerged social reconstruction from nomadic to settled village life. Attachment to the land and agriculture were the common feature of early villagers in all geographical locations.

The picture of the village described in different terminologies in different geographical locations. 'The history of the village, in time and space, reveals such diverse village types as the Saxon village, the German Mark, the Russian Mir, the self-sufficient Indian Gram, the village of the feudal Europe which was an integral part of the manor; and finally the modern village, which is an integral part of national and world economic systems, with its variants such as the U.S.A. village, the typical West European village, the village of the backward modern countries of Asia, the village of the Soviet Union based on collectivized agricultural economy and others' (Desai 1990). Civilization thus began with the development of agriculture. The village – the first settled form of collective human habitation and the product of the growth of agricultural economy – thus historically gave birth to rural society and from the surplus of its food resources, nourished the town which subsequently came into existence (Desai 1990).

Instability of food was the main barrier in human social life. Human social behavior was well exposed with the assured food supply. 'Agrarian communities with

villages as their fixed habitation and agriculture as their main occupation came into existence. This event marked a landmark in the history of mankind, inaugurating a higher phase of social existence. Agriculture assured the community, for the first time, a relatively stable food supply in contrast to previous stages of social life. While food supply derived from such sources as hunting, fishing, fruit gathering and migratory hoe agriculture had always been insufficient and precarious, grain and other types of food products derived from plough agriculture could be counted upon and also be stored for use in periods of emergencies, thereby assuring relative food security for the future' (Desai 1990).

'Works dealing with the role of geographical factors – such as mountain, river, desert, sea, rainfall, various species of trees and animals – in indirectly or directly influencing the nature of economic organization, social institutions, styles of architecture, and beliefs and other ideological elements of man's life, also provide valuable clues for a correct understanding of the emergence of varied rural cultures' (Desai 1990).

V. VILLAGES IN INDIA

Mother India is land of villages and 'it was in the village that 'the pulse' of India could be felt' (Jodhka 2005). M.K. Gandhi said that 'India's soul lived in her villages' (Gandhi 1946). There are good numbers of historical evidence to prove that human being lived in India during Palaelithic age. 'Scholars like Paterson, Krishnaswamy Aiyappan, Dr.Sankalia, Seshadri, Dr. B. Subbarao, Dharni Sen, De Terra and Zeuner have made valuable contributions to the knowledge of many Palaeolithic remains in India' (Mahajan 1983). 'The palaeolithic man in India was a savage who lived in the "drifts of rivers or lakes and caves." He ate roots, fruits, nuts and the flesh of wild beasts' (Mahajan 1983). 'Agriculture was introduced into India from the Middle East' (Hart 2007).

'Towards the end of the Neolithic period, agriculture also became one of the main occupations of the people. To begin with they developed on wild grains, but later on they began to produce crops. Fruits and vegetables were also grown' (Mahajan 1983). 'The earliest signs of farming within the Indian subcontinent are found at Mehrgarh, a village in Baluchistan (the westernmost section of Pakistan), where agriculture was flourishing by 8 kya (= 6000 BC)' (Hart 2007). By 6 kya,

descendants of those farmers had settled both the Indus Valley and the Ganges Valley; and by about 5 kya (= 3000 BC) agriculture had spread into central, eastern, and southern India as well. Since the invaders had the additional advantage of higher average intelligence, they largely pushed aside the aboriginal hunter-gatherers, although with some interbreeding (Hart 2007).

India's well known knowledge base, 'vedic period was illustrated by villages and 'village was the backbone of their social economic life' (Mahajan 1983). During Rigveda, the first stage of vedic system, 'Aryans were essentially agriculturists and no wonder great importance was attached to Krishi or agriculture. Agriculture was carried on with the help of bulls and oxen. The ploughed land was called Urvara or Kshetra. The plough was drawn by oxen in teams of six, eight or twelve. The harvest was cut with the help of sickles. Lands were watered by artificial channels and ordinarily two crops a year were raised' (Mahajan 1983). 'Town played a relatively unimportant part in ancient Indian life, the Vedic hymns frequently pray for the prosperity of village, but rarely for that of towns and cities. While describing the prosperity of a kingdom, Jatakas proudly give the large number of prosperous villages included in it' (Yerankar 2004).

