



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Challenges of Rural Development: An Indian Experience.

Dr.Giridhar Rao M S.

Associate Professor of Sociology

Abstract:

Rural development is a concept that plays a significant role in a developing society. It is a corner stone of development of a nation with a vast majority of its people living in rural areas. In modern times, all societies undertake several measures, policies and programmes for the development of its rural communities. India as a predominantly rural society has a history of its rural development policies and programs. It extends to both pre-Independent and Post-Independent periods. However, there is a paradigm shift in its policies and programmes. Yet, India has a very long way to go to attain a comprehensive and inclusive rural development in its entirety. This paper discusses the major issues and challenges relating to the history of rural development programmes in India and gives an idea about the contemporary approaches to rural development. The pre- 1970 approaches to rural development in India were predominantly coming from top to bottom, wherein the government, policy makers and programme implantation personnel used to decide the direction and path of development, where as the post 1970 approaches tended to be bottom –up, in the sense, the grass root beneficiaries are the decisive factors in program framing and implementation.

Rural Development occupies a predominant place in the developmental policies and planning of an agricultural society. Indian is a predominantly agricultural society, even after sixty years of Independence. The quality of life and the economic well being of the people living in the rural areas are not at all satisfactory . In spite of the adoption of the Constitution which enshrines several developmental policies and programs and the attempts by the successive governments, the conditions of our rural societies remain the same.

Policies and programmes for the development of rural areas in India has a long history. Peoples participation in rural administration and development dates back to the ancient times, wherein the village panchayats existed and flourished with its own fervor. Several rulers in the past used to visit rural villages, in disguise or otherwise, and study the conditions of life of the rural people and take appropriate measures for their improvement. During the pre-Independence period also the Mughal rulers and later the British

administration interfered in revenue system, rural administration and such other aspects of rural life. After Independence, the Government of India and the state governments have come up with several measures to uplift and improve the conditions of rural areas in India.

These measures may be broadly classified in to the following:

1. Development oriented activities: such as Community Development Programmes (1952), Land Reforms (1950), Integrated Rural Development Projects (1978), and Cooperative Movement
2. Programmes for the improvement of standard of living: Tribal Development Programme(1950), Food for work Programme (1977), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP; 1980), Training Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM 1979)
3. Programmes for the enhancement of economic viability of people: Rural Employment Programme, Minimum Agricultural Wages, Green Revolution (1968), the White Revolution etc.
4. Poverty alleviation programmes and Unemployment eradication programmes: Draught Prone Area Program (1979), Garibi Hatao and The 20 Points programmes

All the above programmes and also the other measures which are not mentioned here are the attempts by the people in the position of power and authority. The primary objectives of these programmes are equal distribution of wealth in society, modernization of agricultural activities with the help of science and technology, self-governance by the rural folk, and enhancement of agricultural production, financial assistance to the rural poor, and rejuvenation of rural crafts.

The comprehensive rural development requires the scientific study of rural communities and such studies are undertaken by, the Ministries under the Central and State governments, officers and study teams, and social researchers doing research in Universities and research centres. These studies revealed the problems of rural societies and their historical background.

In this view the British government in India before Independence appointed several commissions such as Edward MacLagan Committee, and Deccan Raiyat Commission by Justice Ranade who conducted survey of Rural Indebtedness.

After Independence, the Agrarian Reform Committee by J C Kumarappa, the High Power Committee headed by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and Ashok Mehta committee which recommended rejuvenation of Panchayat Raj are to mention but a few important steps towards rural development in India.

All these programmes of rural development and the studies on the conditions of rural communities consisted of certain deficiencies in achieving their goals.

1. All attempts at development were directed towards creation of infrastructure, use of new technology, enhancement of production etc. They have not improved the living conditions of the poor people.
2. The Green Revolution only revolutionized some areas of production and benefited only a few people. Problems like poverty, marginalization, and distributional imbalance remained the same.
3. All the developmental models undertaken by several agencies such as technology transfer, community development, extension and training and cooperatives were of help to the haves instead of have-nots.
4. Lopsided development: These programmes have failed in taking in to consideration the demands and capacities of rural communities. They failed in identifying target groups.
5. Failure to identify the social and cultural background of development. They have not recognized the role of social, political and economic infrastructure as the root cause for many of the rural problems
6. Lack of peoples participation. The concept of development has been formulated and framed by the experts. Hence it is a top down development. Here the lack of communication between the policy makers and beneficiaries, inappropriate developmental intervention and lack of knowledge of factors influencing the process of development are glaring. The experts who came from a different cultural and social background have failed to identify the priorities and necessities of the beneficiaries.
7. Most of the researchers and planners are men and they failed to identify the priorities and demands of the women members of the target communities.

Most of these deficiencies emanate from the lack of proper tools for research. The traditional methods and tools of research have limited utilities. The tools and methods that could fetch indepth knowledge about the problems are expensive in terms of money, energy and man-power. It is at this juncture we could recommend the use of Rapid Rural Appraisal and its revised form of Participatory Rural Appraisal and the Participatory Learning and Action.

RRA, PRA and PLA.

After 1970, the significant changes took place in the field of rural development planning and programmes are the emergence of Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal with its revised edition called Participatory Learning and Action. The notable aspect of change that can be observed in this transition is the top-down to bottom-up approach in developmental activities. The change took place from the Centralised programme framing to local diversities based programme structuring approach

In brief, the RRA and PRA approach made a paradigm shift from top down to bottom up programming, wherein centralized standardization of the policies and programs are replaced by local diversities, blue print is replaced by learning process, and extractive questionnaire replaced participatory appraisal. In fact, RRA, PRA and PLA is a cluster of several methods and techniques that are effective in assessing the conditions of the rural society in a more appropriate way.

At the back of Participatory Rural Appraisal method the influence of four major streams of research are explicit.

1. Activist Participatory Research. Paulo Friere's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968) in Latin America.
2. Agroecosystem Analysis in Thailand, South East Asia and in other places.
3. Applied Anthropology which uses extensively the method of field work and field study. The simplicity of field study, participant observation and conversation, rapport establishment, and validity of indigenous knowledge.
4. Field research on farming system by social anthropologists, geographers, agricultural economists, biological scientists revealed the complexities, diversities, and rationality of apparently untidy and unsystematic farming practices.

This model of rural development plays an important role in understanding the complexity, diversity and fear of risks in Indian agricultural system. It helps in understanding the knowledge, rationality and vocationalism of the small and poor agriculturalists. It also helps to understand the experimental behavior and mentalities of the farmers in rural areas and their self assessment capacities.

Readings:

1. Mehta, Sushike 1980. A Study of Rural Sociology in India. S Chand and Co New Delhi
2. Desai. A R, 1961. Rural Sociology in India. Bombay, Popular Prakashan.
3. Y Singh, 1986 Modernisation of Indian Tradition Rawat, Jaipur.
4. Maheshwar, Shriram 1985, Rural Development in India. Sage
5. Dewan, M L 1982 Agriculture and Rural Development in India, concept Publishing company, New Delhi