

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR VILLAGES: A CASE STUDY

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Background:

Socio-Economic sustainability of our Indian villages has been a question always. Concentrated and sustained efforts are required to meet the challenges in these villages. Policies won't turn in to results until the local government take initiatives. A case study will be made in this regard to study how the grama panchayat and NGOs can work for the socio-economic sustainability of the villages.

Objectives: To evaluate the effectiveness of the govt programs and NGO efforts in uplifting the villagers.

Methodology: A descriptive study will be conducted by selecting 50 villagers from Vanalli village of Karwar district, Karnataka. A pre-tested, semi structured questionnaire will be administered and data will be analyzed by using percentages and tables.

Conclusion: It is evident that a large number of Indian poor resides in the villages and are socio-economically backward. That means the government policies are either not being properly implemented in these villages or the villagers are not utilizing the schemes properly. In this case it becomes necessary to create awareness among the villagers.

Key words: policies, villagers, socio-economic sustainability, NGO, local government

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Introduction

India lives in its villages-mahatma Gandhi. Means the majority of Indian people live in villages. But due to the effect of modernization and urbanization people are heading towards cities in search of their livelihood and for better career prospectus. And regrettably, the condition of Indian villages are also not good. This is another reason why youths are moving to cities. Villages are lacking all kinds of facilities. They don't have good roads. There are few good doctors and hospitals. There are insufficient facilities for educating the masses. Majority of people in villages are illiterate and ignorant. They don't know the importance of cleanliness. They indulge in non-productive activities. The villages are normally surrounded by social problems. If the economic backwardness causes social problems, social problems also causes economic backwardness. These two are inter-related. Various factors like literacy, female education, nutritional standards, infant mortality, morbidity, employment, income distribution, public distribution system and political commitments influence the development of villages to a large extent.

Review of literature

Mahatma Gandhi has dreamed of grama swaraj. He emphasized the need of up-lifting the villages for the better nation. In his words, "I would say that if the village perishes India will perish too. India will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others".

Nandan Nilekani(2012) after doing an in-depth study of Indian villages finds out that the villagers are blaming the Government for not developing their villages. It is the same scenario in almost all the villages. He further writes that, why do they expect someone else to do things for them? I don't think that when any villager would like to do something for himself, neither the government nor the private is required to make him do. The villagers can survive only a short time on charity done by anyone but can stand only by the virtue of its own commitment and dedication.

It is easy to blame the government or private for not doing anything. But who runs both these entities. It is the general public and nothing else. If the government is not doing anything, it is just because of the fact that no matter what we do, the public will forget and vote for them at the cost of a liquor! Schemes don't fail because they are not implemented. They fail because the people have over the ages accepted that they are slaves. They just need alms and not their self respect as a citizen of India.

No nation has been developed because of the virtue of its government. It is developed by virtue of its citizens. They make the government not vice versa. If government could do anything then the social values would have changed. People practice female feticide. It is because the government says that people do it? If they can do such things, then why depend on improving one's own life on others.

It's a sad state of this country. This country doesn't lack anything. It is not the population, poverty, unemployment which is hindering the progress of the country. But it is just the right attitude lacking in people which makes it difficult for this country to progress. When this changes, everything will automatically take course and lead this country to the state where no one can conquer it. Without the attitude, whatever we do would collapse forever.

According to Dinesh Saraf (2013), If we want to improve our nation, we shall have to improve the condition of our villages. The root cause of all the troubles and poverty of the villagers is lack of education. For want of education they cannot think beyond their old ideas. They cannot walk with time. They waste much of their time. They cannot imagine of any different occupations. They fail to realize the value of self-help and co-operation. The principal means of livelihood of the villagers in agriculture. We have to train them in improved methods of agriculture. Arrangements have to be made to train them in handicrafts and other small industries. This will keep them employed in spare time and in off-season. This will be a source of additional income for them.

