

A STUDY OF BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract

Rural areas and rural development are not novice concepts. These concepts have been prevalent within the country since ancient times. The social, economic, political, and cultural spheres are the ones that need to be taken into consideration, when the concept of rural development is researched upon. The crucial aspects are, policies and programs need to be put into operation to alleviate the problems and challenges that are experienced by rural individuals. The various problems and challenges prove to be impediments within the course of their progression. It is essential to understand how the development of rural communities takes place in ancient times and in pre and post-independence periods. The main areas that have been taken into account include emergence of rural development, rural development in the pre-independence period, rural development in the post-independence period, Mahatma Gandhi and rural development, significance of rural development concepts and policies and evaluation of rural development policies and programs.

Keywords: Evaluation, Policies, Programs, Rural Development.

Introduction

The development of rural areas in India is regarded to be a significant aspect in both economic and social spheres. In 1901, there were 212.6 million individuals living within rural communities. Whereas, in 2001, the rural population increased to 721.17 million. This depicted the increase in the density of the population. Furthermore, there was a decline in the land under agriculture. Rural development is a complicated area, despite the advancements taking place in technology and the availability of resources. Rural development has a long history in India. There are various approaches, strategies and philosophies, policies, programs, enactments, efforts, experiments and methodologies, which need to be studied and analyzed Background of Rural Development in India. This concept is not novice, particularly within the developing countries. The reason being, many developing countries have been practicing and promoting rural development for decades. Most of them have achieved success in the fields of education, health care, family welfare, poverty eradication, generation of self-employment, farm management and production, rural technologies and so forth.

The background of any activity or program provides its genesis, which may direct the authorities for the effective implementation in future. Many programs of rural development were put into operation with the main purpose of bringing about development of rural communities. It has been unfortunate to find out that most of them were not successful. This has been the result of ineffective and inappropriate implementation. These programs could not make provision of complete benefits to the society. Therefore, the changing theme

of rural development and the associated schemes, which have been implemented by the central government for the up-gradation of socio-economic conditions of the individuals, need to be implemented in an appropriate manner. In order to enhance socio-economic conditions of the individuals, it is vital to eradicate poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, improvements need to be brought about in the system of education and employment opportunities.

Emergence of Rural Development

In India, as well as in other developing countries, when emphasis is put upon the concept of development, then the development of rural areas is given utmost attention. There were misinterpretations in the aggregate figures, in terms of the practice of identifying growth and development. Economic growth had only the selective impact, which benefitted the relatively developed areas and the moderately better-off individuals. The theory of growth has not been able to generate the desired outcomes. If development is not only viewed as economic growth, then the development of employment opportunities and measures were needed to accomplish the desired objectives. Development should cover the larger dimensions of the overall livelihoods opportunities of the vast majority of individuals. The realization that the traditional methods of agriculture within the developing countries could be transformed through modern technology and innovative farming practices. These were regarded as other aspects on rethinking on development. A major consequence of all these facts on the development experience is the current concern on rural development. It occupied the central space in the development dialogue on the World Bank, which is regarded as the supporter of the cause.

Rural Development in the Pre-Independence Period

Rural development has never been a new concept within the country. It has acquired significance and is interwoven in the heritage of the country. When history of mankind began, since then, the concept of rural development has acquired prominence. In the famous epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, rural communities are observed. Since then, the rulers and the administrators are paying adequate attention towards enabling the rural individuals to sustain their living conditions in a well-organized manner. Furthermore, attention was paid towards areas such as, education, employment opportunities, agriculture and farming practices, administration, health care and medical and so forth. Before the country achieved its independence, rural development within the country can be analyzed under the influence of the British Empire. During the British rule, they did not have a major concern towards socio-economic development of the country. As a consequence, rural communities experienced deterioration and backwardness. The primary concern of the administration was the maintenance of law and order and the collection of revenue. Thus, fulfillment of the colonial interests was the primary objective and rural development was regarded as secondary. It was the famine of 1899, which compelled the British government to take into consideration the rural individuals, as they were undergoing detrimental effects.

