

SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF RURAL INDIA- AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

India lives in villages' said Mahatma Gandhi, many years ago. Today, Socio – political point of view India has been divided into two parts - one is Urban and another is Rural India (Bharat). I have attempt state the socio-economic conditions of rural India- an overview, which have 833.0 million people out of 1210 million total population of India. The Rural India lives in 640867 villages as per Census 2011. I have also highlighted the difficulties of agrarian population, social and gender discrimination, poverty and other indicators of development in this paper.

Keywords:Rural India;Agriculture;Stress;Discrimination;Literacy;Poverty;

1. Introduction:

India is an emerging economic superpower. The huge demographic dividend, the high quality engineering and management talent, the powerful Indian diaspora and the emerging Indian transnational – knelling the optimism. In contrast, there is another profile of India. This is the country with the largest number of poor, illiterate and unemployed people in the world [8].

Rural India depends upon agriculture for everything. But most of the farmers still rely on primitive methods of agriculture. With this the annual produce is often very little. Moreover agriculture sector in India is still underdeveloped to provide enough jobs. Faulty supply chain and mismanagement causes the farmers to suffer the most. People at the top of the supply chain earn the maximum benefit of the farmer's hard work. But it should be another way round to

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uplift the rural India and to eradicate rural poverty[6].The area of special concern to us in India, where agriculture is the predominant source of the livelihoods are unfavorable changes in mean temperature, excess or deficit in rainfall etc [14].From Wembley stadium, London our PM stated that ‘India lives in Alwar’s Imran Khan’. The fact is that Imran Khan belongs to ‘Meo’ community, living in ‘Khareda’ a village of Alwar district, which is a part of Rural India. Imran Khan has developed 52 educational mobile apps and donated to the Nation free of cost. Although this is a signal of change in rural India but not yet sufficient [7].

2. Methodology:

This study is based on secondary data. The data was collected by various published sources like census Report, Economic Survey, HDR Report, Magazines, Journals, News papers, Thesis, Review articles etc.

3.Results and Discussion :

The geographical area of India is 3287263 sq. km. and the total land area is 2973190 sq. km. of which 70% comes under rural area. According to the census 2011, India consists of 640867 villages or rural units. It has only 7935 towns and 4041 urban units.

From this table we can see that more than two – third of the population lives in rural India-

Table 1:Population of India

India	Total	Male	Female
Total	1210193422	623724248(51.5%)	586469174(48.5%)
Urban	377105760(31.16%)	51.9%	48.1%
Rural	833087662(68.84%)	51.4%	48.6%

Source : Census of India, 2011

3.1 Growing agricultural stress:

Agriculture sector of Indian Economy is one of the most significant part of India. Agriculture is the only means of living for almost two- third of the employed class in India. As per by the Stated economic data of financial year 2006 – 2007 *agriculture* has required 18% of India’s

GDP. Agriculture also plays a significant role in the development of socio-economic sector in India.

In India there are 179.5 million total rural householders out of which half Rural households at which half of all rural households do not have any land holdings, 37% are marginal farmers, 7% are small farmers, 3% have small to medium sized farms, 2 % have medium - sized farm holdings and 0.1% have large cultivable holdings. Today the agriculture sector is facing serious threats and challenges. Rise in input cost and wages scarcity of labour and unorganized market structure are the main problems of Indian farmers. After 1990s due to flawed agriculture policies, small and marginal farmers have had to rely on agricultural labour opportunities. The ones that remain in are trapped in cycle of debt and low nutrition as can be witnessed from high farmer suicide rate [11].

After the Green Revolution, India reached self-sufficiency in food production but the impact was limited as it focused on regions that were well irrigated and grew two crops, rice and wheat. The benefits were reaped by farmers, who could mobilise the necessary investment in the adoption of the new technology.

For some years, the terms of trade have been in favour of agriculture and the agricultural sector has been better off in terms of its purchasing power of industrial goods, but this trend seems to have peaked according to the Economic Survey. There will, therefore, be a pressure on agricultural incomes and farmers will call for an increase in price support. Agriculture has to grow at 4 per cent to be able to bring sufficient income growth to farmers. From 1981 to 1997, there was an increase in agricultural growth and it averaged at 3.5 per cent but during 1997-2005, there was a decline in agricultural yield to 2 per cent. When crops failed, it led to an increase in farmers' suicides.

Around 14 million farmers have committed suicide in the last 17 years. Although there has also been a decline in per capita land availability, there is a slower reduction in the share of employment in agriculture. It means that productivity of labour has declined [10].

Today, high risk and low profit margin are the twin conditions of Indian agriculture. Current agricultural practices are neither economically nor environmentally sustainable. Rural economy massively relies on agriculture. But farming in India depends upon unpredictable monsoon leading to erratic yield. Hence water shortage, bad weather conditions and reoccurring droughts. The rural economy is becoming stagnate and with this India's overall economy is not growing at a pace with which it should be.