To deal with the problems of the villages in India, start night schools should be established there. In night schools grown-up men and women will have to be educated. They will be taught to read and write. The work of cleaning the villages also needs attention. There should be a library and a hospital in each village. The villagers can start a library and a hospital by raising subscriptions

among themselves. Good roads are also essential for the give a lift to the village economy. There must be adequate arrangement of drinking water in every village around distant corners of India.

Nandan Nilekani in his article of Rural Economy, Khadi and Handlooms mentions that, One of the greatest challenges for Gandhi was to rope in every strata of the Indian society into his ideals of economic self sufficiency. Gandhi understood that the very backbone of India was its villages. Unless the village economy could be reformed, nothing could be achieved on the economic front. In his bid to resurrect the rural economy of India, Gandhi started to advocate the use of handmade tools to plough lands. He did not endorse huge farm holdings with modern agricultural machines. Such holdings, he thought, would naturally bring in discrimination where one would reap the benefits of the toil put in by someone else. Gandhi's more revolutionary concept that gathered great popularity throughout the nation was his defense for the cause of handicrafts and handlooms. It was a pointed attack against the mill-made textiles introduced by the British authorities and was an important part of their economic interests in India. Gandhi gave the call to all Indians to desist from the use of all foreign products and for everyone to spin his or her own clothes. The 'charakha' or the spinning wheel and the khadi, or the homespun coarse cloth became the very symbol of nationalism and a sign for the support for national economy. Gandhi made it compulsory for all satyagrahis to use khadi clothes. It was an important economic statement made by Gandhiji. All forms of rural handicrafts achieved great encouragement from Gandhi.

Objectives

- To study the socio-economic problems villagers are facing.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the govt programs and NGO efforts in uplifting the villagers.

Methodology

A descriptive study was conducted by selecting 50 villagers from Vanalli village of Karwar district, Karnataka. Random sampling was used for the selection of the respondents. Both male and female population was covered to respond to the questionnaire. A pre-tested, semi structured questionnaire was administered and data was analyzed by using percentages and tables. Focused group discussion was also held to understand the situation better.

Village scenario

Vanalli is around 20km away from the city. 95% of the population here is Muslim. Their traditional occupation is fishery as they reside on the banks of the sea. Since the families near the sea shore have indulged in fishery for many years they are identified with a different caste name. Few years back there were no proper transport facilities. But now it has been improved up to certain level. Villagers find little convenience to commute to the city. Unlike any other village Vanalli has is also deprived of many facilities like school, hospital, water problem, marketing facilities an so on. But the local government has made its sincere efforts to provide the services to the village. Hence the majority of the population is Muslim in the village Urdu school has been opened. Weekly twice water is been supplied to the villagers. Because the transport facilities are improved it becomes easier for the villagers for health care needs.

These are the general problems we find in village. But when we start peeping inside we find a lot. The village is still lagging behind in the matter of women empowerment. One side female education is not supported and the other side men are not showing any interest in education. Early marriages for women still exists in this village. Economic backwardness is another problem in Vannalli. Anyhow the researcher tried to study the socio-economic problems of the village. The village consists of 557 families consisting 823 female and 806 male population. Lets go through one by one.

Major Findings

Table 1. General information of the study population (N=50)

a) Age (yrs)	Frequency	%
20-30	12	24%
31-40	24	48%
41-50	10	20%
50 & <	4	8%
b) Sex		
Male	25	50%
Female	25	50%

Above table indicates the age group of the respondents. Majority (48%) of the respondents were covered from the age group of 31-40. And very few respondents(8%) were from the above 50 age group. To collect data from different angles this kind of age group was selected. Since it was

random sampling uniformity could not be maintained. Sex-wise uniformity was maintained. Both male female respondents were selected equally.

Table 2. Education

a)Female Education	Frequency	%
Illiterate	5	10%
Primary	17	34%
High School	3	6%
College	0	0%
b)Male Education		
Illiterate	7	14%
Primary	18	36%
High School	0	0%
College	0	0%

Table No. 2 depicts the educational status of the respondents. Among both male and female majority of the respondents (36% & 34% respectively) have studied up to primary level. None of the respondents have gone to college for higher education. The percentage is nill among male respondents those who have gone to high school. And total 24% of the respondents are totally illiterate. Which means the educational status of the respondents is very poor. Infact education is not given priority in this community.