The recurrent famines compelled the state administrators to seize the food grains and distribute them among the individuals and communities, who have been effected by famine. This task was implemented without any apparent legal sanction, motivated as the action was by the determination to control profiteering and alleviate

unfavorable effects. There was removal of the barter system. The traditional barter system received a set-back, during the British period. Cash economy was introduced by the British, which enabled the farmers to adopt commercial crops. In this way, agricultural subsistence gave rise to commercial crops. Several measures were adopted to combat agricultural crisis, such as, provision of irrigation facilities, co-operative societies and so forth. In addition, efforts were made by voluntary organizations. The various programs initiated have been stated as follows;

Gandhian Constructive Program Sewagram

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had the main aim to see the rural areas of the country as, self-contained and self-sufficient. The problem of the rural individuals, which he was aware of was to completely eradicate those problems without any kind of interference from the outside agencies. He wanted to make provision of solutions to those problems with the help of local individuals and local resources. Therefore, for the betterment of the individuals, he formulated 18 programs. These include the promotion of village industries, basic and adult education in terms of rural sanitation, upliftment of backward tribes, women and underprivileged sections of the society, education in public health and hygiene, propagation of the natural language, organization of labour unions, students and so forth. In addition, special attention was paid upon crafts, traditional oil press, leather works and grain processing. Gandhian rural work activities were based upon the principles of truth and non-violence. His ideas and perspectives in terms of rural reconstruction were adopted officially and resulted in the adoption of khadi and village industries program, the principle of village self-sufficiency and faith in the panchayati raj and Sahakari Samaj Movement.

Rural Development in the Post-Independence Period

In the post-independence era, adequate consideration was given to the development of rural areas. This has taken place in an effective manner, through the initiation of programs and schemes. The country adopted the planned development. The first five year plan put emphasis upon the development of the agricultural sector. It formulated number of measures to bring more land under irrigation. Major irrigation dams, such as the BakhraNangal Dam, Hirakud, Nagarjunasagar and Tungabhadra were constructed, which generated power for augmenting industrialization within the country and water for irrigation. As a result of the construction of these dams, the Indian farmers were not exclusively dependent upon the monsoon season.

Plan Period Rural Development Programs

The rural developments of programs in accordance to the plan period have been stated as follows: First Five Year Plan-Community Development Program (1952) and National Extension Service (1953).

- Second Five Year Plan- Khadi and Village Industries Program (1957), Village Housing Project Scheme (1957), Multi-purpose Tribal Development Blocks Programme (1959), Package Programme (1960) and Intensive Agricultural District Programme (1960).
- Third Five Year Plan- Applied Nutrition Programme (1962), Rural Industries Project (1962), Intensive Agriculture Area Programme (1964) and High Yielding Variety Programme (1966).

- Annual Plan, 1967- Farmer's Training and Education Programme (1966).
- Annual Plan, 1968- Well-Construction Programme (1966), Rural Work Programme (RWP) (1967), Tribal Development Block (1968).
- Annual Plan, 1968- Rural Manpower Programme (1969), Composite Program for women and Pre-School Children (1969).
- Fourth Five Year Plan- Drought Prone Area Programme (1970), Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (1971), Small Farmer Development Agency (1971), Tribal Area Development Programme (1972) Pilot Projects for Tribal Development (1972), Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (1972), Minimum Needs Programme (1972) and Command Area Development Programme (1974).
- Fifth Five Year Plan- Hill Area Development Programme (1975), Special Livestock Production Programme (1975), Food for Work Programme (1977), Desert Development Programme (1977), Whole Village Development Programme (1979), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (1979), and Integrated Rural Development Programme (1979).
- Sixth Five Year Plan- National Rural Employment Programme (1980), Prime Minister's New 20-Points Programme (1980), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (1983) (RLEGP) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (1983).
- Seventh Five Year Plan- Integrated Rural Energy Planning Program (1985) and Special Livestock Breeding Program (1986).
- Eighth Five Year Plan- JawaharRozgarYojana (1989), Prime Minister's RozgarYojana (PMRY) (1993) and Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) (1993).
- Ninth Five Year Plan- Basic Minimum Service (BMS) (1996), Swamjayanti Gram SwarozgarYojana (SGSY) (1998), Jawahar Gram SamridhiYojana (JGSY) (1998), Swajaldhara (Rural Sanitation & Drinking Water) (2002).

Mahatma Gandhi and Rural Development

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the father of Indian nation has rendered a significant contribution in leading to progression of rural communities. The main areas that have been taken into consideration have been stated as follows:

Sarvodaya: One of the ideal concepts of Mahatma Gandhi is sarvodaya. Gandhi believed in putting into practice the traits of truth and non-violence in promoting social welfare. The methods and strategies that were put into practice by Gandhi were different from the other leaders and social reformers. Individual was regarded as the major constituent of the society. He believed that well-being of the individuals is regarded as an essential area towards promoting well-being of the society. Social welfare meant the conscious submission of the individuals and the voluntary contribution to ones possession within the society. For the effective development of the individuals and the society, the principles of truth and non-violence are regarded to be of utmost significance.

All-round Village Service-Gandhi was of the viewpoint that India lives in 700,000 villages. If the Indian civilization is to make its complete contribution to the building up of the stable world order, then it has to ensure that there is generation of awareness among the rural individuals to live their lives adequately. These areas include cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation, alleviating various forms of pollution and preservation of the environment. Water is regarded as the basic necessity of the individuals, hence, rural individuals need to ensure that they keep the water bodies free from pollution. One of the vital areas is, waste materials should not be thrown into them. On the other hand, preservation of the environment is carried out by rural individuals by planting more trees and keeping the natural environmental conditions clean.

