Rural Management
Rural Society and Polity

First Edition

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सत्यमेव जयते

Editorial Board

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About the Book

Indian rural society is at a crossroad. The process of modernization that had gained momentum after independence from colonial rule has been galvanized further with the currents of globalization. The government has been implementing various development schemes to change the rural society in terms of creating economic opportunities, and providing health and educational facilities etc. For a changing environment, a new approach is needed for understanding the change and then taking appropriate steps to steer it in the desired direction.

This book on Rural Society and Polity is designed to provide a foundation for understanding the rural society from the frameworks of sociology. For students of Rural Management, it is crucial to grasp the basic social structure and processes of Indian society in the countryside. For a country like India, which is so diverse in different aspects, it is difficult to provide a singular framework to understand the rural society. In fact, we need to imagine rural societies than just a singular rural society. Therefore, in this book different framework and approaches has been brought in to present different perspective to understand social realities. An attempt has been made to capture the regional, religious, cultural and other diversities that we come across in rural India. An emphasis has been given to understand the society from the perspective of the subaltern that is the groups of people who are marginalized historically for various reasons.

The pedagogical approach in this book is not only to familiarize the students with different perspectives, but also to encourage them to learn from outside the limits of the text from multiple sources. Watching films and documentaries for gaining a perspective has been integrated in this textbook. Moreover, an emphasis has been placed to learn through critical reflection on our everyday lives, and by observing the society around us. The students are urged to look beyond their own social location and think of people living in different social settings. This would help them to sideline their own biases or judgments, and get a more nuanced understanding of the social situation under consideration. Judging other from our own location may lead to misjudgment or wrong diagnosis, and therefore, would not be helpful to find right solutions.

Rural India is beset with myriad set of problems, but there is also a lot of possibilities provided resources are managed properly through adequate policy initiatives. The book attempts to focus on explaining the social problems within the society, and also engages in critical appreciation of various policies. We hope, this will help the students grow up as critically aware and better-informed professionals.

I thank the contributors: Dr. Byasa Moharana, Assistant Professor Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Ms Aishwarya Bhuta, Independent Scholar, Mumbai and Dr Jyotirmayee Tudu, Assistant Professor Public Administration in Utkal University to this book for their outstanding insights. Also, I would like to thank MGNCRE Team members for extending their extreme support in completing this text book.

Dr W G Prasanna Kumar
Chairman MGNCRE

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Chapter 1 Rural Society in India: Themes and Perspectives

Introduction

"India lives in its villages"- these words of M.K. Gandhi summarize the significance of villages in Indian society. Until independence, majority of the population lived in villages. After that, the process of urbanization was accelerated and the urban population grew faster. Even till date, according to the Census of Indian (2011), majority of Indian population (about 69 %) live in about 649481 villages. The rural society has its unique social structure and a way of living that is different from the urban society.

It must be remembered that Indian society is not monolithic. It is diverse in many aspects. The villages are different in terms of the size of population, social composition, spatial arrangement of houses, economic condition, proximity to cities or even in terms of their location within the cities. It is important to keep this in mind when we study rural society, and not imagine "Indian village" as a homogenous or uniform social entity. Moreover, it is also important to know that there is no single perspective or theoretical framework through which one can see a social entity such as a "village" and understand it in its entirety. There are different perspectives or view-points that enable the students to appreciate the complex nature of social world and different ways of perceiving them.

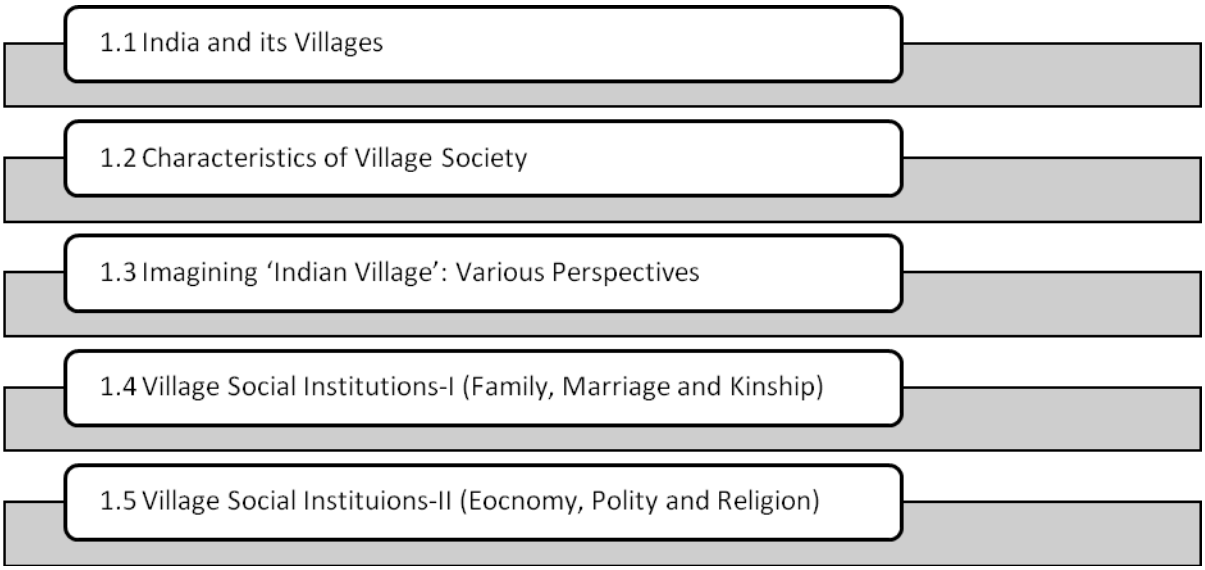
The village consists of different social institutions such as economy, polity, family, marriage and kinship etc. To understand the village, therefore, it is important to understand them. These institutions have definite structure and perform certain function for maintaining the rural society as a whole. These institutions are inter-related; they do not function independently or in isolation. For example, the rural economy has evolved over a period of time. As early human communities of hunting-gathering economy settled down for a sedentary life with agricultural production system, not only the economy, the political system and family structure etc. also had to change accordingly. Gradually surplus economy and increase in population lead to more complex society, and more specialization. Thus, there was a need for proper control of the society.

The rural society in India has to be understood through understanding these social institutions, the way they were operating earlier, and the manner in which they have come to function in their contemporary forms. How people marry and how kinship networks are maintained, how economic activities are structured, how political institutions function, and how religious and cultural institutions shape people's lives- all these are significant themes or windows through which we would be able to see and appreciate the rural society.

Objectives

1. To explain with various terms and concepts related to the rural society in India.
2. To explain various perspectives to understand Indian rural society, and appreciate the diversity of Indian villages.
3. To provide insights on various social institutions, their structure and function, and the interrelated nature of these institutions.

Structure



1.1 India and its Villages: Historical and Conceptual Understanding

Emergence of village in human society is a major shift in history. It is a result of the transition from a nomadic gathering and hunting community life to a settled agricultural way of life. With the development of sedentary forms of horticulture and agriculture, structure of social organization also changed. Land was acquired and converted into cultivable land, and new methods of agriculture were invented to produce surplus- something over and above the need for daily survival. With generation of surplus within the agricultural economy, wealth could be accumulated, and this led to social differentiation. As population increased, and more wealth produced, division of labour also became more elaborate. More occupational specializations were created. Systems of governance also had to change to suit the new modes of living. Thus, the village emerged as a population settlement based on a particular form of social organization.

To understand a "village", we also need to understand "village" as a concept as well as a few other related concepts. The village is understood in the context of rural, and the city in the context of urban. In general, the rural-urban classification is used by many countries to collect population data. While "urban" is defined with much clarity and specificity, "rural" is defined as a residual category. A town or a city constitutes the urban area that consists of large population size and high human density, and much of its environment is built by human beings. In contrast to that, rural area is delineated as the geographical space that is outside the urban area. It is the 'country side' with less population and low human density; the environment is more natural than human-made.

According to Census of India, an urban area may be defined as follows:

- It should have a core town with a minimum population of 5,000
- At least 75% of the male working population should be non-agricultural
- The density of the population is at least 400 per sq. km. (1000 per sq. mile)

The Census further defines- "all areas which are not categorized as urban area are considered as rural area". A village, located in rural areas, is defined in terms of a 'revenue village' that is used for

collection of revenue. “The revenue village need not necessarily be a single agglomeration of the habitations. But the revenue village has a definite surveyed boundary and each village is a separate administrative unit with separate village accounts. It may have one or more hamlets, butthe entire revenue village is one unit.”

The term ‘rural society’ is often used interchangeably with the terms such as ‘village’, ‘country-side’ or ‘folk society’. In Sociological literature in India, term village is used more frequently. In the Western context, the term ‘country side’ is more popular that denotes a space away from the city, away from the busy and fast city life. It is calm and quiet, close to natural environment and the city dwellers usually retire to the country-side during week-ends or during vacations. These country sides in the West are not necessarily devoid of urban facilities, as one finds even modern recreational facilities there.

In Anthropological literature, the term “folk” is used to describe rural life. Popularized by American anthropologist Robert Redfield who worked extensively in India, “folk” means people belonging to a ‘small tradition’ or homogeneous community. Thus, a folk community is traditional and homogeneous. Redfield also described the folk society as ‘past-oriented’ in the sense that people are more attached to their tradition. They are also content with their lot, with what they have.

Village is also associated with “peasant society”. In European context, peasants are the people who are pre-industrial agricultural laborers or small-scale farmers with (limited) land ownership as they pay tax, or rent or other fees. In colloquial sense, the word peasant often carried pejorative meaning that referred to rustic, ignorant and uncultured people in contrast the ‘civilized’ city dwellers. In the Indian context, the American anthropologists have used the term peasant to refer to the village farmers, tenant-farmers or even farm-laborers. Here the term “peasantry” is used in a non-pejorative sense to refer to the rural agricultural community.

Types of Villages

To reiterate, villages in India are not homogenous in nature, either in term of its physical structure, or in terms of its social composition. The population size may vary enormously. Some villages are too small comprising of a population of over a few hundred; some other villages may be of a population over a few thousand. The villages in hilly/mountainous areas tend to be small whereas those in the plains with more fertile land tend to be big. In terms of physical arrangement of the villages, some villages are located along both the side of a road. Some other villages may be more irregularly arranged where different hamlets are spaced out in different directions along the main road of the village.

Some villages are not only big in terms of its population size, but it might also be diverse in terms of its population composition. These are the multi-caste villages that one finds in rural areas where many different castes live together, usually in distinct living-areas for each caste, the ‘lower’ castes living at the fringe areas. On the other hand, one also finds villages which consist to population that is more homogenous, consisting predominantly of only one caste. These are called single-caste villages. Many Adivasis-villages are comprised of a single Adivasi group, or a mixture of a few other groups. In some central Indian Adivasi villages, the non-Adivasis communities also live along with the Adivasis. In terms of economic conditions, some villages comprise of many well-to-do families with better political influence. These affluent-villages have better roads, schools, health centres, post

offices and banks etc. Many other villages comprised of people from poor or low-income groups. Comparatively, those villages lack many infrastructural facilities and services.

Figure 1.1 Types of Villages in India

Because of the process of historical development, some villages grow into towns, and then cities. The other process is when a city comes close to a village and engulfs it as a result of rapid urbanization. These are called urban-villages. We find such villages in Delhi, Mumbai and many other metropolitan cities. These villages are either the old villages that remain relatively untouched by city development process around it. The surrounding areas become urbanized with proper development of infrastructure including roads, housing projects, sanitation, water and electricity facilities. However, these villages remain confined to their old, dilapidated houses and live without proper urban infrastructural facilities. Because of slow administrative process and corrupt administration, it takes a lot of time for proper integration of the village into the city. As a result, the urban-villages become congested as it provided cheaper accommodation, but without proper facility. Illegal land dealings and housing units gets built, so also illegal or legal industrial units. There is lot of crisis in terms of basic facilities and disturbance of existing village social life.

Let us become familiar with some basis statistics on rural India. It will give us some broader idea about it. Please see the table below:

Table 1.1 A few Basic Statistical Information on Rural India

Source: Census of India (2011)

Number of villages	6,49,481
Total number of people (%)	83.3crore (68.84%)
Sex-ratio	949
Sex-ratio (0-6 years)	923
Literacy rate (7+ years)	67.77
Literacy rate (7+ years, female)	57.93
Literacy rate (7+ years, male)	77.15

India has about 6.5 lakh villages with more than 83 crore people living in them. The sex-ratio is low (949 females per 1000 males), and the literacy rate is far from satisfactory. These are matters of

grave concern for policy makers and social scientists. More on these issues will be discussed in other chapters.

To-Do-Activity: Have you ever lived in a village? See how many in your class or among your peer group have lived in a village. Discuss what kind of village they come from or have seen closely. Discuss the variations in experience of each of those who have lived or spend some time in villages. If you have not even been to a village, organize a field trip to go and see a village near your city or town. If you can spend a few days' time in the village, then your understanding of the rural life would be even better.

1.2 Characteristics of Village Society

As discussed in the previous Unit, the rural society is defined and compared in relation to the urban society. Three main factors are taken into consideration for comparison:

a.Population size
b.Density of population
c.Heterogeneity of population

Population Size: The population size of a village is much smaller in comparison to a town or a city. The population of a village is about a few hundred to a few thousand, whereas population of a city is many times more than this. In contemporary times the population of most of the cities are about a few lakhs, and that of some big cities have crossed even one crore.

Because the population size is less, the people in the village know each other by face. Unlike in cities, the villagers are permanent settlers for a long time and therefore know each other and their family histories. Many of them are related to each other through kinship ties. The population is also socially and culturally more homogenous. All these leads to common sentiment among the villagers and there exists a sense of solidarity. This kind of sentiment is either weak in cities or even absent. Many people in cities would not know who their immediate neighbours are. Therefore, nature of social life in cities is very different than the villages. People in rural areas also have a strong sense of attachment to their living place; they cannot think of shifting their residence to another location within the village or to another village. In the cities, people often do not have permanent residence, they live on rent; sometimes they also change residential location easily to another part of the city, or to another city without any loss of sentiment.

