

“Rural Development in India: A Sociological Perspective”

***Dr. Rishi Kumar Sharma**

Abstract

A better grasp of rural society and development in India is the overarching goal of this study article. An integral part of Indian culture has always been the rural population. Villages are the lifeblood of India, and many think they hold the key to the country's identity. So, looking at rural life from a sociological perspective is the main objective of this article. The report also delves into the several programmes put out by the Indian government to improve life in rural areas. The study gives us a thorough grasp of the multi-faceted depictions of modern-day rural India. From a policy perspective, the article may be important as it sought to examine, debate, and analyse rural sociology, rural society, and rural development from a macro perspective. Literature, research, and the creation of new information are all areas to which the article adds.

Keyword: Rural, Society, Sociology, Development, India

1. INTRODUCTION

"The Land of Villages" is a term that has long described India. There are 649,481 villages in India, with 68.84% of the population living in rural regions and 21.16% in urban areas, as reported in the 2011 census. According to the Rig Veda, a village is the basic unit of sociopolitical and economic society. Poet Premchand, citing British control, said that the organisation of villages altered substantially throughout the industrialization period, and many other academics have made similar points. While Gandhi constructed Sabarmati Ashram distance from Ahmadabad to reflect and engage with country people, Rabindra Nath Tagore constructed Santi Niketan Ashram far from Calcutta on the belief that villages are the essence of the nation.

After India's independence, the country's rural areas, including its villages and farms, received more attention. The primary goals of the first five-year plan (1951–1956) were to improve farming, irrigation, and community development in rural areas. The agricultural sector, including investments in dams and irrigation systems, was its primary focus. Agriculture and the enhancement of wheat production were the centrepieces of the third five-year plan (1961– 1966). The goal of instituting panchayat elections was to spread democracy to the most basic levels of society. Bringing power to every town was one of the primary goals of the twelfth five-year plan (2012–2017). Following Gandhi's remark that a nation's villages contain its essence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has placed a premium on rural areas since taking office in 2014. Therefore, the villages are the best place to start if you want to create this nation whole and independent. Numerous policies and

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projects have been put in place by the Modi administration to support the development of rural areas. The significance of rural India has ensured that village development has been a vital policy and agenda item for successive Indian administrations.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE PAPER

A growing number of Indian politicians, scholars, and social scientists are interested in rural life and development. More than 65% of India's population is directly or indirectly involved in agricultural or rural life, and the country has a long history of being known as an agrarian or peasant civilization. The report made an effort to understand three important ideas. An Indian rural sociology history and nature essay is one such work. It delves into the breadth and history of rural society in India, for two reasons. Additionally, it highlights the progress made in rural India. The study aims to make a substantial addition to the literature and research by providing a thorough examination of rural society and development in India.

3. METHODOLOGY

A methodology is a set of procedures for conducting a more systematic investigation of any social phenomenon by making use of a variety of instruments, approaches, and methods. A theoretical framework and technique are applied after the epistemology. Thus, the current research study has made use of the whole methodological framework. Secondary sources were used to compile the paper. The study paper has reviewed all policy papers, as well as books and articles published in India that are pertinent to rural sociology, rural society, and rural development.

4. INTERPRETATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

It starts with an overview of rural sociology in India, including its origins and current state. It delves into the breadth and history of rural society in India, for two reasons. Additionally, it highlights the progress made in rural India. This study adds much to the existing body of knowledge by offering an in-depth examination of rural Indian society and development.