SamagraGramseva: The approaches and strategies formulated by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, in terms of rural development gets reflected in the initiative of samagramseva. According to him, samagramseva must know everybody living in the village and render him such service as he can. This does not mean that the workers will be able to carry out various tasks and activities by themselves. Through this scheme, ways will be shown to the workers of helping themselves and procure for them, such help and materials as they will require. He would also provide training to his own helpers and win over the villages that he will seek and follow his guidance.

Significance of Rural Development Concepts and Policies

The rural community development program in India had a quite sartorial approach. Its major objectives were to bring about improvements in food production at the local level and provide help and support to the individuals to bring about their own developments. The program encouraged the basic association as a basic tool to achieve the joint generating wealth and awakening of the rural population to participate in the changing processes. These are not only economic, but also institutional and political. During the last years of the colonial era, there had already been attempts to perform training and organizational activities for the development of rural communities. The individuals, organizations and agencies need to work in co-operation and integration to bring about improvements in the system of education in rural areas (Calatrava, 2019).

The policies and programs were initiated by the Government of India. Modernization of agriculture was regarded as one of the important aspects of rural communities. The men and women, are mostly employed in the agricultural sector. The ideas and strategies that were put into operation in the agricultural sector need to be improved. Though improvements are coming about and there have been establishment of training centers as well. The agricultural laborers and farmers are getting enrolled in training centers with the purpose of generating awareness in terms of modern and innovative methods and strategies that are necessary to enhance production. Research has indicated that wealthy farmers are able to make use of these strategies and methods. But small farmers, who do not possess adequate resources and struggle to make ends meet, still make use of traditional methods and strategies.

Evaluation of Rural Development Policies and Programs

Critical appraisals of various welfare programs and projects have revealed various types of constraints and limitations in the process of implementation. Comprehensive studies of various programs have been conducted in various blocks across the country and there have been various constraints found in relation to IRDP (1980-1981 to 1983). It needs improvement, such as proper identification of the beneficiaries need to be there, elimination of scarcities in the infrastructure facilities that is involved in administration, involvements of people's representatives, and initiation of activities in support of the IRDP beneficiaries and requirement of detailed evaluation. The review of various programs and projects that put emphasis upon rural development have been conducted by various authors, researchers and reviewers.

The major problems that were identified were, there was lack of interest in the problems connected with rural community, followed by the lack of community feelings and welfare, lack of co-ordination among village schools, village panchayats and village co-operatives, caste, region and religion-based factionalism, lack of village plans, lack of co-ordination from the centre to the block level, multiplicity of responsibilities from the development functionaries, paying low wages to the rural poor and frequent transfer of specialists and other officers, adversely affected the rural development programs. Rural development has become one of the increasing goals of five year plans (Chapter 2, n.d.). But one of the major problems that the country is experiencing is the prevalence of the conditions of poverty. This is one of the major impediments within the course of rural development.

Conclusion

In India, the concept of rural development is turning out to be more complicated, despite of the advancements taking place in technology, the availability of resources and the continued efforts from the pre-independence period. Various programs were initiated to bring about development of rural areas in the pre-independence period. These are, Sriniketan Experiment, The Martandam Experiment, The Gurgaon Experiment, Gandhian Constructive Program Sewagram, Rural Reconstruction Programs in Baroda and The Firka Development Scheme. The three important programs that were formulated with the main aim of rural construction in the post-independence period are, The Etawah Pilot Project, The Nilokheri Experiment, and The Bhoodan Movement. After the country achieved its independence, there were establishment of five year plans, which focused upon rural development. In all five year plans, there were formulation of measures and programs that put emphasis upon development of rural communities.

Another aspect that has been taken into account is Mahatma Gandhi and rural development. The major areas that have been taken into consideration by Gandhi to bring about development of the rural communities are, sarvodaya, village development, all-round village service, samagramseva, arts and crafts, economic reorganization, non-violent economy, food reform, power machinery and panchayat raj. The programs and projects that are initiated to bring about development of rural communities are primarily focused upon enhancement of the agricultural sector, improvements in farming practices, eradication of poverty, backwardness, illiteracy and unemployment, bringing about development of the education system, generating

employment opportunities for rural individuals, promoting health care and medical facilities, improvements in the administrative functions and leadership abilities among the individuals, providing equal opportunities to all and eliminating discriminatory treatment, particularly regarding women and girls. When the individuals will be able to acquire an efficient understanding in terms of the measures and strategies, then development of rural communities would take place in an efficient manner.

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