Because people know each other by face and the relationships are informal, the mode of social control in village is often informal. People disapprove those kinds of social behaviour that is not according to the traditional norms or values of the village. In that sense, people in the villages are less free as there is more pressure to conform to the social values. In contrast, the people in the cities live less integrated or attached to each other. Therefore, people are freer as individuals- where they go, whom they meet, when they come back to home at night, or what job they do etc. People generally are not concerned about lives of others; therefore, informal social control is very less.

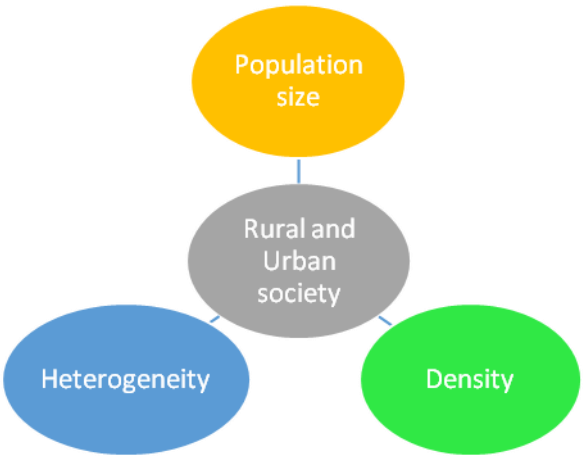


Figure 1.2 Characteristics of Urban/Rural Society

Density of Population: While the population of the cities is more, the area of human inhabitation is comparatively much less. Therefore, the density of population is very high. People live in segregated areas as per their class position, and sometimes also according to social position. They are from different backgrounds and professions, and live physically close together. People in the city often fight for space within bus/train, in the market or on the streets, and struggle to get accommodation, but emotionally or socially not connected to the next person they meet. Thus, the city people are close physically, but distant socially. This kind of situation leads to loneliness. As Louis Wirth (1938) observes-"the necessary frequent movement of great number of individuals in a congested habitat gives occasion to friction and irritation" (p. 14).

In contrast to this, the population density of rural areas is much less as smaller numbers of people inhabit relatively larger physical space. In the villages various castes or other social groups live in clusters as per their social status/hierarchy. Since they live together for generations, there is more personal connection between people. We can say, in the villages, there is more physical distance, but less social distance between individuals. The traditional social hierarchy not withstanding there is a general sense of belongingness in the villages, therefore people do not experience loneliness.

Heterogeneity: As mentioned already, the city is not only dense in human population, but it is also heterogeneous in terms of the social composition of the same. People from various social, economic and regional background move to the cities. Here, people have different interests, and they pursue them irrespective of whether other people approve of it, or participate in it or not. The people therefore are more tolerant towards diversity and about the people who are different from them. The urban society has to find ways to serve the interest of the heterogeneous masses as a single group. The provisions of public utilities, entertainment, education etc. are designed to meet the mass requirement. Thus, the city provides a precondition for emergence of secularism as a social-value in public life.

The villagers on the other hand are not only less in number, but also much less in terms of their diversity. Some villages consist of people belonging to only a single caste or tribe, and even the multi-caste villages would have people only from a few castes or religious/ethnic communities. These people are more or less permanent members of the community, and have more or less fixed interests. Their fairs, festivals and ways of living are confined to their own traditions. Thus, exposure

to diverse socio-cultural practices with which they are not familiar, or they do not participate is rare. This is the reason that villages remain more conservative.

Some important socio-cultural characteristics that differentiate a village from a city are mentioned below:

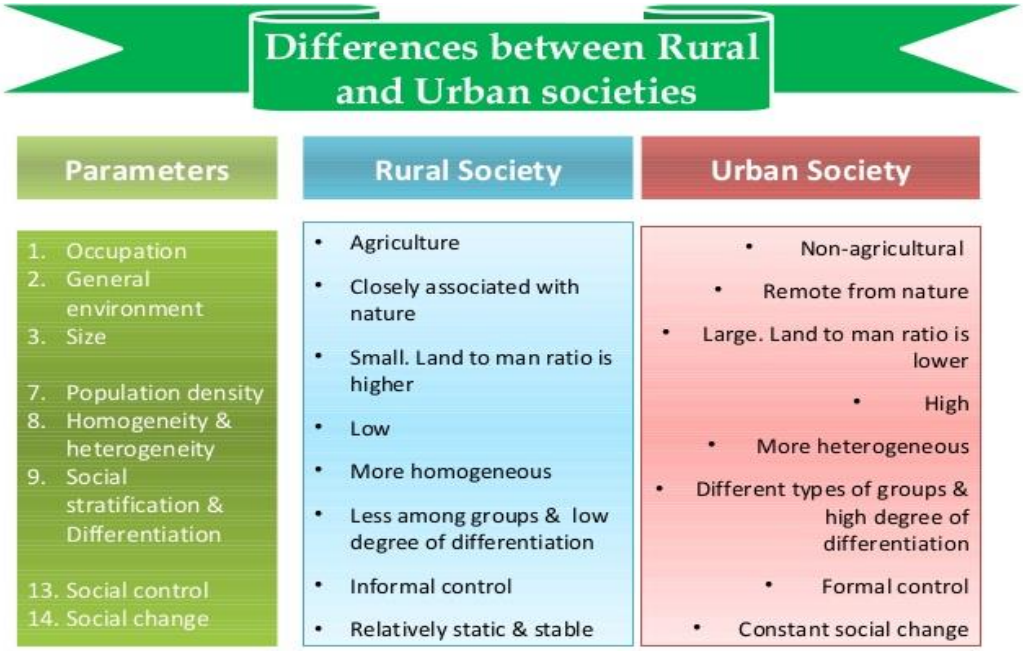


Figure 1.3: Differences between Rural and Urban Society

Table 1.2 Differences between Rural Society and Urban Society

Type of socio-cultural characteristics	**Rural society**	**Urban society**
Division of labour	Mostly agriculturalist; a few specialists and part-time specialists	Full time specialists, specialization and even super-specialization of different types
Social diversity	Less diversity of population, people are from a few castes/communities	Very diverse, people from various castes, communities, languages and cultures, from different part of the country or even outside the country
Social interaction	Personal acquaintance, people know each other by face.	Impersonal relationship, people meet each other only in segmental roles and know temporarily;anonymity prevails
Tradition	Traditional culture followed strongly	Traditional way of life breaks down to a large extent
Tolerance	People are less tolerant to diversity, or towards what is not like their own	People are bound to accept diversity, and therefore more tolerant towards what is not like their own

Similar to rural and urban differences, Robert Redfield, the American anthropologist, had coined the terms "**little tradition**" and "**great tradition**" to describe the social characteristics of Indian rural society and the urban society. A little tradition is the tradition or culture of a little community (village community), the characteristics of which are as follows:

a)It is the tradition of *unlettered* people who live in villages.

b)The people are *unreflective*, that is they do not critically examine or comment upon their tradition, and accept it uncritically.

c)The little tradition is *cultivated at home.*

d)It is *transmitted* across generations *through socialization.*

For Robert Redfield, city is synonymous with 'civilization'. It is the abode of the intellectuals or the "literati" who actively creates great tradition through cultivation of culture in the public domain of the city. This tradition/culture that is formed is a result of systematization and refinement of the little tradition of the villages. This tradition is called the **great tradition**. The following characteristics may be attributed to this:

a)The tradition of the literati.

b)They are reflective, and make it sophisticated through systematization and refinement, and make it universal.

c)The tradition is cultivated in dedicated social institutions available in cities.

d)It is transmitted through specialized and systematic learning and practice/performance.

However, not everybody agreed with Robert Redfield. McKim Marriot, another anthropologist, argued that cultural characteristics flow both ways. The little tradition moves forward and reach the city and get refined and universalized. This process may be called "universalization" as the great tradition has more universal appeal and applicability. Conversely, the tradition of cities travels back to the villages and sometimes get assimilated through a process called parochialization or localization. Here, the elements of a great tradition are modified to suit the rural culture, and get assimilated into the little tradition in a different form.

Milton Singer also argues that it is better to see the little tradition and great tradition as parts of a continuous process, rather than two dichotomous entities. For him, there is continuous interaction between the urban and the rural in India. Therefore, instead of perceiving the rural and the urban society as opposite to each other in the cultural domain, it is important to consider them as part of the **rural-urban continuum**. There exists a cultural continuity between the people of the rural and the people of the urban and they share a common cultural consciousness. This is reflected in the way Indian society experiences modernity. Unlike in Europe where modernity led to emergence of the city after breaking away from the villages, Indian urban culture does not represent a complete break from the rural. Rather, one finds many folk/rural/little traditions very much part of the urban cultural landscape.

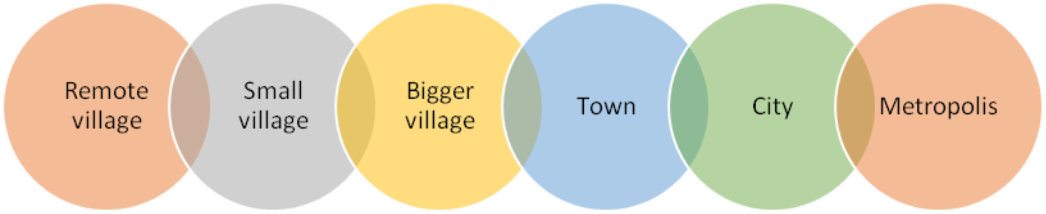


Figure 1.4 Rural-urban Continuum

Rural-urban continuum can also be observed in other aspects of social life such as family life, marriage pattern and maintenance of kinship relations. In India towns and cities developed out of villages, and as a result of slow and gradual migration of village people into the urban set up. This has happened in most part of history without industrialization. The connection between the two social worlds was not cut off. Till date most of the people in cities have some organic connection with the rural, and many of them proudly mention their ancestral village. They regularly visit the villages, and meet their kinship group members and other relatives and friends.

To-Do-Activity: If you are from rural area, then find friends who are from urban areas. If you were brought up in urban area, then please find friends from rural areas. Share your experiences about how we maintain our everyday lives- our interaction with people, how we greet the people whom we meet on the street, how we interact with our neighbours, our food habits, and modes of entertainment etc. See what are the differences and/or similarities between the ways of life.

1.3 Imagining 'Indian Village': Various Perspectives

Orientalist Perspective

The Western European and North American society became economically, politically and militarily powerful during the modern times (18th Century onward). Subsequently, the white European and American people colonized most part of the world. During this period, they produced many writings about the colonized people and their lives. These writings described the peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America- how the people look and what they eat, the dresses they wear, their marriage systems, religious rituals and beliefs etc. Most of these writings were racially biased and described the 'black', 'brown', 'yellow' or 'red' people as physically, morally and intellectually inferior to 'whites'. The non-whites were called uncivilized and backward people. These writings of the Western scholars, administrators or travelers are called Orientalist writing and the bias that it carries towards the non-white racial groups is called Orientalism. Of course, not all Orientalist writings were negatively biased towards the non-whites. A few of the orientalist authors were also romantic about the Asian society especially the old-civilizational areas such as Indian, China or Japan. These old eastern civilizations were highly appreciated for their glorious history, and they were compared with the pre-modern European society. But their present was seen as a pale shadow of their bright civilization in the past.

So far as the image of the villages is concerned, the orientalist scholars have tended to portray an uniformized picture of villages in India disregarding the fact that there are so many varieties of rural cultures. They imagine a monolithic 'Indian village' as if all villages in India are the same. These Indian villages are described as uncivilized, backward and a den of ignorance, and it is ruled by caste-

panchayats. The practice of caste hierarchy, especially untouchability, was seen as another sign of backwardness. At the economic front, village economy was synonymous with subsistence level of economy hardly producing any surplus for overall economic growth of the village, or the country as a whole.

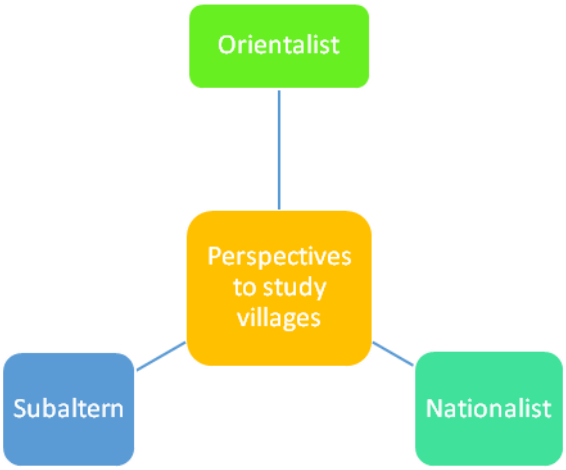


Figure 1.5 Various Perspectives on Studying Indian Village

The romantic school within the orientalist school of thought, on the other hand, described Indian villages as place of peaceful co-existence of different castes where there is no competition unlike in the modern-day Europe. While in Europe, individual competition has created tension within their society, the Indian village, by virtue of caste-based division of labour avoids such tension by containing aspirations at birth. These kind of writing compares India's present village life as a reflection of the past of European life- of tranquility and contentment.

Nationalist Perspectives

While the Orientalist writers created a negative image of Indian society in general and the village in particular, the nationalist leaders of the pre-independence times opposed such a representation of Indian villages. The leaders of the freedom movement had to counter the colonial narratives with counter-perspective. This perspective that perceives the villages as important part of the social life of Indian nation is called nationalist perspective. We can name M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru as two important proponents of nationalist view point on Indian village.

M.K. Gandhi was the most important proponent of Indian village as he said- "India lives in its villages". At that point of time more than 90% of Indian population lived in villages. Not just because of that, but also because Gandhi believed that villages represent true Indian way of living as cities have become corrupt under the influence of western values. He wanted to revive the village Panchayat as part of decentralized mode of governance. The village should be an economically self-sufficient unit and should focus on revival of traditional Indian handicraft and handloom cottage industry, rather than opting for big capital-intensive industrial units.

Jawaharlal Nehru was a nationalist leader with modernist ideology. He differed from Gandhi's plan of reviving traditional industries. For national development he was in favour of big modern industrial power. Yet he recognized that village economy should be developed through use of modern

technology by using high yielding variety of seeds, chemical fertilizers and irrigation facility. He realized that the village economy suffers because of landlords controlling most of the lands and the money-lenders sucking the blood of the small peasants. Therefore, one of the major steps that was taken after he became Prime Minister in 1947 was abolition of zamindari system of revenue collection and the implementation of land reform in rural India.

