

**TRANSFORMING RURAL LIFE, RURAL NON - SUSTAINABILITY AND
POSSIBILITIES TO ENHANCE THE RURAL LIVELIHOOD**

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ABSTRACT

Indian rural scenario is neither 'self sufficient' nor 'isolated' today. Indian rural scenario is transforming and the rate of change is increased in modern days. Not only the outer world is entering into the villages, but also the villagers are very curious to know the outer world. The consumption pattern of rural community is under rapid change and consumable products which are there in the basket of 'consumption' are increasing day by day. But, in one hand, the major proportions of products which are there in the basket of consumable products are producing outside the border of village. On the other hand, the changing consumption requirements are not at all fulfilled within the boundary of village. The chain which links production and consumption i.e. exchange has to transform according to the market trend. But the main livelihood source of rural community i.e. agriculture is in threat. Due to the non-sustainable nature of rural area, rural economy is in crisis and they are migrating to urban area in search of livelihood. Even after series of fluctuation in rural life, still there are possibilities to enhance the livelihood opportunities in villages and the executable livelihood opportunities are explored in this study. This piece of writing is an outcome of the research conducted in eight selected villages of Ramanagara district of Karnataka state located in southern part of India.

KEYWORDS: Rural Livelihood, Indian Villages, Rural Community

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I. INTRODUCTION

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). The word 'diversity' in relation to India is not just restricted to race, region, caste, language, flora and fauna but also extends to villages. Due to vast geographical area one can find diversified villages in India and the country is basically agriculture based village society. When it comes to the rural studies in India, much of Indian society is understood through village studies, like institutions, structures and functioning patterns, but much of the studies have been towards urban related issues. Even though, much of the urban process is the replica of urbanization in the already developed western societies, answers for our social problems are not being seen from the Indian structural point of view. The diversity, vastness and numerical strength which are reside in villages with voluminous knowledge systems, rural studies in India have not gone beyond descriptive understanding.

The three major socio-anthropological jargons which emerged out of the early Indian rural studies were 'Isolation', 'Self-Sufficiency' and 'Little Republics'. 'It was during the British colonial rule that India was first essentialised as a land of 'village republics' (Jodhka 2005). 'The idea of the isolation and self-sufficiency of the Indian village was first propounded by Sir Charles Metcalfe in 1830 and since then it has had distinguished supporters, scholars as well as politicians. Sir Henry Maine and Karl Marx supported the idea and in recent times, Mahatma Gandhi and his followers not only stated that Indian village was traditionally self-sufficient but also wanted a political programme which would restore to these villages their pristine self-sufficiency' (Srinivas 1960). Even though the time of origin of these terminologies is long back, the flow of these terminologies is still continues in sociological literature with some alteration. M.N. Srinivas and A.M. Shah who criticized these conventional ideas and said that 'the incredibly bad roads, the heavy monsoon, the growing of food crops and vegetables, the existence of barter and the powerful sense of membership of the village community have all given students an illusion of self-sufficiency and of isolation' (Srinivas 1960). Andre Beteille in his Sripuram studies said 'at least as for

back in time as living memory went, there was no reason to believe that the village was fully self-sufficient in the economic spare' (Beteille 1996).

Charles Metcalfe's statement 'Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution; Hindoo, Pathan, Moghul, Mahratta, Sikh and English are all masters in turn, but the village communities remain the same' (as in Srinivas) is outdated. Surinder S Jodhka criticized the content of village picture which recorded in early rural studies and said that 'the early village picture was derived from dominant "Book view" which borrowed from classical Hindu scriptures by Indologists (Jodhka 2005). 'The village in India, where life was once portrayed as 'unchanging' and 'idyllic', has in recent decades seen profound changes' (Gupta 2005). Today's Indian villages are not 'Little Republics' in reality. From agricultural seeds, fertilizers, machinery to the agriculture markets, from post office to the modern cell phone, from tooth paste, cloth, slipper to the perfume, from medicine, transport, electricity, education to the police station and court, villages are depended on outer world. The scenario of Indian villages is under tremendous change.