How Rural Sociology Came to Be

Research in rural sociology dates back to the 1800s, making it a relatively young subfield of sociology. Several notable rural sociologists from that era were Pallock, Etton, Stemann, Baden Powell, and Sir Henry Maine. The rural American community was the focus of academic interest and the birth of rural society research as a field of study due to the many socioeconomic issues that plagued it from 1890 to 1920. In a landmark event for rural sociology, American President Theodore Roosevelt appointed the Country Life Commission. Extreme poverty and a general economic slump were affecting everyday life in rural America at the time. The United States' rural socioeconomic issues had escalated to crisis proportions, prompting the creation of the CLC to investigate the causes and potential solutions. By 1917, rural sociology had become its own section under the American Sociological Society. In 1935, Rural Sociology became the first American journal of its kind. It was in 1937 that the Rural Sociological Society was established in the USA. The field of rural American society has been greatly advanced by illustrious sociologists such as Newell L. Sims, Warren H.

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Wilson, and James Michel Williams.

The field of rural sociology was officially established in India by Sir Henry S. Maine, who wrote and published *Ancient Law* (1861) and *Ancient Society* (1861) (1877). His subsequent chastisement by Dumont for his centralism and European prejudice stemmed from his vast writings on Indian communities. "According to Dumont, Sir Henry Maine viewed the Indian village primarily as a collection of historical artefacts from ancient usage and legal thought. However, a more systematic study of rural sociology in India started in the 1950s, following the promulgation of the Indian Constitution and the Community Development Programmes. Sociologists and social anthropologists conducted a plethora of studies in rural sociology, with a primary focus on studying the interrelationships between different aspects of rural organisation. Works by M.N. Srinivas (1960), McKim Marriott (1955), S.C. Dube (1955), and D.N. Majumdar (1955), among others, indicate that this was Maine's perspective.

A subfield and branch of sociology, rural sociology is concerned with rural social life, specifically rural society, social structures, and institutions. Because rural society is mainly dependent on agriculture, rural sociology also focuses on rural community life. Consequently, rural sociology was developed to investigate rural phenomena and is a systematic examination of the various aspects of rural society. Additionally, rural sociology is concerned with peasant society.

Rural sociology is the study of rural social networks and how they work for the smooth operation of society. Since rural society is typically based in villages, it delves into the many facets of villages, their functioning, problems, and strategies for dealing with impending challenges. It offers practical solutions and ways for reducing the impact of these problems on villages.

Auguste Comte, the field's founder, dubbed sociology the "Queen of Sciences." Some sociologists have drawn parallels between sociology and the natural sciences; for example, Pierre Bourdieu writes, "Sociology appears to me to have all the properties that define science."

Moreover, all sociologists deserving of the title agree on a common heritage of concepts, methods, and verification procedures. In the opinion of the vast majority of sociologists, the field is undeniably scientific and has all the hallmarks of a scientific study. As a subfield of sociology, rural sociology may be considered a scientific discipline in and of itself.

Sanderson argues that "Rural sociology is the sociology of rural life in the rural environment," and many academics have weighed in on the topic. "Rural sociology is the study of human relationships in rural environments," Bertand asserts. It is "the science of rural society...It is the science of laws of the development of rural society," according to another researcher A.R. Desai, who defines rural sociology.

Sociology in rural areas focuses on people, places, and things in rural areas, as well as the dynamics of rural communities and the ways in which they adapt to new circumstances. Rural social organisations are the focus of this investigation. Norms and values that govern rural society are established by rural sociology, which represents rural social life. It shows how people in rural areas are different from

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those in metropolitan centres.

A Survey of Rural Society's Past and Present

According to Desai (2018), agriculture is the backbone of rural society. One might use the words "rural society" to describe a "villages," "countryside," or "folk society" all at once. Sociologists use the word "village" more than any other. In India, a village is characterised by a population density below 500 persons per square kilometre, a village panchayat, and at least three quarters of the inhabitants working in agriculture as their main employment.

Sociologists use the term "rural society" to describe little communities with a low population density and relatively limited land area, sometimes even organised into clusters based on socioeconomic class. They are a culturally and morally conservative agrarian community with long-established folkways and traditions.