Subaltern Perspective

An important critique of nationalist perspective comes from the subaltern perspective. "**Subaltern**" is the dominated or marginalised class of people in the society. In Indian context, the Dalits, Adivasis, the religious minorities, sexually marginalized groups and women may be considered as subaltern groups. As most of the nationalist leaders were from elite backgrounds and were male, they are accused of not taking into consideration the concerns of the subaltern groups. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar voiced his opinion about the nature of Indian village which are contradictory to that of Nehru and Gandhi. We can consider his thoughts as belonging to the subaltern school of thought.

For Ambedkar, the dominant nationalist leaders while thinking about Indian village, had overlooked the perilous impact of casteism on the lives of the lower castes especially the Dalits. For him Indian villages ridden with untouchability, and it denies land and property rights to Dalits. They work as landless laborers and perform dirty and humiliating traditional jobs. They are most powerless in the village setting. The Dalits do not have any voice in the village matters and hardly enjoy a dignified living. For Ambedkar, traditional Indian villages represent the oppressive Hindu social order that is antithetical to modern democratic ethos and practices. Therefore, he saw no future for the Dalits in the village, and urged them to leave the village and go to the cities where upward social mobility is possible through getting education and taking up of modern jobs.

Book-view

Another way of talking about perspective is to know how the ideas have been acquired. Often the scholars write through their understanding by reading books written by authors of the past or present. Unless one is critically aware of the nature of the books that they refer to, the acquired knowledge may be problematic. Because many books especially the ancient texts were written in a different context who were not academicians. Moreover, the current academic writings can also carry their own biases. Therefore, an author who wants to write on the basis of reading other books need to be careful about drawing conclusions. This practice of deriving conclusions through reading books and other texts (secondary literature) is called "book view". Many British administrators wrote books or articles on Indian on the basis of reading books written by travelers, fellow administrators, anthropologists or the ancient texts written by Hindu or Islamic writers. One famous example may be the book written by a British journalist James Mill who never visited and experienced India, but wrote a book on Indian history (*The history of British India*, 1817). This book was a compulsory read for the civil services trainees who were selected to serve the British Indian administration. The book contains highly inaccurate information and biased interpretations about Indian society. Thus, book-views often portrays distorted image of the rural society and presents them as same everywhere with common characteristics. Book-view fails to grasp the complex social reality and the variations among millions of villages that one would find in real life.

Field-view

The other means of acquiring knowledge is the "field-view". In contrast to book-view, one has to go to the field- the site of study and know about the issue through observation and other research techniques. This is supposed to provide a first-hand experience of the subject matter under study which often is different from what is described in the books. The academic disciplines such as sociology and social-anthropology emphasize on going to the field to conduct research. Many other social science disciplines also employ various research/study techniques to collect information. The villages studies done by famous sociologist such as M.N. Srinivas, S.C. Dube, WW Goldenwiser, Joan Mencher, Robert Deliege are famous for spending months and years in the villages to understand the village society. Their writings are based on first-hand observation and personal discussion with the villagers. They have demonstrated that it is very important to stay in the field to understand the village, and also to overcome many personal biases and decode many myths associated with the villages.

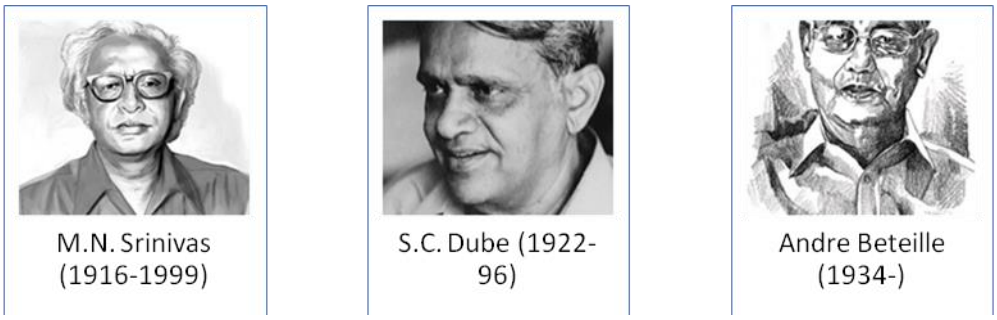


Figure 1.6 Famous Sociologist/Anthropologist who studied Indian villages extensively through field-work method. They also mostly adopt functionalist approach in their study.

However, collecting information from the field need not necessarily present the 'authentic' picture of the village. How one interprets data that one finds, also depends on one's perspective of understanding society. In the following paragraphs, we shall see how visiting the field and collecting data can be interpreted differently depending on the perspective one follows. We will limit our discussion to only two types of perspectives- the functionalist perspective and the conflict perspective.

Functionalist Perspective

Within sociological schools of thought, the functionalists school likes to perceive that the society is a harmonious unit; different individuals and/or groups cooperate with each other to maintain social order. Like the various organs within an organism, various social institutions play their respective roles to ensure the smooth functioning of society. Many early sociologists and anthropologists who studies society, for example, followed this perspective to analyse social order by emphasizing on peaceful division of labour within society to utilize the available resources for managing life.

The field studies of Indian villages conducted by famous anthropologist or sociologists also followed this model and analysed villages as harmonious social units. The caste system was seen as perfect example of division of labour within a complex society, and each (caste) group within a village performed their respective duties to ensure smooth flow of village life. Conflicts or tensions

between individuals/groups were hardly reported, and at the most were seen as aberrations within an otherwise 'flawless' system. Domination and exploitation of one group by the other were not given much importance. The way most of the religious texts justified caste system, the functionalist school also explained caste system in the villages as an Indian way of managing resources peacefully. The functionalist analysis does not take into account the existing unequal power relationship between different social groups within the village.

Conflict Perspective

The conflict perspective within social sciences starts with the basis premises that the society is full of different interest groups with different amount of power. Different groups/individuals try to take care of their interests which are not necessarily coherent. Therefore conflict, rather than consensus is the norm in most of the societies. The dominant group(s) tries to mobilise all the resources for itself despite of the opposition of the other group(s). The 'unity' of the society is possible, not through consensus, but by use of brute force.

In the context of the study of Indian villages, some anthropologists and sociologists have countered the functionalist way of understanding villages. Joan Mencher, Robert Deliege and Gerald Berreman argue that the village society is not a harmonious unit, rather it is a site of exploitation of the 'lower' castes by the 'upper' castes. The latter uses power to take control of the resources and deprive the rights of the lower castes. These theorists therefore reject the book-view or the functionalist view that perceives caste-system within a village as a division of labour for avoiding competition between different caste groups. As Ambedkar says- "Caste system is not a division of labour, but a division of labourers". This means the caste system divided people and imposes unequal rights and duties on them; thus, depriving some groups from land and other important economic/cultural resources and makes them suffer. The other groups who control land and other valuable resources maintain domination in a caste society. Instead of seeing this kind of social arrangement as consensual and beneficial, the conflict perspective looks at this as forced social arrangement and a serious social problem. (More on caste is discussed in Chapter 2).

Figure 1.7 Anthropologists who Studied Indian Villages from a Conflict Perspective

In addition to the anthropologists, the popular thinkers who perceived Indian caste system within the village society through conflict perspective are Jotirao and Savitribai Phule, EVR Naickar (Periyar) and B.R. Ambedkar etc.They raised the issue of caste inequality and exploitation to understand the nature of Indian villages. Therefore, the villages need not be seen as ideal places of human habitation. We need to understand the deep-rooted problems and find ways to address them.

With this discussion on various perspectives, we will move on to discuss a few basic points about the nature of village in India.

1.4 Understanding Village through Social Institutions-I (Family, Marriage and Kinship)

Each individual in a society occupy a certain place or location. Each one also plays the roles associated with the location(s) in the society. For example, one is a mother or a teacher. The place of a mother or a teacher is associated with corresponding roles to be performed by that individual. However, the individual is not free to perform as s/he wants. The roles that one plays is mostly pre-determined with associated rights and duties. A mother within the institution of family has certain duties. Of course, the duties prescribed vary from culture to culture. These roles are performed within certain institutional frameworks which are meant to facilitate the smooth functioning of various social processes as well as to constrain the action of the individuals by drawing limits for their action. Thus, there are other institutions that regulate human behaviour related to the domain of religion, education, politics and economy etc. We may note that there are formal institutions as well as informal institutions. Family and religion are informal institutions, whereas state, school, army and courts are formal institutions.

Thus, family as a social institution is meant for bearing and rearing children for the next generation, and to manage the economic and other resources of the group. Marriage is another social institution that regulates socially legitimate access to sexual partners and the process of reproduction in humans. Who can marry whom is not a free choice in most societies. It is very much true in India where marriage is supposed to be within caste and community and often it is decided by the family. The institution of marriage therefore facilitates marriage alliance by prescribing certain norms and rules about whom to marry, and at the same time also restraining individuals about whom they cannot marry.

We should remember that there are different perspectives to see and understand various social phenomena. The social institutions that will be discussed in the following paragraphs can be seen differently depending on the kind of perspectives we would follow. As discussed in section 1.2 the functionalist perspective would suggest that social institutions exist to satisfy social needs and to ensure smooth functioning of the social order. The conflict perspective on the other hand would holds that all individuals are not placed equally in the society. The power that each one of them held would vary according to one's caste, tribe, class or gender. All social institutions operate in the interest of the dominant sections or individuals. The dominant section not only controls the rest politically or economically, but also controls the idea/knowledge. Thus, the conflict perspective debunks the idea that there is a common need of a society. Rather the needs are differently determined by the powerful section for themselves.

To understand rural India, we must now proceed with the understanding of the various institutions that are found in the society. We can see how these institutions facilitate various social functions and fulfill various needs, and see whether these institutions affect different sections of society differently.

Family, Marriage and Kinship

Family is a universal social institution which means it is found in every human society. To us, family appears quite 'natural' and all families are similar across the world. However, family, marriage and kinship organizations across the globe are known to vary widely in terms of their constitution, size and function. Moreover, family as an institution is also linked to other important social institutions such as economy, religion, education and polity.

Though family is so familiar to us, the definition of a family in academics is not easy because of the variations found in the nature of families across societies. We can define family as a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume responsibility of caring for children. The U.S. Bureau of census defines a family as a social unit consisting of "two or more persons, who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and who live together as one household". Families that we find in rural areas in India can of following types:

a)Nuclear family
b)Joint family

A nuclear family consists of parent(s) and the child(ren). A joint family is where more than one set of parent(s)-child(ren) live together. It is a popular notion that in India especially in villages, joint family is the predominant form of family. However, the fact is that in villages, nuclear families are more common especially among the lower classes and lower caste communities. Sociologist A.M. Shah has showed that in the rural areas there are more nuclear families than joint families. However, after independence, due to increase in life expectancy, many families are becoming joint families as older generations live longer, and continue to live with their children and grandchildren.

In the rural areas, upper class/caste land-owning families tend to live in bigger family structures (joint families) to effectively manage their properties- such as farm land etc. They prefer the brothers to stay together after marriage as that provides more working hands to manage the cultivation. The poor families struggle to stay together as fights/quarrels erupt to share limited resources. The lower castes, generally being poor, tend to live in nuclear families. As the children grow up, they get married and set up a separate household. In most of the Adivasi areas also, nuclear family is the norm.

Functions of the Family: Family is based on marriage. Thus, it plays a major role in channelizing sexual relations of people in a society. Thus, it also provides a social unit for reproduction of the species. Family is also the site where children are socialized to learn the culture and waysof life of that particular society.

In addition to taking the responsibility of bearing and rearing the children, the family plays a very significant role in managing its economic resources. The family members of poor households participate in various economic activities- farming, fishing, home-based cottage industries, or working as wage laborers. Men, women and children participate in these activities. The agricultural production in rural areas depends so much on the collective effort of the whole family members. Especially during the season of sowing, plantation and harvesting when more hands are required, family members join together to get it done in quick time. If required, their relatives from other

villages do join in if they are free. Married women also sometimes come back to parents' place to contribute towards such farm activities. However, in upper-caste and upper-class households, women generally stay at home and their role is limited in the economic production activity. They take care of the household and the family members by cooking food, cleaning the house and taking care ofthe young, the elderly and the sick.

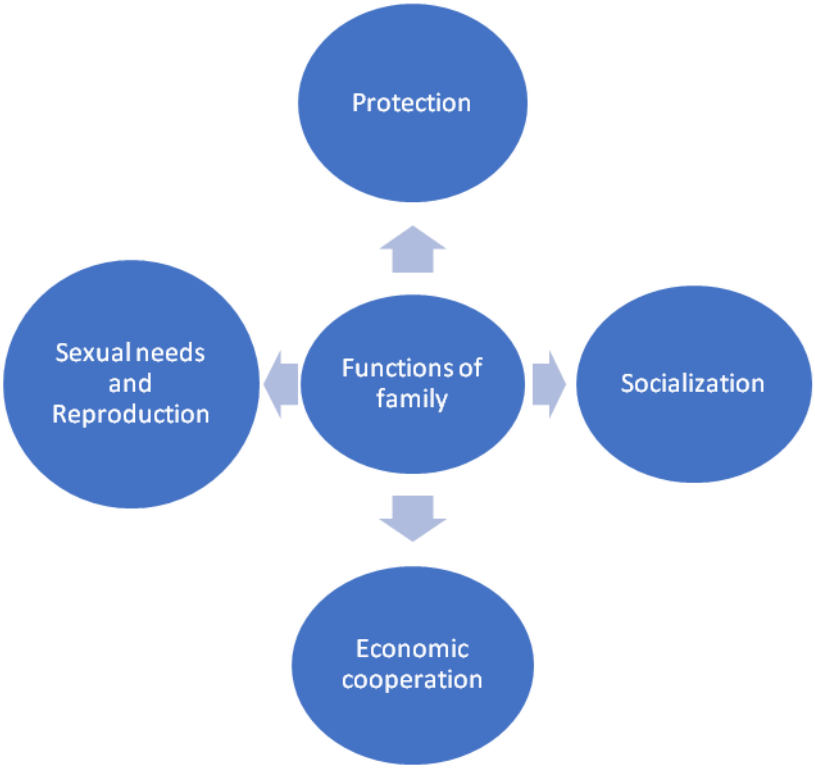


Figure 1.8 Functions of Family

This is how the functionalist perspective would discuss the (positive) function of the family as an institution. However, this perspective neglects the unequal distribution of power within the family. Conflict perspective would point out that family is also a site where women have less power and very little autonomy. While many rural women work more, both inside and outside the house, their control over property and production is limited. Men take decisions regarding the family income and how to spend that. However, in Adivasi households, women enjoy relatively better power and autonomy as patriarchal norms are less severe in their society.