Table 3. Economic status (N=50)

a)Income level	Frequency	%
>2000	7	14%
2000-5000	32	64%
5000-10000	11	22%
10000<	0	0%

b)Occupational details

Variable	Female	%	Male	%
Agriculture	0	0%	0	0%
Fishery	6	12%	16	32%

Business	2	4%	11	22%
Job (pvt/govt)	5	10%	3	6%
Unemployed	1	2%	6	12%
Total	14	28%	36	72%

c) Having bank account

	Frequency	%
Yes	19	38%
No	31	62%

d) Reason for many people shifting from traditional fishery work (N=28)

Financial problem	11	22%
Marketing problem	3	6%
Better opportunities	6	12%
No interest	0	0%
No career in that	8	16%

e) No. of respondents having own motorized boat (N=22)

Own	7	14%
Coolie	9	18%
Selling fish	6	12%

f) No. of respondents got support from government for fishery (N=22)

Yes	0	0%
No	22	44%

g) Awareness about schemes to improve fishery

Yes	0	0%
No	50	100%

Table no. 4 is about the economic background and status of the respondents. Through this table we can see that the income level of the respondents is not so good. And majority of the respondents are turning from their traditional occupation to other areas. Hardly total 44% of the respondents have retained their basic occupation. The reason researcher could find out is that the fishermen are facing financial problems. The income they are earning is insufficient. Hardly seven respondents are having their own boat to catch the fish among those who are still in to fisheries. In this regard they are not receiving any support from the government. No NGOs are working in this concern. The villagers are not aware of any schemes in this aspect. No govt

official has visited to their village to address their problems. Motorized boats cost heavy price and ordinary fisherman can not afford. And they go for collie work in others boat to catch fish. With the limited money they earn they have to fill their stomach, hence more than half of the respondents (62%) are not having the bank account. The women have to go door to door to sell the fish or sit in the fish market. If the fish is caught by their husband then the profit is theirs. In other cases fisher women buy fish from boatwala and sell it with minimum profit.

Table 4. Social aspects

a) Age of marriage (N=50)

Variable	Female	%	Male	%
>18	6	12%	0	0%
18-25	19	38%	16	32%
25 & <	0	0%	9	18%
Total	25	50%	25	50%

b) Member of a Self Help group (N=50)

Yes	18	36%
No	32	64%

c) Has it created an identity

Yes	50	100%
No	0	0%

d) Stigma/bias faced by the identity in society

Yes	47	94%
No	3	6%

e) Demand for male child

Yes	45	90%
No	5	10%

The social condition of the respondents is such that they are identified with a different caste name called 'dalji'. Moreover for being fisher community they are looked down. Though they belong to Muslim community, they are pushed to the lower strata in the caste hierarchy. As a result unlike other religion this community also faces stigma. they are not welcomed by the upper caste Muslims.

If we come to other social problems, the marriages happen at very young age especially for girls. Some times after puberty only the preparation for marriage starts. And at young age only they become mothers. Since now a days the occupational trend is changing and the men are opting different occupations, especially moving towards gulf country the demand for giving birth to male child is more. Till the male child enters the family the women have to conceive. Women are not given a good position in the community. Even the number who go for fishery and other work is lessening day by day. As a typical Muslim family women are being made to sit at home. 2-3 NGOs are trying to empower women through Self Help Groups in this area now. The importance of savings is told to these women. The NGOs are even trying to empower the women with different training and awareness programs. But the women are not ready for it yet. Women have joined SHG only for savings and loan purpose. They are not attending any training programs.

Suggestions

- Financial aids should be provided by the government to carry ahead the traditional occupation and to help the fisher community.
- Loans should be available on subsidized rates for the improvement of their work and the community should be made aware of this.
- NGOs have to put little more effort to empower women folk.
- NGOs should provide skill development training to the young generation of the community.
- Community should made aware of the current laws existing ex: age of marriage etc.

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