Prof.Regnar Nurkse has laid sufficient emphasis on the improvement of agriculture for a balanced growth of an economy. The development of agriculture provides necessary capital for the development of other sectors like industry, transport and foreign trade. In fact, a balanced development of agriculture and industry is the need of the day.

To increase productivity and employment generation in this sector, there is a need to bring about structural changes, primarily based on land reforms, as support prices and provision of cheap credit do not help beyond a point. Experience has shown that providing the poor with access to land is not anti-growth. In the rural growth strategy, the dynamism of small family farm plays an important role. Here are some facts about the agricultural turnaround made by West Bengal, mainly due to the extensive land reforms measures undertaken by State Government over the last three decades [1].

Given the importance of the agriculture sector, the Government of India, in its Budget 2015–16, planned several steps for the sustainable development of agriculture. The government has already taken steps to address two major factors (soil and water) critical to improve agriculture production. Steps have been taken to improve soil fertility on a sustainable basis through the soil health card scheme and to support the organic farming scheme 'Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana'. Other steps include improved access to irrigation through 'Pradhanmantri Gram Sinchai Yojana'; enhanced water efficiency through 'Per Drop More Crop'; continued support to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the creation of a unified national agriculture market to boost the incomes of farmers [4].

3.2 Poverty:

Poverty is one of the main problems which have attracted attention of sociologists and economists. It indicates a condition in which a person fails to maintain a living standard adequate for his physical and mental efficiency. It is a relative term according to Adam Smith. After coming out of Amartya Sen's thought the concepts of poverty has been shifted in the past two decades.

As per the Eleventh National Development plan of India more than 300 million people in India are poor. With great efforts, India has managed to reduce the number of poor from 55% in 1973 to about 27% (326 million poor) in 2004. According to the recent estimates (2011 – 12), 216.5 million people in rural areas are poor. And still close the one third of the total population in India lives below the poverty line and majority of poor live in villages and rural India. India's the poorest state is Chhattisgarh where 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. 61% of poor population of India lives in seven states i.e. Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Though 30 % of rural population lives in a chronic condition of poverty but in the last three decades some improvement in the number has been seen because of anti – poverty scheme and migration from rural urban areas. Scheduled castes and tribes are the worst sufferers of rural poverty. Recently the planning Commission has also revise the poverty line for rural as well as urban areas. The new poverty line for rural areas is Rs. 27 and for urban areas it is Rs. 30 per day. Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 for Rural India also endorses this poor picture of poverty in rural areas.

3.3.Literacy :

Literacy and level of education are basic Indicators of the level of Socio – economic development achieved by a society. Literacy form an important input in overall development of individuals enabling them to comprehend their social, political and cultural environment better and respond to it appropriately. After starting planning process the Vth five year plan recognized education as a key factor in production.

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment stressed the greater role of Panchayati Raj. 86th amendment to the constitution in 2002 made education as a fundamental right.⁵ From April 1st 2010 the Right to Education Act (RTE – Act) has come into effect. This act gives every child the right to free quality elementary education from aged 6 – 14.

Table 2: Literacy rate

India	Total	Male	Female
Total	74.0%	82.1%	65.5%
Rural	68.9%	78.6%	58.8%
Urban	85.0%	89.7%	79.9%

Source: Census of India, 2011

This table helps us to understand India's education profile. Literacy is an effective tool for empowerment specially of female literacy. In India only 68.9% of rural people are literate. Literacy in urban areas is for better than rural India. Women literacy in rural India is very low. This also contributes to the low development of socio – economic indicators. In spite of several measures taken by both Central and State government, literacy rate remains to be low in Rural India [2].

3.4 Social Discrimination:

Indian society has been traditionally highly hierarchical in nature. The caste system practiced by the Hindu society did not allow social mobility across the classes. Though other religions are supposed to be castless, in the Indian context all religious groups covertly practice caste-based discrimination. Dalits who are outcastes are the worst victims of caste discrimination followed by the adivasis who are outside the caste hierarchy. Our constitution has special provisions to protect the interests of these group which are characterized as scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs). All the affirmative actions in favour of them so far has helped only a small proportion of them [9].

The SCs who account for over 16.66 per cent of the population, remain backward in economic and social development. Mostly landless and asset less being largely agricultural labour in rural areas, their living conditions and access to basic amenities of life are pathetic. As a result, the

incidence of poverty, illiteracy and ill health among the SCs is significantly higher compared to the rest of the population. Though untouchability has been abolished by the Constitution more than 50 yr ago, still they continue to be victims of various forms of discrimination.