Domestic Violence within Family: There is a popular saying- "home is heaven". Unfortunately, that is not true for many households in India. In rural areas, as also in urban sector, family need not be seen as a heaven where people live happily and are safe. There are various types of violence that occurs within the four walls of the house. Domestic violence within family includes physical and sexual violence against children, women and elderly people. The children face rampant sexual abuse at the hands of their male relatives or other acquaintances, though these are not reported due to social stigma or to protect family-honor. Physical violence against children is also very high as parents and other elderly people resort to slapping or beating to control them. These are accepted as normal, and children suffer physical and mental agony because of this.

Table 1.3 Domestic Violence in Indian Society across Religious Categories

Source: National Family Health Survey (2005-6)

RELIGION	Participants who experienced violence from age of 15	Percentage
Hinduism	67,426	33.7
Buddhism	681	40.9
Sikhism	1,492	26.1
Jainism	264	12.6
Muslims	11,396	34.6
Christians	2,039	27.8
Others	333	36.3

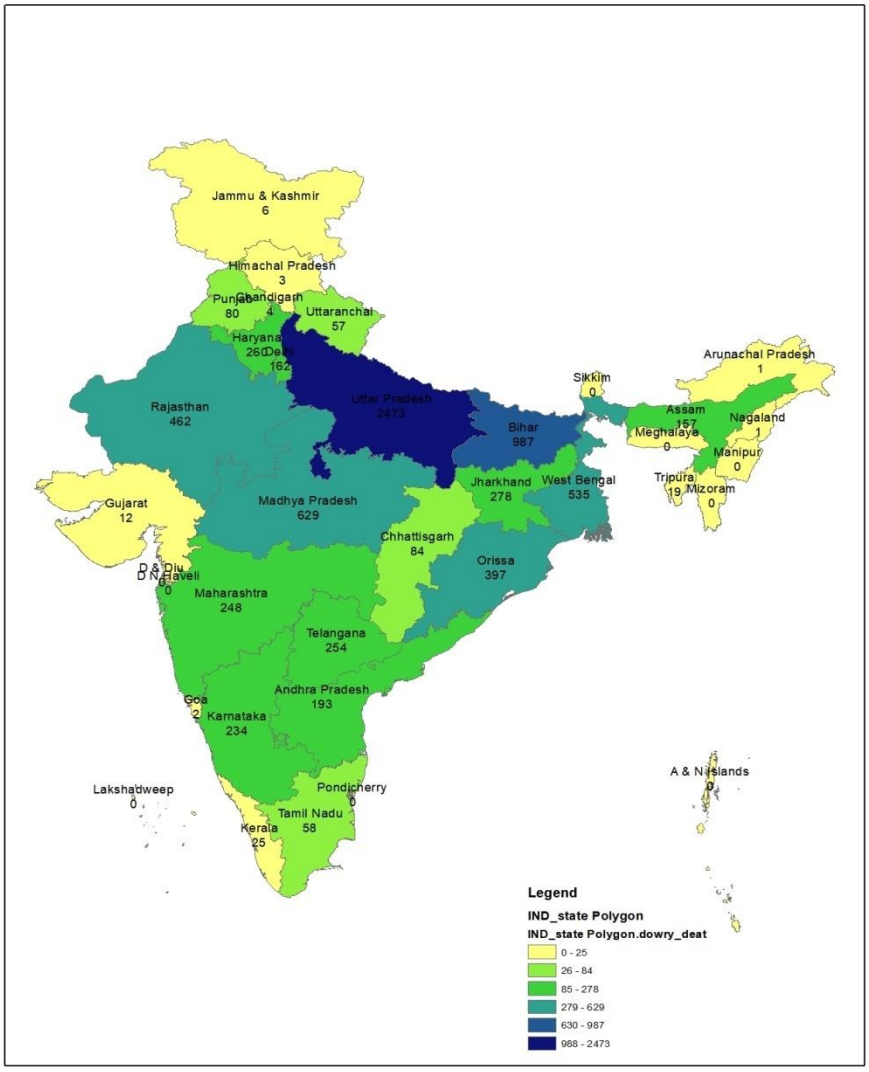


Figure 1.9 Dowry Death Rates in India

Source: National Crime Record Bureau, *Crime in India* (2016)

In a patriarchal society, women bear the brunt of male domination. In most part of rural India, dowry in marriage is a common social practice today. Historically, dowry was a Hindu upper-caste practice. However, later it spread to most other castes and communities. The women have to bring cash and consumer goods during marriage that puts huge burden on the bride's family. When a woman fails to bring promised amount of dowry after marriage she is mentally and physically tortured, and even killed by the groom's family. Another reason for domestic violence is alcoholism. Men drink and come home to beat their wives and children for flimsy reasons or even for no reason. This is an example of men exercising patriarchal authority over women and children at home.

Marriage

Historically marriage has been found to exist as a social institution in a wide variety of forms across human societies. The main function of marriage is to arrange sexual-partners, and thereby regulate reproduction in society. The many forms of marriage that exists may be presented in the simplified version as follows:

Monogamy is the practice of marrying one individual at a time. A woman can have only one man as husband at a time, or conversely a man can have only one woman as wife at a time. Polygamy is the practice of having more than one spouse. Here, a woman marries more than one man is called polyandry; a man marrying more than one woman is called polygyny. In general, in Indian rural society, monogamy is the norm. In some cases polygamy is also practiced, though the prevalence of the latter is very low. The polygamy practices are generally polygyny, i.e. a man has multiple wives at a time. However, in some communities in rural India polyandry is also seen, i.e. a woman has more than one husband at a time. The Toda community living in Nilgiri Hills is one such example where some women practice polyandry. A few other communities in the Jaunsar-Bawar region of Himachal Pradesh, in Arunachal Pradesh and in Kerala traditionally practiced polyandry. In contemporary times, this type of marriage tradition has declined.

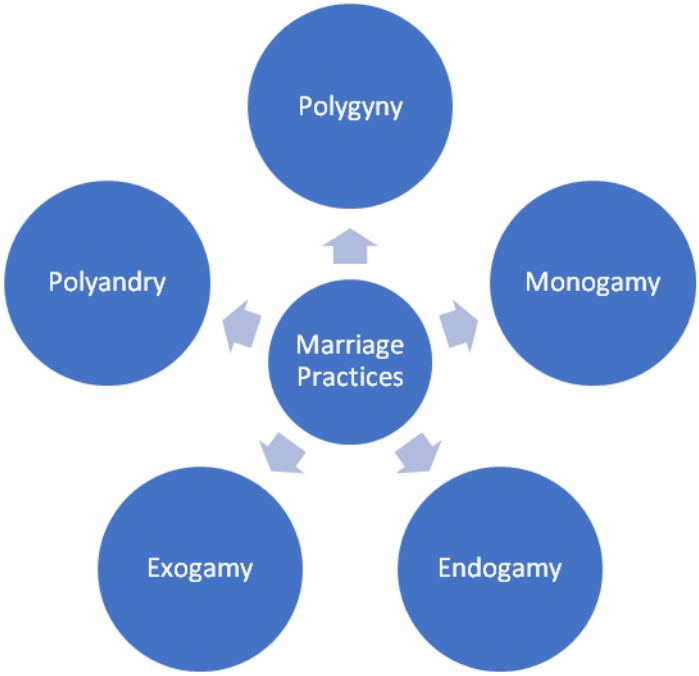


Figure1.10 Different Categories of Marriage Practices in Rural India

Based on the boundaries of marriage choices, marriage practices can be classified as **endogamy** and **exogamy**. Endogamy is the rule of marrying within one's group, whereas exogamy is about marrying outside the defined boundary. People belonging to various castes, religion, tribe or ethnic groups prefer to marry within the respective groups. Marriage outside one's defined group is called exogamy. While endogamy is a matter of common occurrence, exogamy is not very rare. Within Hindu community people marry across castes at times. Inter-religious or inter-ethnic group marriages do occur sometimes, but often it brings in resistance from both the sides. Sometimes, the disapproval takes violent forms and may even lead to killing the bride, or groom, or both, and sometimes even the relatives.

It might be interesting to note that exogamy occurs within endogamous groups. For example, within Hindu society, one is supposed to marry within caste (caste-endogamy). However, in some rural sectors in north India, one cannot marry within one's own *gotra*(sub-group) within the caste. Thus, one has to marry within caste but outside the gotra (*gotra*-exogamy). Similarly, in north India, marriage of the daughter is sought is other villages instead of within the village. The farther the village of the groom, the better is supposed to be the choice. This may be called village-exogamy. On the contrary, in South Indian marriage pattern, marriage in close proximity is preferred. Particularly cross-cousin marriage is popular among many South Indian communities- both within Hindu and Muslim communities. Here, one can marry one's mother's-brother's-daughter or father's-sister's-son (cross-cousin). In some rare cases parallel-cousin marriage is also preferred, i.e. marrying father's-brother's-daughter or mother's-sister's-son. Marriage among close kin also is found in the form of uncle-niece marriage. This tradition allows a man to marry his sister's daughter. This type of marriage may be considered "incest taboo" in North India, but is practiced among many communities in South India. Both cross-cousin marriage and uncle-niece marriage is on the decline in recent times.

As discussed earlier, social institutions prescribe norms and rules to facilitate social intercourse through individual action. At the same time, they also restrict individual choices and actions. Marriage is no exception. In rural India, marriage is mostly a family affair that also has to consider the rules imposed by caste or community. An individual making independent choice is very in frequent, and often not approved socially. This type of marriage process is popularly known as arranged marriage. Here the primary responsibility of getting the children married lies with the parents and other kin members. It is often seen as duty as well as right of the parents to find partners for their children. In Hindu religious tradition, the father has the religious duty to marry their daughter to a man. It is popularly known as *kanyaa-daan*(the gift of a virgin). This is supposed to be bring immense religious merit to the father.

The discussions above mainly reflect a functionalist way of looking at marriage as a social institution. If one looks at marriage from conflict perspective, the violence associated with marriage will be visible. When the man and the woman (or as it is often referred to- the boy and the girl) on their own decide to marry each other, it is often looked down upon in Indian society. In contrast to arranged marriage it is called "love-marriage". If the love-marriage partner is from the same caste/community then the families generally accept the proposal and marriage is consummated through the traditional processes. However, in case the partners are from different

caste/communities there used to be strong opposition and violence (as discussed in the previous section).

The practice of arranged marriage also has some unpleasant history. Among the Hindu community, there was practice of child-marriage. Initially it was limited to the upper-castes, and subsequently some lower-castes also adopted the practices. As per the upper caste tradition, the parents can marry their children as young as 4-5 years. Girls were often married off at an early age, usually before the onset of puberty to young boys or even very older man. After marriage the girl used to stay at her parents' place till she attains puberty. As soon as she starts menstruating, she is sent off to the in-law's house to consummate her marriage. This social custom had been a major pint of debate during colonial India and may social reformers including Raja Rammohan Roy had to fight for abolition of child-marriage. Even today, some communities practice child-marriage.

Another unfortunate marriage related social custom among the Hindus of north India was the tradition of *Sati*. It is the practice of burning the widow on the funeral pyre of the dead husband. This issue again was a very contentious topic of debate in colonial India, and the British often referred to this tradition to point out why India is uncivilized and backward. The rural communities practicing this glorified the tradition as the dead woman was worshipped as goddess *Sati-mata* (pure-mother). Temples were built in honor of the *Sati-mata* and people flock such temples in large numbers to worship the goddess. The East India Company rule in colonial India had banned this practice by Bengal Sati Prevention Act, 1829. Nevertheless, in independent India, this practice of Sati did happen a few times and it had led to huge confrontation between the state, the social activists who opposed the practice and the rural people who supported and practiced it. You may remember the case of Roop Kanwar who was made a Sati in 1987 when her husband died. She was 18 years old and was married for eight months when this happened. This incident in Deorala village in Rajasthan led to huge uproar in India about women's rights. This debate about tradition and women's rights in modern India finally led to enactment of Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act of 1987.

Kinship: Patriliny and Matriliny

In India, the majority of the population follow patrilineal kinship system. That means that after marriage the couple moves into the groom's house for living together. The children are primarily known as the member of the father's family and lineage (line of descent) and take the family name (surname) of the father's side. As per the customs of most of the communities, the daughters do not have property rights in the parents' family as they marry and move to the husband's family. This kinship pattern is also a reason why women are economically and politically weak as they have very less bargaining power within the family.

Some communities in India practice matrileal kinship system. According to this, the woman along with her husband lives with her husband in her parents' house. The children belong to her mother's family lineage and take the name of the mother's family. The well-known communities who practice matriliny are- the Garos, Khasis and Jaintias of

The case of **Bhanwari Devi** in Rajasthan is an example of how people try to defend their tradition. Bhanwari Devi was a government appointed social worker (*sathin*). In 1992, she opposed child marriage of an upper-caste family in the village in Rajasthan. The upper caste men were very angry and gang-raped her to take revenge. Unfortunately, some rural communities still stick to this tradition of child-marriage and seriously affect the life of the young girls.

Meghalaya, the Izhavas and Nairs of Kerala, the Bunts in Karnataka and the Malikuns in Lakshadweep (Minicoy) islands of the Arabian Sea. It may be remembered that the matrilineal society gives better power to women. However, that does not mean we can say that matrilineal societies are also matriarchal. The patrilineal societies are patriarchal, which means men are most powerful and important decision makers in the family. The matrilineal societies are not matriarchal as women do not take all important decisions for family or society. Here, men (usually elder brother or the uncle) plays an important role in decision making process within the family.

To-Do-Activity: You should watch the TV series *Satyamev Jayate* (Episodes 1 on child sexual abuse (Break the Silence), Episode 2 on dowry system in India (Marriage or Market Place), and Episode 7 on domestic violence (Danger at Home). Discuss with fellow classmates the problems of our social life with relation to family and marriage.