With names like Dube, Lewis, Srinivas, Marroit, Bailey, Gough, Berreman, Epstein, Andre Beteille, T.K. Oomen, and K.L., a long list of anthropologists and sociologists have examined Indian villages. Sharma. One defining feature of rural living is the pervasive influence of nature on every aspect of daily life. There is less variation among the population. Their economy is based on agriculture, and they have a tiny community.

Most middle- and lower-class farmers are forcing their children to leave for the city in search of work, while not all farmers are feeling the effects of the rural economic crisis to the same extent. The impoverished rural populace is forced to live in slums and work as day labourers in urban centres since they do not possess the necessary education and training. Big landlords, brokers, and lenders take enormous advantage of the poor rural farmer, who already lives in abject poverty. Because they do not reside in densely populated regions, people in rural areas also have the additional challenge of limited access to specialist services.

As a result, rural residents endure a plethora of socioeconomic problems, including high unemployment, the disintegration of traditional married households, difficulties pertaining to migration, poverty, health, development, ignorance, and a lack of resources compared to metropolitan regions.

Improvement of India's Rural Areas

We shall examine rural development in India in this part. After India gained its independence and a constitution was put in place, all initiatives pertaining to the rural areas were launched. Government policy after 1950 will therefore be the primary subject. It was accurately stated by Maheswari (1995) that rural development is a crucial component of India's growth. According to Mahaheswari (1995), development programmes and policies are crucial.

A great deal of trial and error has gone into rural development in India. More recently, the focus has turned to inclusive development, after having moved from community development to integrated development. Efforts like Mahatma Gandhi's 'Sevagram' (1920), Rabindra Nath Tagore's rural

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reconstruction institute at Shantiniketan (1921), Spencer Hatch's Marthandum project (1921) supported by the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), and the Indian Village Service (IVS) founded in 1945 by Mr. Arthur T. Mosher of New York and Shri B.N. Gupta were mostly charitable endeavours undertaken by individuals with altruistic motives (Kumar, 2014).

In 1952, the Community Development Programme (CDP) was established with the aim of encouraging rural development and public involvement. Loans for fertiliser and seed were made available to farmers under the Intensive Agriculture Development Programme (IADP) in 1960 and 1961. For the purpose of cultivating exceptional harvests in farming, the Intensive Agriculture Area Programme (IAAP) was implemented between 1964 and 1965. In 1966 and 1967, the government implemented the Green Revolution in an effort to increase output. For the purpose of bringing power to remote regions, the Rural Electrification Corporation was formed in 1969.

To ensure that rural areas have access to potable water, the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) was established in 1972–1973. For the purpose of creating jobs in rural areas, the Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE) was set up in 1973. In 1973 and 1974, the Marginal Farmer and Agriculture Labour Agency (MFALA) was set up with the purpose of aiding marginal farmers financially and technically. With the overarching objective of improving living conditions, two programmes were implemented in 1975: the Twenty Point Programme (TPP) to eradicate poverty and the Command Area Development Programme (CADP) to make better use of irrigational capacity. Established in 1977, the National Institution of Rural Development offers training, research, and advisory services in the field of rural development.

In 1977–1978, the Desert Development Programme (DDP) was implemented with the goal of regulating the spread of deserts while preserving ecological harmony. The Educational and Vocational Training Programme known as TRYSEM (Training Rural Youth for Self Employment) was founded on August 15, 1979. In an effort to help the rural poor in general, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was established on October 2, 1980. In an effort to help people living in rural areas find work, the government established the National Rural Development Programme (NREP) in 1980. In 1982, the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) initiative was established with the goal of giving low-income rural women the chance to start their own businesses.

Among the other significant policies and programmes are the National Drinking Water Mission, the Council of Advancement of People's Action & Rural Technology (CAPART), which was established in 1986 to aid rural residents, encourage self-employment through subsidies and credit, and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), which was established in 1983 to employ landless farmers and labourers.

The Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (JRY) was established in 1988 to help the jobless in rural areas, while the Nehru Rozgar Yojna (NRY) was established in 1989 to help the jobless in urban areas. The Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission replaced the Rural Drinking Water Mission in 1991. The Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) guaranteed villagers a job for 100 days or more, and the

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District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) provided financial aid to those living in rural areas. The Mahila Samridhi Yojna was launched in 1993 with the aim of enticing rural women to save money via Post Office services.

The Child Labour Eradication Programme was established in 1994 with the goal of transferring children from dangerous industries to educational institutions. A nationwide social assistance programme to help persons living below the poverty line and the Midday Meal Scheme, which provides lunch to primary school kids in an effort to increase enrollment, retention, and attendance, were both established in 1995. In 1997–98, the government of India instituted the Ganga Kalyan Yojna to help fund the exploration of groundwater by farmers.

In 1997, the Kastoorba Gandhi Education Scheme was put into place to build schools specifically for girls in certain regions.

Swaran Jayanto Gramme Swarojgar Yojna, which encouraged self-employment in rural areas, and Jawahar Gramme Samridhi Yojna, which built infrastructure in villages, were both launched in 1999.

The Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojna was established in 2001 to ensure that rural residents had access to food and employment opportunities. The National Rural Health Mission was launched in 2005 to ensure that the most disadvantaged rural residents could receive affordable, accessible, and accountable healthcare. And in 2006, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) was established to provide 100 days of wage employment for development work in rural areas.

In an effort to help the rural poor (via Self Help Groups) raise their family income and get access to financial services, the Indian government's Ministry of Rural Development created the National Rural Livelihood Mission/Aajeevika (2010) programme.

As part of the National Livelihood Mission, the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana seeks to diversify rural families' income and fulfil the professional goals of rural adolescents. Rural kids from low-income households, ranging in age from fifteen to thirty-five, are the primary target of the programme, which was inaugurated on September 25, 2014. As part of the Indian government's 2014 rural development initiative known as Another Sansad Adarsh Gramme Yojana (SAGY), each member of parliament is tasked with improving the economic, social, environmental, and personal aspects of three different villages. In addition to raising living standards, this would greatly enhance the quality of life for the villagers.

The Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin)/ Indira Awas Yojana is a social welfare initiative in India that aims to give homes to low-income rural residents. It was renamed to Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana in 2016. the plan aims to provide homes for all residents.

Programme for the Development of Gramme Panchayats (GPDP) "Sabki Yojana, Sabka Vikas" cluster-based strategy for the revival of traditional industries (SFURTI) and shared-use community centres (CFCs) with an emphasis on bamboo, honey, and khadi goods. This Scheme supported rural businesses.

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Swamitva Yojana was an initiative that encouraged land ownership via the use of cutting-edge technologies. On the eve of Panchayati Raj Diwas, the Union Government's Panchayati Raj ministry launched this plan after testing it as a pilot project. Both the Ministry of Rural Development and the Panchayati Raj department were instrumental in launching this initiative.

In an effort to fortify the social fabric of rural India, the government has launched a number of projects, policies, and initiatives since 1947. The significance of self-sufficient communities has been acknowledged in almost all five-year plans by the different administrations. Consequently, the government should launch additional welfare programmes and coordinate existing ones to help the hamlet become more self-sufficient.

5. CONCLUSION

The article argues that rural society is fundamental to India and that a scientific and methodical understanding of the country is necessary for a complete understanding of India. The majority of the country's urban dwellers originally hail from the countryside, and over 65% of the population resides in rural regions. This research drew the conclusion that the field of rural sociology emerged out of a need to study rural Indian villages and their unique social structures, organisations, difficulties, and problems. The study stressed that throughout India's cultural history, villages have served as the social and political foundation. Lastly, the article asserts that the government has prioritised rural development since 1947, implementing several policies and projects to bolster communities. If we want to improve rural communities, their economies, and their social structures as a whole, the report says we need to take broader, welfare-oriented measures. There will never be a time when rural society and development don't occupy the minds of academics, policymakers, and government agencies.

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