During the later Vedic period 'grains like rice, barley, beans, sesamum etc. were grown during the various parts of the year' (Mahajan 1983). 'Village or Grama was a popular unit' (Mahajan 1983) during the epic period. 'The bullock-cart and village huts seen, in Bharhut sculptures of about 150 B.C. or the plough and ploughman in Kushana relief's of A.D. 200 would cause no comment if they appeared suddenly in some modern Indian village' (Kosambi 1964). 'In ancient times kings like Bimbisara used to convene a meeting of village headmen' to discuss the village affairs (Yerankar 2004).

"Democracy" is replaced in the place of rule by the kings and western invaders. With effect of rapid population increase, numbers of village are also increasing. From the first settled life of human being which enabled by agriculture to the present stage, human life got series of changes. Not just the patterns of agriculture but the whole human settlement experienced change. Village is not just a place to live; it's a way of life in India. Though human being, agriculture allied animals and various agricultural crops are replacing, villages exists in India from thousands of years. Greenery - the

soul of village, birds – musicians of the village, rain and soil – the guardians of village are performing their duty to keep the village alive.

During the post independence period, various policies and programs are enacted for the development of rural India. Separate ministry is formed in both central and state government to take care of rural development. Panchayath Raj is in place according to the 73rd constitutional amendment. Three tiers of centralized administration such as Zilla panchayat, Taluk panchayat and Gram panchayat are in place. Concentration focused during the five year plans for the rural uplift. The present Indian continent is divided into 29 states and seven union territories; 610 districts. According to the census report of 2011, there are 6,40,867 villages in the country.

Village settlement has long history and it sustained for thousands of years. Especially in India village settlement is 'a way of life'. M. K. Gandhi said that 'the true Indian civilization is in the Indian villages' (Gandhi 1940). With "we feeling" village satisfied the fundamental needs of its members on its own territory. Across the border of haves and have-nots, caste hierarchy and rigidity, 'unity of village' was ultimate manthra. 'Unity' and 'self reliance' protected the Indian villages for long time. But now, basic nature of villages i.e. "self reliance" is under threat. Villages have undergone a tremendous change in all walks of life. Unity, self reliance, strong social norms, bondage of 'we feeling' are somewhat lost the taste in rural life. Villagers are searching their future in urban setup. Lack of livelihood and basic amenity are the major force behind this rapid shift of rural community to the urban setup.

VI. MIGRATING VILLAGES

India is an agriculture based country. 'More than a profession or a business, agriculture is India's culture' (Taware 2010) and 'Peasants were believed to be attached to the land through the bonds of sentiments and emotions. Agriculture, for them, was 'a livelihood and a way of life, not a business for profit' (Redfield, 1965:17-18; Shanin, 1987). But the swagger of Indian agriculture got a new touch in the period of British administration. 'In pre-British India, village agriculture mainly produced for

meeting the needs of the village population. This subsistence village agricultural economy was transformed into a market economy during the British period'(Desai 1990). 'Due to the necessity for cash for the payment of land tax, rent and debt, the agriculturist, the peasant proprietor or the tenant, was more and more constrained to produce for the market. Thus village agriculture increasingly ceased to produce for directly satisfying the needs of the village population and began to produce for the national and subsequently even world market' (Desai 1990).

Even today, agriculture is the main livelihood option in rural India and one can see the scarcity of agriculture allied industries across the country. Large scale industries and service sector are mainly concentrated in urban areas. Today, the only means of rural livelihood i.e. agriculture is not profitable. In the name of modern agriculture, the input cost in agriculture is keep growing. But the prices of agricultural goods are decreasing in the market and most importantly the low cost agri-products are entering in to the Indian market with the effect of liberalization. Indian agriculture is always in crisis in one or the other way. 'Indian agriculture has always lurched from crisis to crisis. If the monsoons are good then there are floods, if they are bad there are droughts, if the production of mangoes is excellent then there is a glut and prices fall, if the onion crops fail then that too brings tears' (Gupta 2005). Today, agriculture is the most risky sector in country.