1.5 Understanding Village through Social Institutions-II (Economy, Polity and Religion)

Work and Economic Life in Rural India

As children and young students, we imagine "work" is something that is about paid employment in a formal organization. This is generally the meaning of work in modern times. However, not all types of work are in formal institutions with regular paid-employment. Most of the works performed in informal economy is not recorded, therefore they are not counted for official or government employment statistics. In rural areas, most of the work that people do belong to the informal economic sector. The wages that are paid, for farm labor as an example, is not recorded in any official document, neither is the amount that is paid follows any kind of formal rule. The wage rate may vary as per the type of work, season of work, and the age and gender of the worker. Generally, children and women would be paid less than men for the similar type of work.

Most of the villages are based on agrarian economy predominantly. Earlier the agrarian production was for self-sustenance; now increasingly people are heading for profit-oriented production including cultivation of cash-crops. The main food crops in Indian village are cereals such as rice, wheat and maize; major millets such as sorghum (*sajja/bajra*), pearl-millet (*jawar/cholam*), finger-millet (*ragi*); minor millets such askodo-millet (*kodu*)and little-millet (*kutki*); and pseudo millet such as Amaranth (*rajgira/ramdana*) etc. The cash crops include sugarcane, cotton, jute, oilseeds, tobacco, onion and soybean etc. In suitable climatic conditions the rural farmers also cultivate various fruits such as strawberry, pomegranate, grapes and guava etc.

In addition to agrarian production, the village economy consists of other informal sector production activities such as handicrafts, traditional artisanry work including pottery, weaving etc. Production and sell of local alcoholic beverages made of fruits/roots/flowers or tree sap such as toddy, *hadia* are also to be noted. Earlier, many of these productions used to take place through traditional caste based occupational groups. Basket-making and leather-work was the specialized job of some low-caste communities, and it continues to be done even today mostly by the same communities. Barber, washer-folk from the respective castes used to serve the rest of the population within the

village. The Brahmans would perform religious rituals, and the so-called untouchable castes used to perform the job of cleaning dead bodies of animals, cleaning toilets, sweeping the roads and so on.

The traditional Hindu villages in India, this kind of performance of various types of labor by different caste groups was unified as a system called *jajmani* system**.** Here, the payment for the labor performed was usually annual payment, especially after the harvesting. The payment was usually in terms of grains. Thus, the barber, the potter, the weaver, the cobbler etc. are expected to follow their caste-specific occupations to serve the land-owning upper-castes. In reality, most of these caste-specific occupations were usually not sufficient for sustaining the household need. Therefore, many of these artisans also worked in their small lands, if they had, or as landless agricultural laborers. Within the *jajmani* system the Dalits performed the most 'lowly' and dirty jobs such as removing human excreta from open-toilets, carcasses of dead animals, and cleaning various upper-caste households or public places. All these traditional occupations were seen as their respective caste duties.

Rural economy in India is predominantly an agriculture-based economy. However, the problem with rural agriculture persists even today. The pre-British era was a society ruled by Kings who hardly invested in agricultural growth and output. The king was the owner of all the land, and a few other individuals from the upper-varna category could own land. The Shudras and the Ati-Shudras (Dalits) did not have the right to own land; they worked as artisans or landless laborers. The farmers during this time were mostly tenant farmers who paid tax to cultivate the land owned by kings or others. During the British era, individual land ownership process started, but it was mostly the upper castes who could own land as the lower castes were too poor to do the same. So the tenant farmers continued to exist and the British collected taxes from all of them. The taxes were huge, and the burden on famers was too heavy. This colonial policy in fact broke the backbone of Indian agriculture.

After independence, the problem of rural economy was expected to change rapidly, but that did not happen. Though Zamindari system was abolished, further land reform to distribute land among the landless did not happen properly. The central government under the leadership of Nehru did undertake measures to improve the agriculture sector. He emphasized on building big dams for irrigation, and use of science and modern technology for increasing food production, but the measures were not enough to make India food-sufficient. The problems of marginal farmers, small farmers and medium farmers were multiple and persisting. The problems were about irrigation facility, good quality seed and productivity of land, and marketing the products at proper price. While they toiled hard to feed the nation, they themselves struggled to feed themselves. Story of farmers in the countryside is the same everywhere in India. Of course, there were some big farmers who benefited and prospered, but those are not the stories of a very small section of farmers.

Green Revolution in India: The idea of Green Revolution was started by American agronomist Prof. Norman Borlaug (1914-2009) to boost food production by using modern science and technology during 1950s and 1960s. The idea was to use high-yielding variety (HYV) of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, irrigation facility and mechanization of agriculture to increase the food crop output.

This ‘modern’ method of agriculture was seen as superior to the ‘traditional’ method of agriculture. The experiment was stared in Mexico 1950s and since then the world food production has increased many folds, especially in case of rice and wheat production. Prof. Borlaug is credited to have saved billions from starvation, and was awarded Nobel Peace prize in 1970 for his contribution to eliminate hunger from the globe.

When India was suffering from food deficiency and staring at mass famine in early 1960s, Prof. Norman Borlaug was invited by Prof M.S. Swaminathan to start the Green Revolution. Punjab was chosen as the main site of experiment and sooner it was extended to other north India states such as Haryana and UttarPradesh. IR-18, a semi-dwarf variety of rice, also dubbed as the “miracle rice” was able to produce about 5-10 times the amount of rice from the same land area when cultivated by using modern methods. Soon India’s rice and wheat production increased many folds. Within two-three decades India became one of the major exporters of rice.

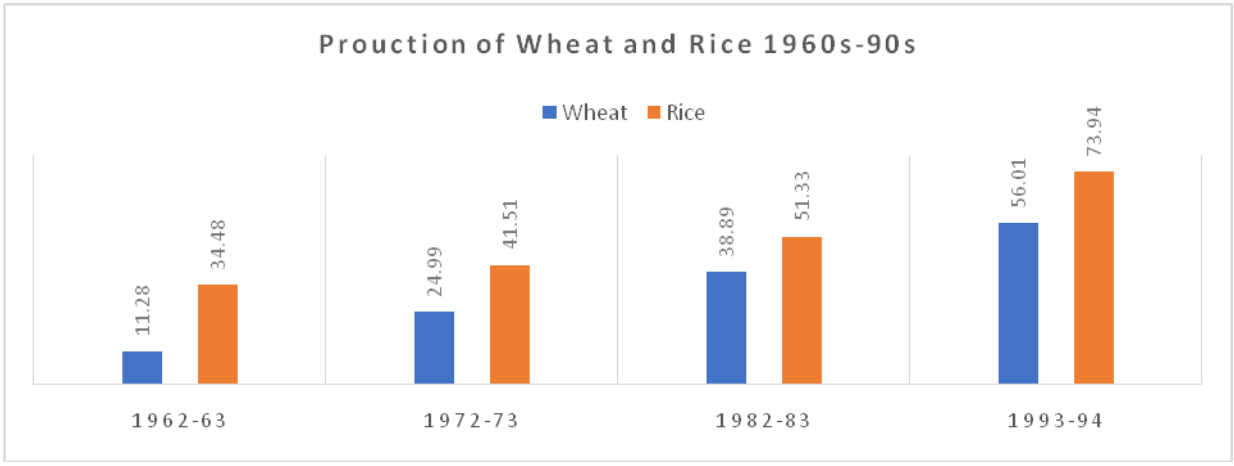


Figure 1.11 Increase in Agricultural Productivity after Green Revolution (In Million Tonnes)
Source:Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of India.


M.S. Swaminathan (1925-)

Agricultural scientist (geneticist) Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, is known as the “Father of Green Revolution of India”. After getting his Ph.D. from University of Cambridge in 1952, he held various important positions with the government of India in the agriculture sector. He was the Director General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (1972-79), Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Argiculture and Irrigation (1979-80) and then Director General of the International Rice Research Institute (1982-88). He is also the founder of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation that works in the field of biodiversity, ecotechnology, food security, climate change and geographical information system etc.

Nevertheless, there are also negative impacts of Green Revolution. Ecofeminist scholar Vandana Shiva points out the harmful impacts as follows:

a)Excessive use of chemical fertilizer has reduced soil fertility
b)Use of pesticides has poisoned our food and the ecosystem and had badly affected the health of the environment
c)Excessive extraction of ground water for irrigation has drastically reduced underground fresh water, and now Punjab and many other states are facing huge water-crisis even for drinking
d)Green Revolution promotes capital intensive agriculture. Therefore, it benefits the rich farmers and marginalizes the small farmers.

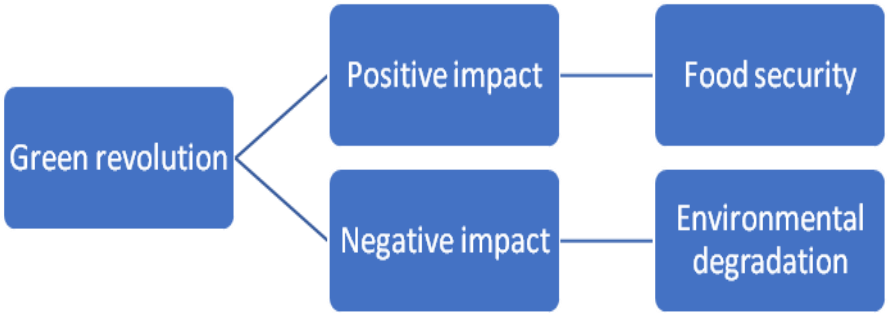


Figure 1.12 Impact of Green Revolution

Responding to the negative impact of green revolution, M.S. Swaminathan is now advocating "evergreen revolution"- that India should move towards sustainable development, by promoting environmentally sustainable agriculture,a nd by protecting biodiversity.

White Revolution in India: "White revolution" (later called "Operation Flood")refers to emphasis on producing more milk to make India milk-sufficient. The idea of Operation Flood started a few decades after milk-cooperatives were formed in Gujarat in late 1940s after a 'milk strike' by the milk-producers. To avoid the exploitation of middlemen, under the leadership of Mr. Trivubandas Patel and with the support of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the dairy-producers in two villagers of Kaira district of Gujarat established the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers Union, Anand in 1946. Out of this movement "Amul" (literally means "priceless") as a milk brand was born. Mr. Trivubandas Patel convinced Dr. Veghese Kurien to spearhead the movement under the name Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd.

Dr.Kurien furthered the movement by expanding activities of Amul Dairy. Milk production, collection and marketing were done through cooperative model. Amul became the prime example of a successful cooperative enterprise. As surplus milk was produced, Dr. Kurien endeavoured to produce (baby) milk power and cheese. Amul milk powder has a major contribution in reduce infant malnutrition to a large extent in India. The Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd. (GCMMF) has now more than 3.6 million milk producers as members.

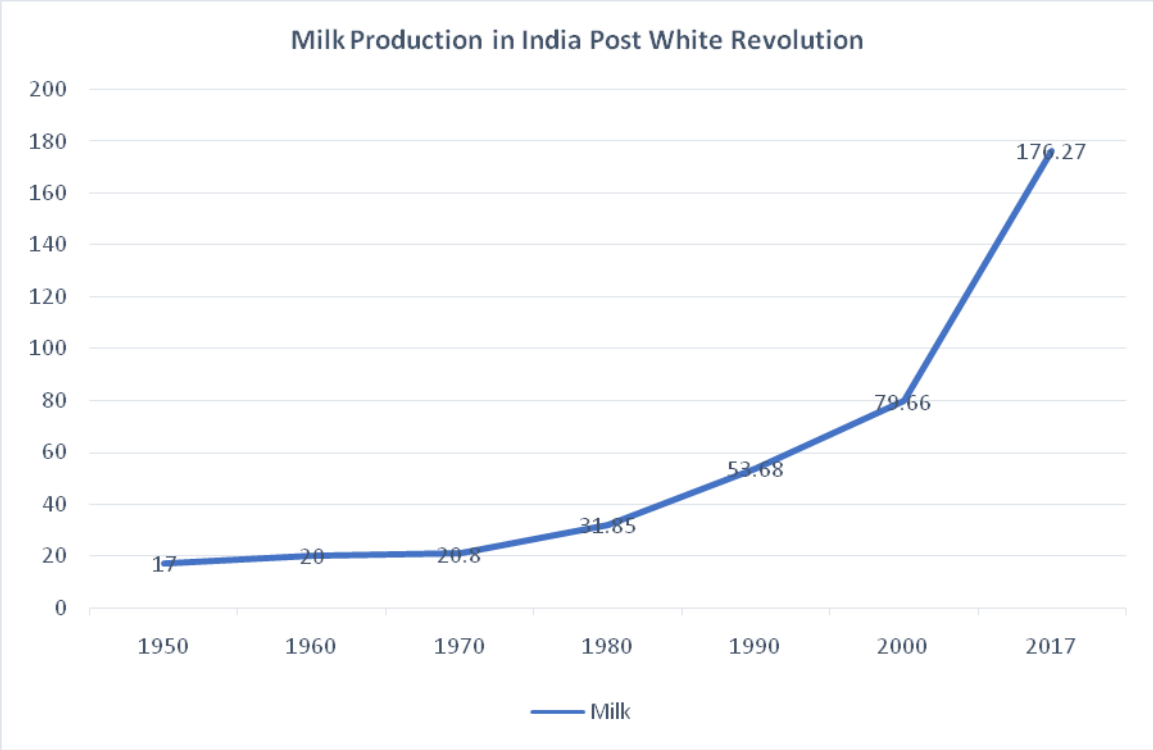


Figure 1.13 Milk Production in India (in million tonnes)

Source: National Dairy Development Board

A very popular film *Manthan* ("churning of the milk ocean", in Hindu mythology) was produced by ShyamBenegal that told the success story of Amul and Operation Flood. This film was also used by UNDP to promote similar cooperative movements in Latin America and Africa.

You might know that Dr.Kurien established **Institute of Rural Management Anand(IRMA)** in 1979. Since then it has grown into one of the most prestigious institutes in India for studying Rural Management. In his autobiography, Dr.Kurien observes- "My reasoning was even if only a handful of students each year from such an institute (IRMA) could grow, evolve, stride out into the world and, perhaps build some more Amuls, what a boon it would be for our *rural people and for the nation*."

(From Dr.VergheseKurien's autobiography- *I Too Had a Dream* (2005)).