When we look at the present Indian rural scenario, villages have crossed all these illusionary borders and they are in the next level i.e. 'Migrating Villages'. An interesting new cycle is, outer world is entering into the Indian villages and making remarkable changes in country side in one hand. On the other hand, villagers are suffering from lack of livelihood opportunities and basic amenities and moving from villages in search of livelihood and better amenities. The 'village economy itself lost it's sustain power'. Agriculture is not reliable area today; country's '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' and the present 'agrarian economy is forcing people to look elsewhere for both livelihood and respect' (Gupta 2005).

'The cities are not only draining the villages of their wealth but talent also' (Gandhi 1946). Rural-urban migration is considered as a serious problem today. In one hand, the outer world is entering into the isolated Indian villages; on the other hand, villagers are turning their face towards outer world due to lack of livelihood opportunities in villages. Statistics indicates that during the last 50 years rural

population has decreased from 82.0 to 68.9 percent and approximately two million people are shifting from rural to urban area annually. Lack of livelihood opportunities and amenities are the major force behind this rapid migration. Dignity is the major cause when it comes to lower caste migration. This research conducted in eight selected villages of Ramanagara district of Karnataka state located in southern part of India to understand the change and crisis of rural area. This study is also intended to find out the sustainable livelihood opportunities in rural area.

II. TRANSFORMING RURAL LIFE

Dear fellow researchers, there is no evidence to claim that today's Indian villages are 'Self Sufficient'. Today they are neither 'Little Republics' nor 'Isolated'. Indian rural scenario is transforming and the rate of change is increased in modern days. Rural connectivity such as transportation and communication technology is increasing. Transportation connectivity enabled village people to walk out and outsiders to walk into the villages easily. Urban centered mass media is reaching even the remote villages of the country. Multiple language television channels of different states and countries are reaching the Indian villages. Central and state government policies and programmes are touching the borders of Indian villages. With the introduction of modern trade policies, products of different countries are entering into the Indian villages and Indian villages are emerged as the marketing hub for both urban and foreign products. India is a populous country and the higher proportion of the population is in rural area. The money makers of foreign and Indian urban entrepreneurs are looking at the village people in terms of profit and modern democracy enabled new class of politicians in the recent decades are looking at the village people in terms of vote bank.

The lifestyle of village people is transforming. The change was less in Indian villages for the long period of time; it may be due to lack of connectivity with the outer world. Urban way of life is replicating in Indian villages. Rural people are imitating the urban people in terms of food, dress, linguistic and entertainment etc. Various T.V. channels are introducing new varieties of dishes to the rural women. In recent days the dress pattern of rural and urban youth is almost similar. The indigenous entertainment means such as folk songs, folk dance, drama and

storytelling are disappearing in Indian villages. Television is a predominant entertainment tool in Indian villages. Various kinds of rural games are replacing by mobile games. Home and its interior decoration in villages is also the replica of urban houses. LPG is replacing firewood, aluminum, steel and plastic vessels are almost replaced the mud vessels. Refrigerator, bicycle, mobile phone, motorbike, varieties of car and auto rickshaw are not unknown elements to the rural people today and they are part of their life indeed. Not just the literacy is increasing in rural India but also the craziness of English medium and private education. People interest is more about private school than the government school. The tendency of technical education is also increasing in Indian villages.

Money plays a significant role in current Indian villages. The rural life today is money centered. The other forms of traditional exchange systems are almost replaced by money. Lifestyle of ruralites is changing and the needs of rural people are increasing. Villages are not even in the position to produce according to the requirement of its own community. Except some food products, villages are depended on the urban shops for their day to day consumable products. Input cost of agriculture is increasing and villagers are turning the face towards commercial crops. Expenses such as education, medical treatment, recreation etc are increasing. The demands of villagers are extend from cosmetics to tobacco and alcohol. The addiction of alcohol and tobacco is increasing without any discrimination of age and gender in villages. The tendency of gambling is also increasing in villages. Social norms are losing the threads in villages.

