



Strategies for Rural Development in India

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Abstract: *The rural economy is an integral part of the overall Indian economy. As majority of the poor reside in the rural areas, the prime goal of rural development is to improve the quality of life of the rural people by alleviating poverty through the instrument of self-employment and wage employment programmes, by providing community infrastructure facilities such as drinking water, electricity, road connectivity, health facilities, rural housing and education and promoting decentralization of powers to strengthen the Panchayati raj institutions etc.*

Key words: *Rural economy, wage, employment, policy-makers*

Introduction

The rural development primarily means the development of agriculture. This brings us to the necessity of effecting maximum possible production by application of modern techniques and if necessary by bringing about structural transformation. The former means bringing into use the modern devices like tractor and other mechanized instruments. The latter implies land reforms and ceiling on property and wealth and the distribution of surplus land. The summum bonum of the strategies is the removal of poverty. The State's role assumes importance in devising and implementing the policies necessary for achieving the goal. It has to participate in the production and distribution processes and plan the utilization of its resources. A socialistic function aimed at the welfare of the poor. As such rural development becomes one of the main concerns of the planning strategy. Let us examine the function oriented strategies adopted to accomplish the above task.

Three distinct strategies for rural development may be identified: (i) Initially, in the 1950s, policy-makers

stressed maximisation of economic growth by stepping up investment assuming that the benefits arising out of it would 'trickle down' and diffuse among all sectors of the rural society. But in the 1970s, it was realised that the benefits of agricultural growth did not percolate to the rural poor.

(ii) This gave birth to the second approach led by structural school which suggested distribution of assets through land reforms, community development programmes and cooperative farming. But this also did not work.

(iii) Then came the idea in the 1980s that suggested attack on poverty through rural development programmes, such as IRDP, TRYSEM, NREP, and RLEGP which later on merged in JRY programme. Before analysing these anti-poverty programmes, we shall evaluate the role of Five Year Plans, and 20-Point Programme in poverty alleviation.

Functional and Institutional Strategy

A) *Community Development Programme:* The community development programme was the first and the foremost strategy devised and adopted to improve the economic



conditions of the people in the rural areas, it was indeed a process started in 1952 involving the people with the efforts of the government authorities in the developmental activities. India perhaps was the first country to adopt this strategy as an extension method as she realized that unless the millions of small farmers understood and accepted the objectives and came forward to join hands with government in this endeavour the poverty alleviation programmes could not be accomplished. This programme was launched as trial and error method with the formation of the community Development Blocks as primary units for implementation plans. Though the scheme was a failure, it had good objectives in tis fold such as the removal of illiteracy, eradication of poverty, improving the lot of people, etc. It aimed at creating employment opportunities, encouraging co-operatives, and undertaking public utility services such as laying of roads, digging of wells and canals, construction of tanks and parks etc, Besides it intended to foster the virtues like selfless service, and encourage participative attitudes, initiative and concerted efforts by creating social consciousness among the people. It tried to hand over the modern scientific technology to the people so as to enable them to look after themselves and their needs without depending on help from outside and attempted to provide opportunities for the creation of local leadership. Thus the community Development Programme was revolutionary in thought and evolutionary indeed. It had also a history of sorts.

B) **Panchayat Raj:** As pointed out earlier consequent upon the failure of the community Development Programme the

government of India appointed Balwantory Mehta committee which made some recommendations for making the rural development a reality. The community observed “so long as one did not discover or create representative institutions which would supply the local initiative, supervision and care necessary one would never be able to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field of development”. It advocated a three tier system with panchayat as a basic unit at grass root level, Samithi at the middle level and Zilla Parishad as an apex body at the District level. It recommended that they should be charged with comprehensive duties and functions and equipped with necessary executive machinery and lequat resources.

As such Panchayat Raj institutions with three tier structure were established in the year 1959 by Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan States for the first time in India replacing the District and Taluk Boards existing in those days. These institutions are function oriented with the following responsibilities.

- a) Increasing agricultural production
- b) Development of rural industries
- c) Fostering Co-operative Institutions
- d) Full utilization of human, financial and natural resources
- e) Rendering special services to the weaker sections of the society such as construction of houses, providing financial assistance by way of loans
- f) Encouraging the spirit of self-help.

These institutions are subjected to criticism on various grounds which include official apathy, elitist approach,



illiteracy and ignorance. Their failures are functional due to the prevalence.