In 1964, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri visited Anand and requested Dr. Kurien to replicate Amul model everywhere in India. In 1965, Indian Dairy Development board (IDDB) was established. By 1969-70 "Operation Flood" was initiated to replicate Amul model across India, and soon India became the largest milk producer of the World. Today India has more than 16 million milk-producers operating through 185903 co-operatives in 28 states (www.amul.com, retrieved 24th February 2020).

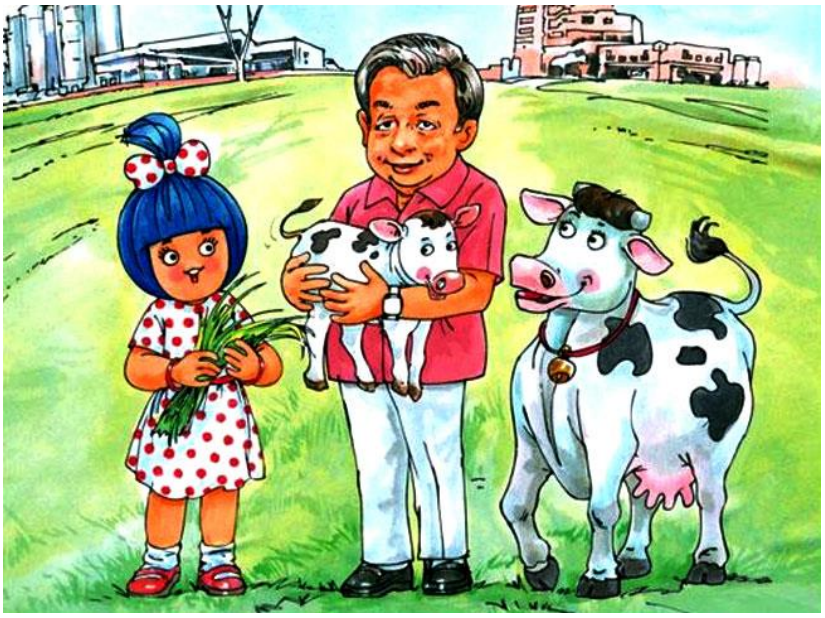


Figure 1.14 Dr. Verghese Kurien and the "Amul Girl"

Now Amul produces milk and many other milk related products including ice-cream. It has also started its overseas marketing.

In addition to the attempts to increase food and milk production, the government of India has also brought in initiatives for development of rural handloom and handicraft sector. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) as a statutory boy was set up in 1956 to"plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary".You may remember that Gandhi had made Khadi as a weapon of protest against the colonial rule. As he was against excessive industrialization, he promoted Khadi also as alternative to the modern economic system of industrial and capitalist production and consumption. As Khadi industry needs very less capital investment, it was suitable for poor rural artisans to revive rural economy and also gain self-reliance and dignity.

Political Institutions

Political institutions are about the distribution of power in our society. "Power" is the ability of an individual or a group to carry out their will irrespective of opposition or resistance. And we must remember that power in a society is a zero-sum game. If one has more power, it means the other has less; power is held in relation to somebody else. And how is power exercised? It happens through "authority". Authority is a structure of power that has legitimate right to exercise power in the society. Of course, there are certain individuals/group who exercise power that is not legitimate. People in a society resist or detest such illegitimate authority. There are various types of legitimate authority as mentioned below.

Types of Authority: Max Weber, a famous sociologist from Germany, has classified three main types of legitimate authority in society:

a.Traditional authority

b. Rational-legal authority

c. Charismatic authority

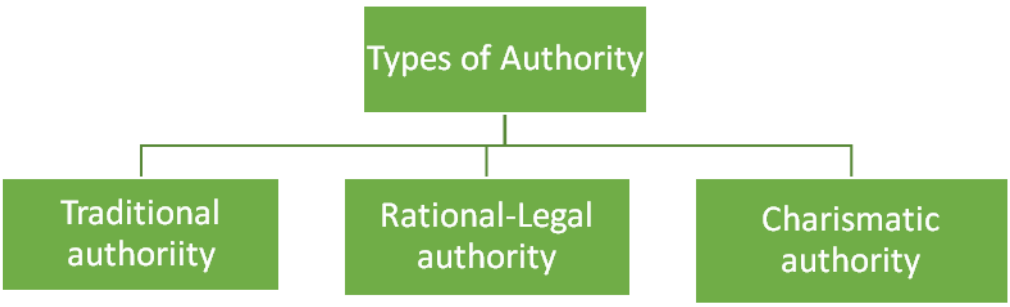


Figure1.15 Max Weber's Scheme on Types of Legitimate Authority

Preindustrial societies rely on traditional authority. In this case, the authority is derived from the age-old tradition of choosing the successor to the existing authority. The king, the village chief, or the head of the clan are based on this understanding that these positions are somewhat sacred and unchangeable. Small communities or societies have different types of authority structure which are different than what we are familiar today. These small communities are ruled by chiefs who are elected / selected on the basis of age, sex, kinship rules or some other criteria. These are mostly called stateless societies who are not under regulation by any modern-day state structure. They do not have written constitution, or a formal bureaucracy to rule.

The modern societies have moved on from traditional authorities to rational-legal authority (the state). The structure and function of this type of political authority depends on a codified law and the positions of power are based on some secular criteria rather than on the basis of any sacred or traditional belief. The posts of president, bureaucrats etc. are filled accordingly to written down procedures (a written constitution and codified law-book) and it is not fixed with individuals forever. There are different forms of state authority within each nation-state today.

The charismatic authority is about the special power that some people hold over others. Many popular leader, and religious gurus are examples of holding such authority as many people obey their authority even though they do not hold any official position. Gandhi is an example of charismatic authority of a very high order.

Indian villages have been part of bigger civilizations, and ruled by small and big kings and emperors who ruled from cities. However, the cities were only a few and small too. The overwhelming majority of the population lived in villages. The orientalist writings often described the Indian villages as "little republic" or "mini republic". This means the villages were small politically independent entities isolated from the rule of the kings. However, this is factually not true that the villages were fully independent 'republics'. The kings or emperors had taken active interest in villages as those were their source of revenue and supplier of men for army. Nevertheless, the king, unlike the present-day state did not control everyday affairs of the village governance for various reasons including the (lack of) faster means of communication.

Within the caste-society, the villages therefore were governed by the traditional village panchayat (village council). Panchayat literally means 'rule of five elderly men'. However, the number was not necessarily limited to five people only. Depending on the size of the village and the number of dominant castes, the size of the panchayat varied. The membership of the panchayat was limited to the members of the land-owning upper castes, so the Shudras and the Ati-Shudra (Dalits) had hardly any say in that. The panchayat manages the village social and political order. The disputes related to land or other resource sharing, family disputes, or inter-caste disputes were handled by this village body.

As discussed earlier, this aspect of village polity can be perceived differently from different perspectives. Gandhi, from a nationalist perspective, projected the village as the essence of Indian civilization. When he was in South Africa in early 20th century, the Indians (and the Africans) were not allowed to vote by the racist White government. The reason of discrimination provided by the white supremacist government was that the non-whites are not used to use democratic forms of government. Against this, Gandhi argued in court that non-other than the prominent British scholar Sir Henry Maine has mentioned the existence of panchayat in Indian society. Therefore, he emphasized that the Indians, as part of their long civilizational history, are well conversant with the modern form of democratic government.

For Gandhi, the villages should be governed by local people and the centralized state should not interfere in it. His idea of *Gram Swaraj*was to emphasise on village self-governance as he believed that people should be able to take control of their own lives and the decision making at the local level is the best way of empowering people. The top-down model of bureaucratic model of governance was a modernist and European system that should be discarded. Centralization of power leads to improper decision making and also leads to corruption. He further emphasized, resonating the idea of 'village republic', that the village should be independent as an economic and as a political unit. It should produce most of the things that people need to live, and should not depend on outside market for sustenance. However, while discussing the idea of gram swaraj Gandhi did not consider the problems that the lower-castes face in the villages in terms of not having enough power to raise their voice.

B.R. Ambedkar, on the other hand pointed at the problem of powerlessness of the lower castes in the village panchayat. From a subaltern perspective, he pointed at the romanticized view that the Indian village panchayat is an example of a perfect democratic institution. For him, the village is a caste-ridden society and therefore inherently unequal. Unless we annihilate caste as a social system, egalitarian institutions are not possible. The village panchayats are traditionally controlled by upper castes. The lower castes, especially the Dalits, are marginalized and even outcast to be part of any such governance structure.You might have heard of "Khap Panchayat". KhapPanchayat is an example of caste-council (*jaat-panchayat*) that adjudicates upon various social issues within the caste or between castes. Recently, these traditional social institutions are in news for ordering "honour killing". If the boys or girls from the community marry from other castes especially from the so-called lower castes, the caste elders punish them 'appropriately'. Sometimes the 'appropriate punishment' is to kill the couples. As this is done to protect the 'honour' of the community, it is often termed as 'honour killing'.

Adivasi Villages: The Adivasi villages are different from caste societies in the absence of caste-like hierarchy and discrimination. The local self-governance structure of traditional Adivasi villages in central India or in the indigenous communities in North-Eastern India or in other parts of the country is not called "panchayat". Generally, they have age and gender-based governance structures. The eldest male member is usually chosen as the head of the community. The authority figure is also often clan based, i.e. the successor is chosen from the same family or the clan. There are some matrilineal communities among the tribal groups in India, especially in the North-East. The Garo, the Khasi and the Jaintia have matrilineal kinship system, where name of the children and the property are transferred through mother's line. However, their local political organization is dominated by men. Among the Khasi community, for example, the men form the village council, and they also had integrated hierarchical political system to manage the Khasi kingdom. In addition to the local village level political administration, many tribes in central and North-East India also ruled over small/big kingdoms.

Similarly, the nomadic tribes in India such as the Banjara's of Central-South India would meet once in a year in a given place to discuss the issues of the community in the central 'caste-council' (*jaat panchayat*) which is the highest decision-making body of the whole community in the region. The issues discussed range from marital issues and other disputes, especially the disputes that could not be settled by local authorities in smaller group level settlements.

Religion and Rural India

India is a plural society with its population being diverse in terms of religion, language, food, culture and so on. In the context of religion, we may mention that all the major religions in the world- Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and the indigenous animistic faith all found here. Among them, the Hindus are the majority population. The official category of Hindu population includes the Adivasis (the tribes) also as Hindus, though the discipline of anthropology considers the religion of the Adivasis as different in nature than the 'mainstream' Hindu religious practices.

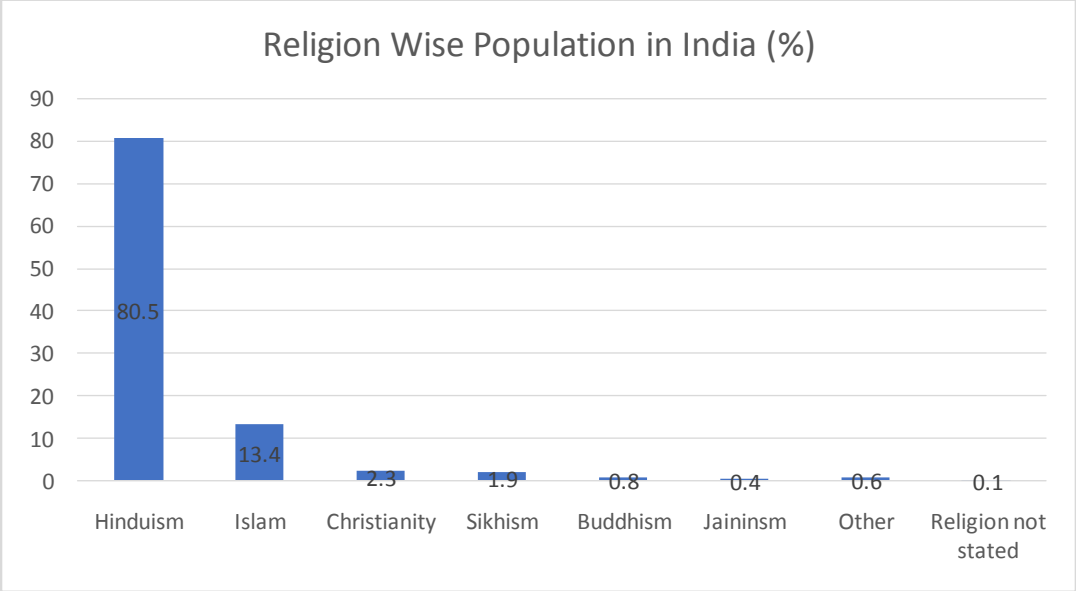


Figure1.16 Religion Wise Population in India

Source: Census of India (2011)

The religious practice of the Adivasi communities may better be called animism. This is the practice of worshipping spirits of various kinds- trees, mountains, or ancestors who are sacred. There is no clear notion of God as a divine figure and it is mostly without any written codified text that is expected to be followed by the adherents. Anthropologists also point out that magic is also part of the religious practices of the tribes that believes in controlling certain supernatural forces and forcing them to act as per the wish of the magician. Magic is used to cure diseases, get rid of some trouble, find the lost things, or to inflict pain or even death upon others to take revenge. Thus magic can be black-magic or white-magic depending on the purpose of the performer. Usually we talk more about black-magic in common conversations. Witch and witchcraft are normally associated with black-magic. In fact, magic is not just limited to the tribes, but is a general feature of rural religious belief. People tend to identify some people as witches or *tantrik*s and there would also be witch-doctors called *shaman*, *ojha* or *bhopa*. to counter witchcraft or help the be-witched persons.

The indigenous communities in the north-east part of India have their own religious beliefs that varied from community to community. The tribes of the Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are diverse in their indigenous religious beliefs practices and it is beyond the scope of this book to discuss all that. What is important however to mention here is that most of these indigenous communities have been converted into Christianity. In Manipur, the Meiteis living in the plains do follow Hinduism, but rest mostly follows Christianity. Sometimes, this leads to anxiety in the Adivasi/indigenous communities as they find a conflict/tension between their traditional beliefs and customs and the new religious beliefs and rituals.