Joint families are almost converted into nuclear family. With the increase in population, the number of households is increasing and the proportion of land is decreasing. The role of women is transforming in rural households. The role of women is not just restricted to take care of family, but also extends to take care of financial issues, part of decision making and there are instances where the women is heading the family. Villagers are giving importance for the female literacy too. The importance of female literacy is not only restricted to learn the day to day needs but also extend to get a job and also to get a good bridegroom. Money centered rural economy is forcing both the gender to work to meet the increasing expenses. With the

affect of various women centered government programmes, the financial freedom of women is increasing in villages.

Marriage is getting a modern touch in villages and the expense on marriage ceremony is increasing. Villagers are seeking outsiders support to handle the marriage ceremony. Marriage ceremonies which use to conduct in holy places of the village are shifting to urban conventional hall. In one hand the demand for dowry is decreasing due to the scarcity of brides, on the other hand dowry rate is voluntarily increasing from bride side to get an educated, employed and urban settled bridegroom. Grooms who are settled in villages are struggling to get the brides. Even today majority of villagers are rejecting the inter-religion and inter-caste marriage but love marriage within the caste is not a taboo today. The sale of land is increasing in villages and luxury marriage ceremony, increased medical expense, gambling and addiction of alcohol are the major reasons behind it. The willingness to purchase the agricultural land is increasing among urban people.

Though the value of kinship exists in villages, quarrel within the kin group is increasing for various reasons and division of property is the major reason. Villagers today prefer to have marriage tie outside the kin group and they are well aware of the disadvantages of marriage within the kin group. The frequent communication of kin group is decreasing due to changing lifestyle in village but the technology is somehow minimizing the gap.

With some alterations, the consciousness of caste is still exists in villages. Political party is emerging as a parallel opponent to caste and village community is dividing on the basis of political party. Newly elected political leaders have major priority in villages than the traditional leaders. The introduction of democratic political party system is a major threat for village unity. Though village panchayath exists, it is losing the hold; the numbers of cases which are filing in police station are increasing. Both bribe rate of political leaders to attract the villagers and bribe rate of villagers to the political leaders to get the sanction for various government programmes are increasing.

III. RURAL NON - SUSTAINABILITY

Indian villages which protected its community from thousands of years have lost their sustainability. In India, nearly two millions of people are migrating from rural to urban area annually. 'Self sufficient' villages reached the stage of 'Migrating Villages'. Agriculture, the major source of livelihood in village is under fluctuation. Population is increasing in villages, technology is minimizing the usage of human resource in agriculture, modern agriculture is replaced the organic agriculture, modern agriculture demands more input cost, in most of the cases input cost is more than output cost, even today Indian agriculture in a game with monsoon and extension of irrigation facility to agricultural land is not up to the mark.

Rural life is transformed into money oriented economy but the possibility to earn money in village territory is very less. The expense in rural life is increasing but not the income. The traditional crops are not profitable and commercial crops are expensive. Not only monsoon is unguaranteed, but also there is no guaranteed price for agricultural products. The cottage industries are almost vanished in villages. The changing rural life is forcing the villagers to earn money. But the opportunities to earn money are not according to the increasing demand. The increasing tendency of non-sustainability is pushing villagers from the village.

IV. POSSIBILITIES TO ENHANCE THE RURAL LIVELIHOOD

Even after series of fluctuation in rural life, still there are possibilities to enhance the livelihood opportunities in villages. The demand for organic agricultural products is increasing from urban area and also from abroad. But the farmers are adjusted with modern agricultural system which is more of investment based. Investment on agriculture is increasing day by day but there is no assured profit. Indian population and geographical characteristics suits to switch over to the organic agricultural system. We cannot expect the sudden shift, but it is possible gradually. Country's modern agricultural products are defeated in global market but organic agricultural products can encash the trend of globalization.

Villagers are expressing the interest to have small scale industries in the villages. Instead of just restricting to the production of primary agricultural products, there are possibilities to produce hundreds of agricultural byproducts which have greater demand than the primary agricultural products in the market. User friendly

and affordable technology has to reach the doorstep of villagers and market connectivity has to be established to kick start this initiative.