- a) Olfeudal oligar by riding roughshod over the poor people.
- b) Aristocratic leadership tending to ignore the public interest
- c) Casteism at the grass root level
- d) Corruption at administrative level

Finally they are keeping low profile on account of financial straits and governmental interference. However they are continuing their existence with minimum functions to discharge and as we are wedded to the principle of democratic decentralization, we won't allow them to die but rather see the living corpse than kill the bodies. Must has to be done to make these bodies healthy and wealthy (much details are provided in the chapter titled Panchayat Raj). Now let us turn to other strategies for rural development.

Panchayat raj and economic development: The theories of development proposing to set in the process of modernization have in their view the economic development for their target in addition to the social change. The economic development is nothing but the growth process to ameliorate the conditions of the poor as stressed by the various economists. It then implies the eradication of ubiquitous poverty and ignorance which is only possible with the help of local organizations at the gross root level. With the strong structure base the local bodies i.e., the panchayat instructions play a significant role in the local planning process by ensuring people's participation. They are also expected to play the role of an elder in guiding the poor innocent towards the goal of reconstruction. Thus they become

responsible for mobilization of local resource.

Panchayat raj and social change : It has been proven many times especially in western countries that economic development is not possible without the non-economic factors (social, cultural and political) which determine the pattern of consumption production and distribution. It is therefore interactive for the panchayat raj to break the tradition bound customs of the people inculcate secular outlook and induce scientific temper to them with the help of the government. It is a known think that power rests by and large with the rich in rural areas. Panchayat raj is an effective process to transfer the power from the affluent to the poor ensuring there by the people's participation. Status orientation can be transformed into ranks orientation which is essential for social change. This brings us nearer to the concept of politician as defened by Dr. Shivaih.

Politicization and Panchayat Raj: Dr.Shivaih in his book rural development in India. Some facets, defines politicization as including of the people into political process. Unless the people are organized the benefits that are meant for them would be pocketed by the undeserving. As Dr.N.H.Sitarama Sarma and Sri Rama Brahmam point out a vigilant organized populace would help in strengthening the delivery system, political will and political performance as a means for effecting any change can be accomplished by panchayat raj institutions which have already provided the downtrodden an opportunity to participate in political process by policy by the government of reservation of scats to them.



Panchayat Raj and Planning :

Decentralized planning is essential for rural development as it takes in to account the local needs and priorities and this is facilitated by the bodies which can vouch for utilization of locally available human and natural resources. As such the first and second five year plans stressed time and again the importance of the rule of the panchayat bodies i.e. the local self-government institutions. The planning commission initiated block plan studies to encourage decentralized planning. The local institution can fill in the gap in implementation of policies and programmes, relating to rural planning taking into account the local needs is based on presumptions

1. The local institutions are capable of assessing the needs of the people correctly
2. The bodies have requisite infrastructure to fulfill their obligations
3. They have resourceful personnel to plan and implement the plans

C) Special programme strategy:

Intensive Agriculture Programme, Package Programme and the New Strategy of Agricultural Development were started in sixties to raise agricultural production. The salient features of the New Strategy are worth mentioning.

- a) Stress on high yielding varieties
- b) Optimum utilization of production in areas with assured irrigation and rainfall through their inputs
- c) Introduction of short duration crops
- d) Effective utilization of the irrigational potential.

Though this strategy led to the growth in agricultural production. The benefits are concerned by big farmers with the result that the poor have become poorer and the rich richer. Now we can understand the additional income occurring on the account of the introduction of new methods and techniques distributed unevenly. The marginal and small farmers are forced to leave their primary occupation as they could not mobilize the required capital. This led to the polarization of the classes, an unhappy trend encouraging the rifts in society. This induced a change in the perspective of the government which consequently adapted another set of developmental schemes with looked clientele oriented.

The rural economy is an integral part of the overall Indian economy. As majority of the poor reside in the rural areas, the prime goal of rural development is to improve the quality of life of the rural people by alleviating poverty through the instrument of self-employment and wage employment programmes, by providing community infrastructure facilities such as drinking water, electricity, road connectivity, health facilities, rural housing and education and promoting decentralization of powers to strengthen the Panchayati raj institutions etc. The various strategies and programs of the Government for rural development are discussed below:

Integrated Rural Development Program

(IRDP): First introduced in 1978-79, IRDP has provided assistance to rural poor in the form of subsidy and bank credit for productive employment opportunities through successive plan periods. Subsequently, Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Supply of



Improved Tool Kits to Rural Artisans (SITRA) and Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) were introduced as sub-programs of IRDP to take care of the specific needs of the rural population.