Outside the Adivasi/indigenous communities, the rural India is predominantly Hindu. Thus, the traditional village society follows norms and values of a Hindu social order. Accordingly, there are various caste communities who have some common Hindu religious beliefs and rituals. In addition to this, there are also other caste specific religious institutions and rituals. Broadly, the Hindu religious tradition can be divided into two categories:

a.Sanskritic tradition or Brahmanical Hinduism
b.Non-Sanskritic tradition or popular Hinduism

The Sanskritic tradition is the religious beliefs and rituals followed by the dominant ‘upper’ caste Hindus. The non-Sanskritic tradition is that of the ‘lower’ castes. Of course, over a period of centuries, the upper-caste tradition co-opted the lower caste religious traditions or rituals if they were popular, and the lower caste tradition also adopts the upper-caste Hindu traditions. Therefore, the religious traditions of the larger Hindu communities are internally diverse and complex. The major world religions such as Islam and Christianity believe in existence of a single divine being. This belief is called monotheism. In contrast to that, Hinduism believes in polytheism, i.e. the existence of multiple gods and goddesses. These divine being is also represented through distinct iconography. These deities are worshipped differently depending on their origin. Around the worship of these deities, there are varieties of festivals and fairs throughout the year.

Functions of Religion

According to the French Sociologist Emile Durkheim, religion plays a very crucial role in people’s lives, more so for the people of rural areas. Arguing from a functionalist perspective, Durkheim

mentions that religion acts as a 'social cement' to keep people together. When they take part in common festivals and celebrate together a sense of solidarity develops that gives them a sense of identity, and that is very important for people in a society. Rural people in India are highly religious; and religion affects many aspects of social life. Food practices, marriage alliances, gender relations, economic choices etc. are deeply linked to religious beliefs.

Many traditional features of rural society are associated and preserved through religious practices. When people celebrate fairs and festivals, they sing songs, prepare special types of food, wear certain type of dress and decorate the house etc. with different types of colourful designs. These are sources of joy and enjoyment for people and they feel happy. Religious festivals of rural areas are often linked to the agricultural activities. During sowing and harvesting seasons there are some festivals such as Makar Sankranti, Bihu, Lohri, GudiPadwa, Nuakhai, Pongal etc. are famous festivals. Similarly, in the North-Eastern part of India,Kut in Manipur, Myokoand Moping in Arunachal Pradesh, Wangala in Meghalaya, and Aoling in Nagaland are some other major agriculture-related festivals of Indian rural communities.

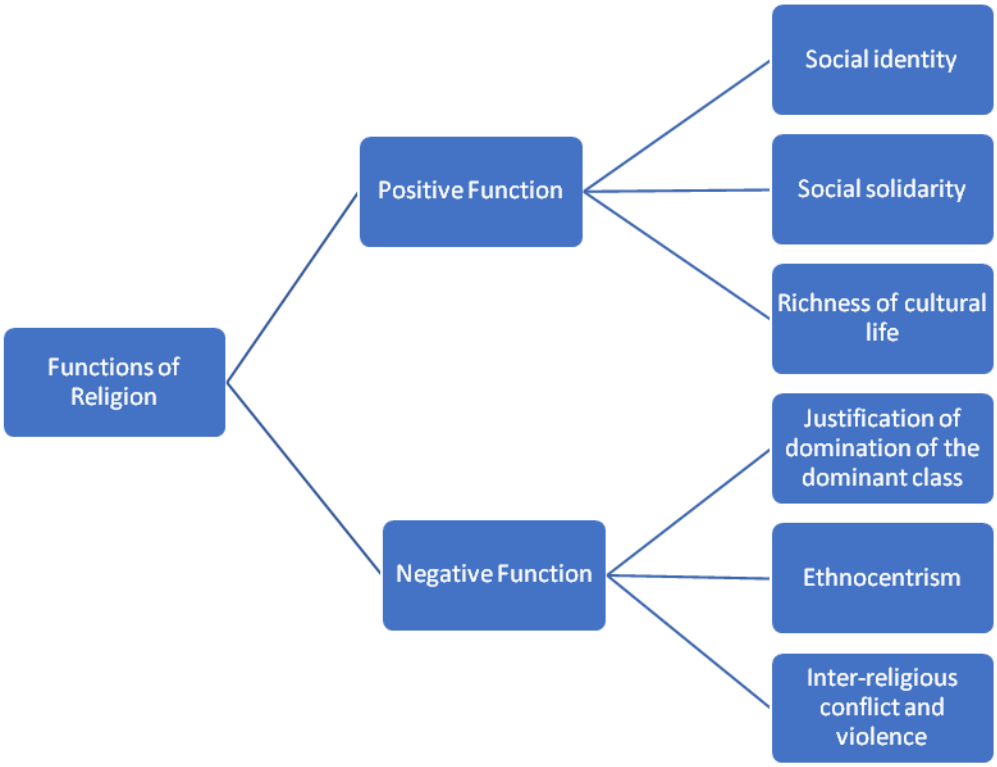


Figure 1.17 Positive and Negative Functions of Religion

Dysfunctions of Religion

Karl Marx, however, differs from Durkheim as he analyses the role of religion from a conflict perspective. For him religion is misused by the dominant section of society to hide the prevailing inequality in society. In the name of religion the powerful control the powerless, justify their domination, and control the resources. For him 'religion is the opium of the masses.' That means, religion has an intoxicating impact that prevents the oppressed from seeing the real cause of inequality and exploitation in the society. For example, in Indian society religious logic was cited from the sacred scriptures to justify caste inequality and untouchability. In rural India, people's belief in caste ideology remains very strong, and caste inequality is still practiced on everyday basis.

Exploitation of one caste by the other is justified in the name of religion. Religious ideologies become one of the sources of legitimacy of domination over less powerful. This ideology of claiming one's own religious faith or practice as better/superior than the other religious group or community is called "ethnocentrism". We may consider these as negative impact of religious beliefs. Sociologists call it dysfunction of religious institutions.

Another negative aspect of religion is that in India, inter-religious conflict occurs quite frequently. Especially Hindu-Muslim conflicts occur at regular intervals. Hindu-Christian conflict also occurs in Adivasis areas of central India. This is most unfortunate part of rural life that witnesses such intense hatred and violence against each other. Social scientist point out that such communal antipathy between Hindus and Muslims became a regular feature in Indian society after the British ruled India and adopted a divide-and-rule policy. It is also a well-documented historical fact that India was a land of 'unity of diversity'. The syncretic tradition of India is well known. Both Hindus and Muslims have been living in India together since centuries and, in many places they celebrate certain festivals together. The Muslims and the Hindu saints continued to support this syncretic culture, and the people visit each other's shrines to worship. Even today, despite of incidents of communal tension, the syncretic culture is maintained, though it has become weakened to some extent. Similarly, there is also syncretic tradition of Hindus and Christians. Many Hindus believe in Jesus Christ and Mother Mary, and there are even some temples where Mother Mary is worshipped.

To-Do-Activity: Have you heard of *Jallikattu* controversy a few years ago? *Jallikattu* is a very popular festival in Tamilnadu. During the celebration of Pongal, bulls are released into the crowd and the bull-catchers try to stop the raging bull by holding it by its horns or hanging onto its hump. Often it leads to injury to the animal as well as to men including the spectators at times. There has been long attempt to ban this sport as it is seen as cruelty against animals. It is alleged that people indulge in various cruel methods to make the bull angry. However, the supporter of the festival argue that it is part of the Tamil culture, and this helps in preserving the good species of bulls who in turn are important for an agriculture economy as they provides seed for producing strong breeds for ploughing as well as for milk. Supreme Court of India finally banned the festival in 2014, and there was very strong protest against it in Tamilnadu. Subsequently, both the Central government and the State government made amendments to various laws to allow the sport, and PETA opposed these amendments in Court. Finally the matter has been referred to a Constitutional Bench of Supreme Court in 2018.

If you have not read anything about it, then find out about the issue from internet and get ready for a debate on it. Do remember to read different aspects of the issue and initiate a healthy debate regarding how we as a society can handle such complex issues.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, we have discussed various terms that convey the meaning of "rural society" and the "village" as a dwelling unit. We learnt that the rural is defined in the background of what is urban. The village in comparison to the town or city is a much smaller unit with much less density of population and with predominantly agricultural set-up. In fact there are very different types of villages depending on the size of population, social composition of population and about its

closeness to the urban centres. In the difference between the rural and the city is not too abrupt. In Indian context, the villages have expanded into towns and cities, and there exists a continuum of social connection between different types of rural and urban settings.

In Unit-3, we discussed 'ways of seeing', that is how to look at social reality through various lenses. The way the British colonisers and the Western scholars perceived Indian villages is different from the way the nationalist leaders of India perceived them. Similarly what the nationalist leaders imagined about the village, the subalternist scholars challenged them and posited a counter view. In addition to this we also discussed how the functionalist and the conflict theorists focus on different aspects of village life and thus help us understand how social realities are not single and uniform. Therefore, a village can be understood in many different ways; our job is to evaluate these critically to choose our own perspective when we want to study a village.

Unit-4 discusses family, marriage and kinship structure of the rural society in India. Again, as Indian society is very complex, there are so many types of marriage practices. A few of them have been mentioned in this chapter, but there are also other types of marriage and kinship practices within India. In Unit-5 we have discussed the nature of rural economy, politics and religious institutions. The economic structure of a traditional rural society in India has been discussed, and how those have changed in due course of time has been brought in. The examples of Green Revolution and White Revolution are to show how India has become food and milk sufficient by successfully managing its rural economy.

The political dimension of traditional rural society is diverse as expected. The Adivasis, the caste-societies and the indigenous communities have had their own systems of governance before the modern Panchayati Raj system of local self-governance was introduced. The religious diversity of Indian society has been discussed and that beings out both the positive and the negative aspects of religious identity and ideology. Last, but not the least, we discussed how Indian society has been celebrating religious plurality since long by accommodating all the major religions of the world. However, with the colonial policy of divide and rule and subsequent political polarisation of religious groups there has been large scale religious violence and tension since independence. It is a challenge for us to overcome this for building a strong democratic nation.

Model Questions

1. What do you understand by "rural society"?
2. What are three main characteristics on the basis of which one can differentiate between rural society and urban society?
3. What are the perspectives to understand Indian society in general and rural society in particular?
4. How did the Western scholars perceive Indian village society?
5. What are the main difference between functionalist perspective and conflict perspective?
6. What do you mean by "book view" and what are its limitations?
7. Do you think field-view may also have problems in terms of perceiving social reality?
8. What are various forms of marriage that people practice in rural India?
9. What are the positive and negative impact of Green Revolution on rural India?

10.What is “Operation Flood”? Explain Indian’s journey towards a milk-surplus production economy.

11.Explain what are the positive and the negative qualities of religion in our society? What do you suggest to overcome the challenges of communal conflict?

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Chapter 2 Rural Society in India: Social Structure and Stratification

Introduction

In the previous Chapter, we discussed how we can understand a village society through various perspectives. In this Chapter, we will further deepen our understanding of the village society through discussing various aspects of rural social structure such as caste, tribe, class and gender. These categories (caste, class and gender) not only are different aspects of society, but also stratified within themselves. That means various social groups within these structures are vertically divided, one above the other. Accordingly, their privileges and rights of one group are different than those who are below or above them. This is called "social stratification". It leads to direct and/or indirect discrimination and marginalisation as the powerful tend to get more control over resources than the powerless.

Caste in Indian society is a very distinct feature, not found in any other society in such complex form. Though the institution of caste is typically a practice of the Hindu community, it is found in most other religious communities across India, such as- Islam, Christianity and Sikhism. Nevertheless, caste among non-Hindu religious groups is not as elaborately practiced as it happens among the Hindus. Based on the principle of purity and pollution, caste system divides people into different hierarchically arranged groups; some are considered superior than the others. Accordingly, theirs rights and duties are determined. The most inhuman tradition within caste system is the practice of "untouchability".

The Adivasis of different parts of India and the indigenous communities in the North Eastern part of India are very much different in their rural social structure. Social hierarchy/stratification is mostly absent within these 'tribal' communities. Their traditional economic life is very different from that of the traditional caste-based Indian rural society. In addition to this, their political and religious institutions are also markedly different. Therefore, it is important to study these communities living mostly in rural areas.

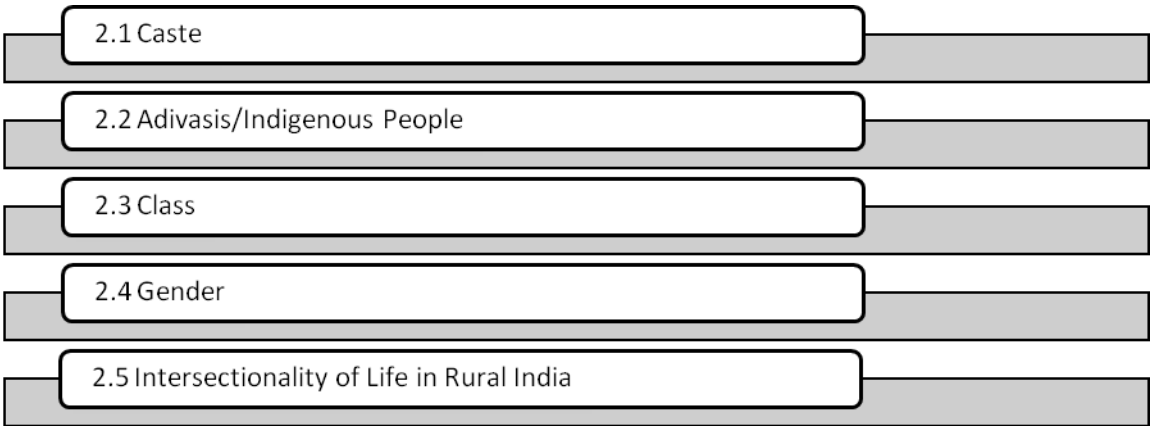
Class structure in rural society is evident as we see rich and poor households. However, the class status is linked to the other social status also, for example their caste. We shall explore the nature of class stratification in the rural society. Similarly, gender is another significant dimension of rural social stratification. As rural society is mostly patriarchal in nature, women have secondary social status with less political, economic and social rights as compared to men. Their health and education status also get affected because of discrimination that is widespread.

What is important for us is to understand the interconnected nature of all the various facets of social stratification in rural India. A woman, for example, is not just a woman; she is also a member of some other social group. She may be an upper caste, lower class woman. A landless farm-labourer may also be a lower-caste man. For analytical purposes we may try to understand various dimensions of social structure independently, but in reality, the way society functions, different aspects of social structures influence a person's life chances. In the following pages, we will try to uncover that.