The pleasant urban life is converted into stressed life in India. Expenses are increasing in urban area and urbanites are working round the clock to meet the increasing expenses. Air, water, soil, sound and food are polluted and diseases are following the pollution. The polluted and stressed life is forcing the urbanites to move away from the urban area. Interest to visit the village, visit to the rural tourist spots, enjoy the folk culture, taste the village food, participate in cultivation process, spend time with farmers and village children are increasing among the urbanites. Even the urbanites are expressing their willingness to stay in villages during the holidays. The increasing tendency of rural visit can be beneficial to the villagers in many ways.

There are possibilities to create 'rural centric market system' where urban consumers can buy the products directly from the villagers. By enabling the rural centric market system, we can deactivate the middle man who is proletarianizing both farmers and urban consumers. If the rural centric market system comes into place, the value of products which are available in the villages gets increases and urban consumers can buy the required products in very less cost compare to the urban market. Demand and supply curves are not working properly in India. If urban people reach the villages, villagers can have the first hand information about demand and urbanites can get to know the availability of products which are available in the villages.

Today the numbers of diseases are increasing with the change in lifestyle, medical facilities are also increasing but the modern medical system is not affordable to a common man. People are also realizing that modern medical system has side effects. India had its own medical system and people were sustained with such medical system from thousands of years. The root of Indian medical system is in villages, which is affordable to a common man and nature friendly. But today Indian medical system is in danger; interestingly people are realizing the importance of Indian medical system. It's not too late to rejuvenate the indigenous medical system which is rooted in villages. The rejuvenation of indigenous medical system can also enhance the livelihood in villages.

Farming is not a noblest profession today and the interest on agriculture is decreasing in villages. The carrier choice is shifting from agriculture to salaried job

and own business in villages. In India farming is not a profession in the real sense. A teacher who is expected to teach, a scientist who is expected to invent, an engineer who is expected to plan and a doctor who is expected to protect the life etc are all considered as professionals. But, a group of people who are involved in production of food, the basic need of human race have no professional standards. Poverty, illiteracy, unhygienic and poor physic are the common characteristics of farming community. Neither 'sympathy' nor 'curtsey' can uplift the farmers. Attitude of proud, standard and dignified life can make the farming as a profession. Farmers have the abundant knowledge towards the practical cultivation process and millions of children in urban area are growing without the basic knowledge of food production. There are possibilities to bring the urban children to the farm land and farmers can teach the practical cultivation process to the urban children. Even urbanites of all age group are showing the interest to learn as well as participate in cultivation process.

Possibilities are kept open to start farm shops in each village to meet the demand of urbanites. Urbanites are also expecting to have organic stores in their area. There are possibilities to make use of technology to boost the rural market. Urbanites are interested to participate in village festivals and villagers have no objections. Urban people are expecting to have frequent fairs to buy village products and they are also showing the interest to help the farmers to market their products in urban area. There are hundreds of things which fit to acquire patents and Geographical Indicators (GI) in Indian villages.

The literacy rate is increasing in the villages and a new class of educated youngsters is emerging. The connection of basic amenities such as water, transport, electricity and communication networks are increasing in the villages. There are comfortable possibilities to extend industry and service sector to the rural India. In one hand, the extension enhances the livelihood opportunities to the rural people and on the other hand, it decreases the problems of urban area.

V. CONCLUSION

The study conducted in eight selected villages of Ramanagara district of Karnataka state located in southern part of India revealed the changing aspects of rural scenario. The social institutions are transforming and the rural community is

welcoming the change. The consumption pattern of rural community is under rapid change and rural consumable products which are there in the basket of 'consumption' are increasing day by day. In one hand, the expenditure in rural life is increasing and on the other hand, agriculture, the main source of rural livelihood is in crisis. Due to scarcity of livelihood opportunity and good amenities in rural area, rural community is migrating to urban area. This study explored the various possibilities to create sustainable livelihood opportunities in rural area.

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