According to ‘Crimes in India 2013’ report, National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB), a total of 39408 crimes against SCs were registered across the country by the end of year 2013. It is 17% rise as in the year 2012, a total of 33655 crimes against SCs were registered in the country. NCRB is an agency which works under the Ministry of Home Affairs, and is officially responsible for collecting crime data in India.

Crimes against Scheduled Castes

Top 5 States	2013	2012
Uttar Pradesh	7078	6202
Bihar	6721	4821
Rajasthan	6475	5559
Andhra Pradesh	3270	3057
Madhya Pradesh	2945	2875

Source: NCRB Report, 2013

Like previous years Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state which also has maximum number of SC population, witnessed maximum number of crimes against SCs in the year 2013. Some 7078 crimes against SCs were recorded in UP in 2013. The figure was 6202 in the state in 2012. UP, which is home for more than four crore SC people as per Census 2011, has topped in crimes against SCs since 2005.

Bihar where 1.65 crore SC people reside, witnessed 6721 such crimes, which is second largest in the country. In 2012 some 4821 crimes against SCs were reported in Bihar.

Compared to 2012, crimes against SCs increased in Rajasthan also. In 2012 some 5559 such cases were registered but in 2013 it went up to 6475. Recently in Faridabad District (Hariyana) two children of a dalit family were burned in their home by ‘Dabang’ caste people[5].

The number of rape incidents was highest among all cognizable crimes against SCs in 2013. Out of total 39408 crimes against SCs in 2013, some 2073 rape cases were reported across the country. In 2012 some 1576 rape cases were reported. Maximum number of rape cases reported in Madhya Pradesh. In 2012 and 2013 some 367 and 397 rape cases were registered in MP respectively. The gang-rape and murder of two minor cousin sisters of a Dalit family in Badaun district of Uttar Pradesh on 27 May 2014 had shocked the entire nation. Even the world community including the United Nations had expressed sorrow and dismay at the ghastly incident [16].

Scheduled tribes account for about 8.6 per cent of the population of the country. But their share among the poor and illiterates is more than double their population share. The STs are concentrated in the central and north - eastern parts of the country. Unlike SCs, landlessness is not a major problem for the STs. But most of the land owned by them is of inferior quality and less productive. Another important problem is their isolation from the mainstream on account of geographical location. This is especially true of the north-east where STs are in a majority in several small States.

Most of the mineral wealth of the country is in the tribal belt. Mining and other developmental activities like power and irrigation projects often lead to large scale displacement of tribes from their habitats. Often they are not properly rehabilitated economically, socially and culturally. Indeed, they have been often victims of the development process.

3.5 Gender Discrimination:

In India, females are discriminated in various forms and fields like health, education and job. The girls carry the liability of dowry on their head, many people think so. Many female babies are aborted, abandoned, deliberately neglected and underfed simply because they are girls. Following tables clearly indicate this problem in/of Rural India –

Table 3: Gender Composition of Rural Population

India	2001		2011	
	Population(in m.)	Proportion(in%)	Population(in m.)	Proportion(in%)
Male	381.7	51.4	427.9	51.4

Female	360.9	48.6	405	48.6
Sex Ratio	946		947	

Source: Census of India, 2011

Rural area in the country as a whole there has been an increase by only 1 point from 946 in 2001 to 947 in 2011 Gender Composition of Population (0 – 6) in Rural India.

Table 4 : Gender Composition of Population (0-6) in Rural India

INDIA	2001		2011	
	Population(inm.)	Proportion(in%)	Population(inm.)	Proportion(in%)
Male	65.42	51.7	61.29	52.1
Female	61.07	48.3	56.30	47.9
Sex Ratio	934		919	

Source : census of India, 2011

The sex ratio (0 – 6) in the country in Census 2011 has recorded as the lowest since 1961 Census at 914. In the Rural India the fall is more significant (-15) from 934 in 2001 to 919 in 2011. While most of the major countries have a sex ratio favourable to women, our sex ratio continues to remain in favour of men. Not only that, child sex-ratio has been moving inexorably against the girl child in the recent decades. Of course, this is not a biological phenomenon. It is the result of sex-selective abortions and the blatant violation of PNDT Act, 1994.

4. Conclusion :

As of today, a majority of Indians have been bypassed by the process of economic development either they are able to contribute to the growth process or receive any tangible benefits. How can we make the economic growth inclusive of covering the backward regions, rural areas, the marginalized social classes and the women in India? The theory of ‘trickle down’ has been failed specially in rural India. Inequality is the product of deliberate economic and political policies (HarshMandar). For agriculture improvement, our strategy should be to maximize the production benefits of good monsoon and minimize the adverse impact of climate change [15]. Rural development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. In order to provide the rural people with better prospects for economic

development, increased participation of people in the rural development programmes, decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit are needed.

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