Wage Employment Programs: Anti-poverty strategies, like assistance to the rural poor families to bring them above the poverty line by ensuring appreciable sustained level of income through the process of social mobilization, training and capacity building. Wage Employment Programs have sought to achieve multiple objectives. They not only provide employment opportunities during lean agricultural seasons but also in times of floods, droughts and other natural calamities. They create rural infrastructure which supports further economic activity. It encompasses Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) etc. NREGA is an act of parliament. It is not merely a scheme or policy. It aims at enhancing the livelihood security of the people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage employment in a financial year, to a rural household whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The objective of the Act is to create durable assets and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor.

Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS): EAS was launched in October 1993 covering 1,778 drought-prone, desert, tribal and hill area blocks. It was later extended to all the blocks in 1997-98. The EAS was designed to provide employment in the form of manual work in the lean agricultural season. The works taken up under the program were expected to lead to the creation of durable

economic and social infrastructure and address the felt-needs of the people.

Food for Work Program: The Food for Work program was started in 2000-01 as a component of the EAS in eight notified drought-affected states of Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttaranchal. The program aims at food provision through wage employment. Food grains are supplied to states free of cost. However, lifting of food grains for the scheme from Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns has been slow.

Rural Housing: Initiated in 1985-86, the IAY is the core program for providing free housing to families in rural areas. It targets scheduled castes (SCs)/scheduled tribes (STs), households and freed bonded laborers. The rural housing program has certainly enabled many BPL families to acquire pucca houses. The coverage of the beneficiaries is limited given the resource constraints. The Samagra Awas Yojana (SAY) was taken up in 25 blocks to ensure convergence of housing, provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and common drainage facilities. The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) has extended its activities to the rural areas, providing loans at a concessional rate of interest to economically weaker sections and low-income group households for construction of houses.

Social Security Programs: Democratic decentralization and centrally supported Social Assistance Programs were two major initiatives of the government in the 1990s. The National Social Assistance Program (NSAP), launched in August 1995 marks a significant step towards fulfillment of the Directive Principles of



State Policy. The NSAP has three components: a) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS); b) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS); c) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS). The NSAP is a centrally-sponsored program that aims at ensuring a minimum national standard of social assistance over and above the assistance that states provide from their own resources. The NOAPS provides a monthly pension of Rs. 75 to destitute BPL persons above the age of 65. The NFBS is a scheme for BPL families who are given Rs. 10,000 in the event of the death of the breadwinner. The NMBS provides Rs. 500 to support nutritional intake for pregnant women. In addition to NSAP, the Annapurna scheme was launched from 1st April 2000 to provide food security to senior citizens who were eligible for pension under NOAPS but could not receive it due to budget constraints.

Land Reforms: In an agro-based economy, the structure of land ownership is central to the wellbeing of the people. The government has strived to change the ownership pattern of cultivable land, the abolition of intermediaries, the abolition of zamindari, ceiling laws, security of tenure to tenants, consolidation of land holdings and banning of tenancy are a few measures undertaken. Furthermore, a land record management system is a pre-condition for an effective land reform program. In 1987-88, a centrally-sponsored scheme for Strengthening of Revenue Administration and Updating of Land Records (SRA & ULR) was introduced in Orissa and Bihar.

Science and Technology for rural development

Ministry of Science and Technology plays a pivotal role in promotion of science & technology in the country. The departments has wide ranging activities ranging from promoting high end basic research and development of cutting edge technologies on one hand to serving the technological requirements of the common man through development of appropriate skills and technologies on the other. Appropriate rural technology focuses mainly on those technologies which are simple and within the reach of the ordinary people for their own benefit and the benefit of their community and harness the local or regional capacity to meet local needs without increasing dependence on external factors. A large number of governments, public and private non-government organizations are involved in developing technologies for rural areas.

Conclusion: This lesson throws light on the various schemes adapted by the government from time to time which a view to improving the lot of the poor by accomplishing socio economic development. The institutions of panchayat raj were also created to achieve the objective stated above at their always continued a wide gap between the promise and performance because the local bodies were defiled by casteism and regional politics and they were more often than not caught in Flagranate Delicto while doing undue favours. If the local bodies have their councils filled with the members of ruling party, they face no difficulties. Otherwise they face the threat of dissolution. The politicization and privatization of the local government units will lead to privation of the people since such bodies either deprive them of the services due to them or create conditions and opportunities favourable



for their cronies and Henchmen to snatch away the benefits meant for the people. The third strategy i.e., new strategy discussed above also failed to deliver the goods to the people. Hence the government divised and launched in good faith special agency strategy to usher in rural development.

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