The trend of farmers choice is also transforming. Gupta said 'there was a time, not too long ago, when a jat farmer in Uttar Pradesh or Punjab, would proudly proclaim that farming was the noblest of all occupations. Today this swagger is missing amongst them. They want an urban foothold and would even condescend to take up occupations in towns and cities that they would deign to perform in their own villages' (Gupta 2005). 'There are unambiguous statistics that point to the falling rates of growth in agriculture and to the increasing exodus from country to town' (Gupta 2005). The present rural structure is pushing the ruralites from rural to urban area.

'The main causes of heavy influx of rural migrants in urban areas are either due to the repulsive forces operating in the rural areas in the form of high rates of unemployment, poverty, low wages, small size of land holdings, lack of infrastructure development, or due to the attractive forces working in urban areas in the form of availability of jobs in factories, shops, offices, buildings and public services, facilities

of vocational, technical and higher education, better medical services, entertainments, high wages, less arduous nature of work, expanding infrastructure facilities, civic amenities and facilities etc. (Chapman 1969&1971; Clarke 1966; Bogue 1962; Davis 1951; Mitra 1968; Sen Gupta 1968; Zachariah 1960&1964 as in Khan). With regard to structural reasons for migration in India, poverty is the most commonly cited factor for migration with poor people migrating to urban areas (Deshingkar, 2004). M.K. Gandhi said that 'the cities are not only draining the villages of their wealth but talent also' (Gandhi 1946).

Today, the Indian rural scenario is under tremendous change. In one hand, the outer world is entering into the Indian villages; on the other hand, villagers are turning their face towards outer world due to lack of livelihood opportunities and good amenities etc. '1982 census revealed that 99% of the population of the region constituting present day India resided in villages' (Kumar 1982). Statistics indicates that during the last 50 years rural population has decreased from 82.0 to 68.9 percent. Between two census (2001 & 2011) the Indian rural population decreased from 72.19% to 68.84% and approximately 2 million people are shifting from rural to urban area annually. Dipankar Gupta said that 'the village in India, where life was once portrayed as 'unchanging' and 'idyllic', has in recent decades seen profound changes. The twin shackles that once decided matters for India's villagers, caste and agriculture, no longer exercise their vigorous hold. While a break in caste rigidities has fostered greater fluidity in occupational choices, agricultural stagnation has ensured the constant march in increasing numbers of employable people in the villages towards urban areas' (Gupta 2005).

Lack of livelihood opportunities and amenities are the major force behind this rapid migration. The key of rapid urbanization in the country are basic amenities and livelihood opportunities. In one hand amenities and livelihood boosted urban settlement, on the other hand lack of livelihood opportunities in the country side is changing the picture of both rural as well as urban settlement. 'It is not as if the village is transforming internally entirely on account of urban inputs. In fact, it is the sheer inertia of the agrarian economy that hardly allows for any optimism, which is forcing people to look elsewhere for both livelihood and respect (Gupta 2005). The push factors are not only restricted to livelihood and amenities, but 'other than the

lack of economic opportunities, it is the nature of social relations in rural India that drive many poorer castes and classes out of the village' (Gupta 2005).

Though good number of studies took place in the domain of rural sociology to understand the structure and function of rural life, sociologists have failed to come out with an appropriate solution to rebuild the beauty of Indian villages. A healthy urban life is not at all problem for a country. But force on urbanization creates hundreds of problems. Physical and mental health of human being and environmental hazards are the major outcomes of rapid urbanization. Villages are strained to find additional livelihood opportunities and basic amenities to retain the rural population in its setup. Rapid development of urbanization created environmental hazards and kept the urbanites under stress. A proper solution is required to balance the healthy and happy life of both rural and urban community.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper made an attempt to give a bird view of dynamic nature of human being from an historical perspective. The shift from nomadic to settled life with the help of sustainable food productivity is recorded in this paper. The exhibition of human talent in different dimensions is lies with settled cultivation which assures sustainable food productivity. This piece of writing gives a brief note on origin and growth of rural settlement in India. India is land of villages and rural community is sustained from thousands of years in villages. Series of changes are entering into the Indian villages and 'self sufficient' Indian villages are converting into 'migrating villages'.

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