Objectives

1.To explain various basic structures of society in rural India.
2.To explain the nature of stratification within these social structures.
3.To explore the interconnectedness of the social life that intersects at distinct points and shape life-courses of individuals.

Structure



2.1 Caste

We are all familiar with the term "caste". It is the name of the ancient institution that is so much integral to the history and culture of India for millennia. The English word caste originates from the Portuguese word *casta* that means 'pure breed.' Caste society is a very peculiar social arrangements where different social groups are arranged vertically along a social ladder. This social arrangement is characteristics of Hindu society, though in due course of time other major religious groups in India have adopted similar social arrangements within their communities.

"Caste" in India is often confused with "*varna*". "Varna" literally means colour, but it refers to the five larger social groups in the caste society- Shudra, Ati-shudra, Vaishya, Kshatriya and Brahman. Within each *varna* there are different *jati*s or castes. Each caste may also have further sub-caste groups. The names of castes and sub-castes are different in different parts of India. Usually people refer to their caste-name for identifying themselves socially. Varna is more a formal referral category for the spiritual analysis or ritual specialists.

According to the Hindu religious texts, god created four different *varna*s from various parts of his body. Brahmans are born from the head of the god, therefore they are supposed to be of highest *varna* status. Kshatriyas are born from the shoulder; they are the next in rank, below the Brahman. Vaishyas come from the thigh; and they are third in the varna-rank. The Shudra are born from the feet. Thus as per *varna* hierarchy as mentioned in the Hindu religious texts, there are four *varna*s. Later in history, a fifth *varna* called the "Atishudra" was added to the varna classification. Thus today, the Hindu social order, is divided into five varnas as follows:

a.Brahman
b.Kshatriya

c.Vaishya
d.Shudra
e.Atishudra

Out of the five varnas, the first three are known as *dvija* or the "twice-born" *varnas/*castes. These castes perform thread ceremony of the boys during childhood to initiate them into the varna, and this ritual is perceived as the second birth (thus called "twice-born"). As per the religious understanding, the Brahman is the sacred-ritual specialist as well as had the right to read and write. The Kshatriya's job is to specialise in martial art and engage in war or protection of the kingdom. They are the part of the ruling class. The Vaishyas are the trading communities. The Shudras are the service castes meant to serve the upper three varnas, and they did not have property rights. The Atishudra is the latter addition to varna-scheme whose job is to provide various kinds of services for the upper castes, These kinds of services are usually considered dirty and ritually defiling.

Figure 2.1 Caste-model in Hindu Society According to the Religious Texts (Book-view)

In everyday use, people do not refer to their varna, rather refer to their caste name. To make it more intelligible, we can draw parallels between the traditional *varna* classification and the present day official caste classification that is used for providing reservation or other benefits. It is mentioned in the following table:

Table 2.1 Correspondence between Traditional V*arna* Division and the Contemporary Official Caste Category

Varna	**Popular Social category**	**Official category**
Brahman	'Upper' castes, *Dvija* ('Twice-born' castes)	General Category
Kshatriya		
Vaishya		
Shudra	'Lower' castes, Bahujan	Other Backward Caste (OBC)
Atishudra	'Untouchables', Harijan, Dalit	Scheduled Caste (SC)

Please note that this is only a rough correlation between social category and official category. For example, all castes under Shudra varna are not part of OBC category. Mandal Commission had adopted a three point criteria for determining "backwardness", i.e. caste, economic and educational status of the family. Therefore, some Shudra-castes did not qualify to be OBCs. The population of various varna/caste groups are mentioned below.

Table 2.2 Population of Castes in India, 1981

Source: Mandal Commission Report (1980; p. 56) and Census of India 2011.

Varna/Caste	**Population Percentage**
Brahmans (including Bhumihars)	5.52
Kshatriya (Rajput, Maratha, Jats etc.)	7.11
Vaishya-Bania and Kayastha; and other forward castes	4.95
Shudra (OBC)	43.70 (excluding Backward-non-Hindu castes)
Atishudra (SC)	15.05 (16.6)

Please note: The official process of enumeration of caste wise population through census was discontinued after independence (from 1951). The last census of India to count caste-wise population was done in 1931. In 1941, there was no census due to World War-II. Mandal Commission used data of 1931 to calculate population percentage of the three so-called upper-castes belonging to *dvija*-varnas; and also the Shudra castes. The population of Ati-shudras (SCs) and Tribals (STs) however continues to be enumerated. Therefore, data of SC population (16.6) for 2011 is available.

Characteristic of Caste

The main characteristics of caste as follows:

a. **Caste is Determined by Birth:** One is "born into" the caste of her/his parents. It is never a matter of choice. Ordinarily, an individual cannot choose or change one's caste.

b. **Segmental Division of Society, and Hierarchy:** The caste society is divided into different segments, and the segments are hierarchically arranged based on the religious principles of purity and pollution. Those at the top of the ladder of hierarchy are considered to be purest castes, those at the bottom are considered the most polluting. The other castes are arranged along different rungs of the ladder according to the socially assigned purity of their status.

c. **Restrictions on Feeding and Social Intercourse:** The relative status of each caste determines who can interact with whom in term of close in close contact, sharing food, entering the house or physically touching the other. As the traditional practice, the upper-most caste will not accept food from the lower castes. Many so-called lower castes were not allowed to enter into the upper caste houses. And the lowest castes, that is the so-called untouchable were not touched by the upper castes. They were not allowed to have tea or water etc. in village tea-shops from the same tea-cup or glass. Separate set of cups/glasses were kept for the lowest-castes. They were also not allowed to enter into the temples. In Kerala, as per the caste ranking, there were distinct rules about how much distance each caste would maintain from the other castes. For example, the lowest placed Pulaya caste was expected to keep a

minimum distance of 64 feet from a Nambudiri Brahmans and Nairs, 40 feet from Kammalas, and 30 feet from Ezhavas. These traditional caste practices have loosened to a large extent, but still many rural societies practise various caste norms to different degrees.

d.Civil and Religious Disabilities and Privileges of Different Sections: As per the relative status of a caste, the caste-members are assigned different rights and duties. The religious texts prescribe the Shudras to serve the upper twice-born castes. Because they are 'low', the Shudras did not have right to own property including land and other valuables. The Ati-shudras, the lowest in caste hierarchy, did not have right to enter into temples and the Brahmans only had the right to become priests in temples. Again the top three *varna*s had the right to read and write, the Shudras did not have that right. In the traditional caste society, the Brahmans and other upper castes had monopolised on control over various kinds of resources. Right to education, ownership of land, right to rule, and right to do trade and commerce were reserved for the top three *varna*s. Walking on public roads, using public water-sources etc were severely restricted for the Shudras and Ati-Shudras. Many of these restrictions have been removed, thanks to modern laws, enacted during colonial period and especially after the independence. Untouchability, for example, was legally abolished soon after India got independence.

e.Lack of Unrestricted Choice of Occupation: Caste society fixes choice of occupation on the basis of birth. Thus, caste is an "ascribed status". If one is born in a trading community (Vaishya *varna*) then he does not have the right to become a ruler. If one is born in a potter caste (Shudra *varna*), then he cannot become a *pandit*. Thus it restricts one choice of livelihood, and thereby does not allow social mobility of among castes.

f.Restrictions on Marriage: In a caste society, people are not supposed to marry into other castes. Thus caste-endogamy is the rule. This is the mechanism to maintain caste boundaries. Preference to marry within one's own caste is still very strong and it is true for rural as well as urban India.

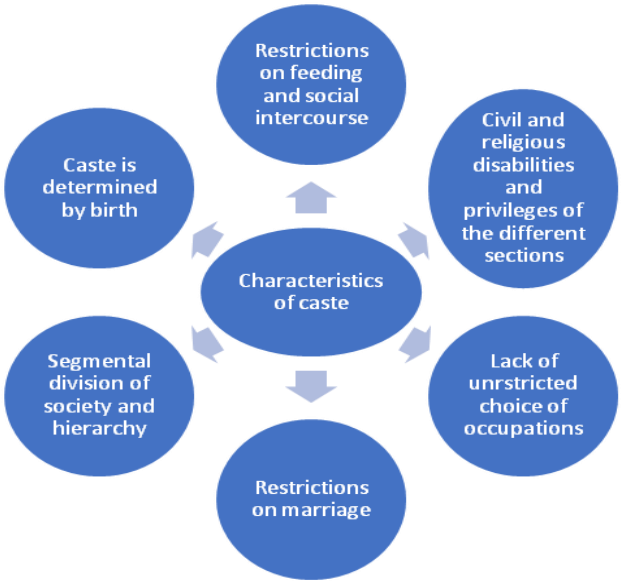


Figure 2.2 Characteristics of Caste

Functions of Caste

Since caste is an old institution and still going strong, it is important to assess what role caste plays in Indian society, especially in the rural context?

Determination of Social Status and Identity: Caste determines ones status-rank in society, and accordingly gives a distinct identity to her/him in the society since birth. In rural India, people are known by their castes and their social interaction depends on their caste location. Needless to say upper-caste have higher status, lower castes have lower status.

Division of Labour: A caste society is seen as a perfect example of division of labour. Different castes are assigned different occupations and they are linked to an integrated socio-economic system. The village *jajmani-system* is formed on the basis of reciprocation of goods and services by different castes. It is argued that this division of labour make the society function smoothly and there is no competition among individuals as their social position is fixed by their caste. Individual aspiration is curbed to avoid unnecessary tension. In addition to economic division of labour there are also other traditional duties for various castes; they are pre-assigned as per the tradition. In case of a public festival, families belonging to different castes are expected to perform their duties for the smooth conduct of rituals and other activities.

Social Security: When caste ensures division of labour, it leads to social security. One does not have to wander around and struggle for finding a job. The economic security is more or less granted. Same is also about social security as people in rural areas live in different caste-clusters. The relationship between them is more intimate than others. In matters of crises of a member, the fellow caste-members often come to the rescue. This kind of social practice offers certain social security.

Socialization: Caste as an institution is also responsible for socializing the members to follow caste specific religious/cultural tradition, behaviour, food, clothing, and learning economic activities. Since childhood, a child learns the profession of the family which is that of the caste. They also learn how to perform their caste duties when collective rituals/celebrations happen in the village.

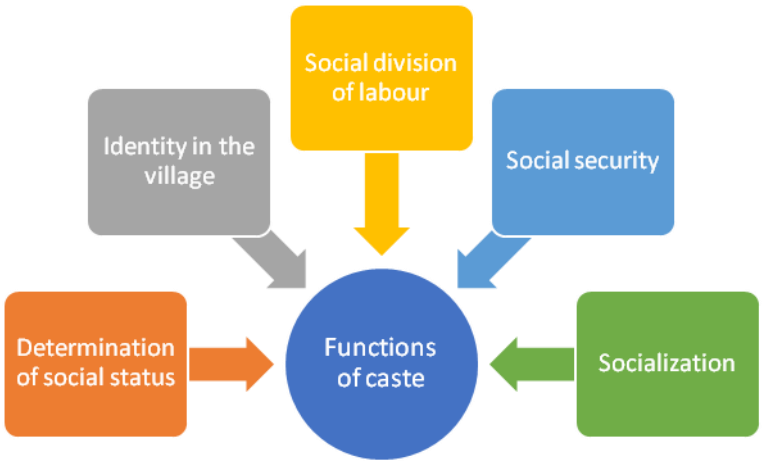


Figure 2.3 Functions of Caste

Dysfunctions of Caste (Caste from Conflict Perspective)

As discussed is Chapter 1, society can be analysed from different perspectives. The functions of caste we discussed above is mostly seen from a functionalist perspective. Some popular writings on caste in Indian society put forward this functionalist view to point out how the it was an ideal social institution that helped Indian society to manage itself in a harmonious way.

However, if we try to understand caste from a conflict perspective, it would look very different. This perspective points out the negative aspect of caste. It believes that the institution of caste is based on the principle of inequality; it bestows different amount of power to different castes. Thus the system is inherently exploitative. Some of them are pointed out below:

Hierarchy as Ideology, and Inequality: Caste society is governed by an ideology of inherent inequality of human beings on the basis of birth. This ideology may be called casteism. Accordingly, people in a caste society would treat each other as unequal. They have unequal rights and duties. The upper-castes have more rights, more privileges and fewer duties. The lower castes have very less rights and fewer privileges, and more duties towards the upper castes or towards the village collective.

Unequal Access to Resources: As upper castes are more powerful, they have more access to various kinds of resources. They have land, and they also control the village caste-panchayat. The village wells were under their control and the lower-castes often not allowed access to clean drinking water from the common wells. Thus, the upper-castes traditionally belonged to upper class, and the lower-castes remained poor. Even today, as it is reported in various media, in some villages the lower castes are not allowed to use footwears or sit on the chair in the presence of the upper castes, or ride bicycles through the upper caste lanes, and so on.

B.R. Ambedkar (1895-1958)

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is one of the most important political leader, legal luminary and social reformer who contributed immensely to our understanding of caste. Born in a Dalit community, he faced humiliation and ostracism on his way to get two Masters and two Ph.D. degrees from some of the best universities in the world- Columbia University (USA) and London School of Economics (UK). He wrote extensively on various socio-political, legal and economic issues and fought for the rights of the marginalised communities, women and workers.

He argued that caste is not a system of division of labour, but a system of division of labourers. That means, unlike in class system, caste system is not an open system where one can choose one's profession. Rather one is forced to perform certain labour on the basis of one's birth- whether one likes it or not. He pointed out that caste privileges are maintained as a result of endogamy.

Where class division has an "open-door character", mobility from one class to the other is possible. In contrast, castes are "self-enclosed" units- "some closed the door: others found it closed against them." This means the resource-rich upper castes closed the possibility of inter-caste mobility by not allowing intermarriage. Thus social hierarchy was rigidly followed to maintain the privilege of the upper castes.

Lack of Social Mobility: Poverty of lower castes was the direct result of deprivation from access to various resources, the most important being no right to possess land. In addition to that, occupations that people choose in a rural caste society are not a voluntary choice. One is expected to follow the traditional caste linked occupation. Leather work, pottery, agriculture, washing clothes, cleaning toilets or weaving etc are caste-specific occupations. People had no option but to follow them even if it was not economically profitable or socially respectable. In short, social mobility into different occupations was not allowed.

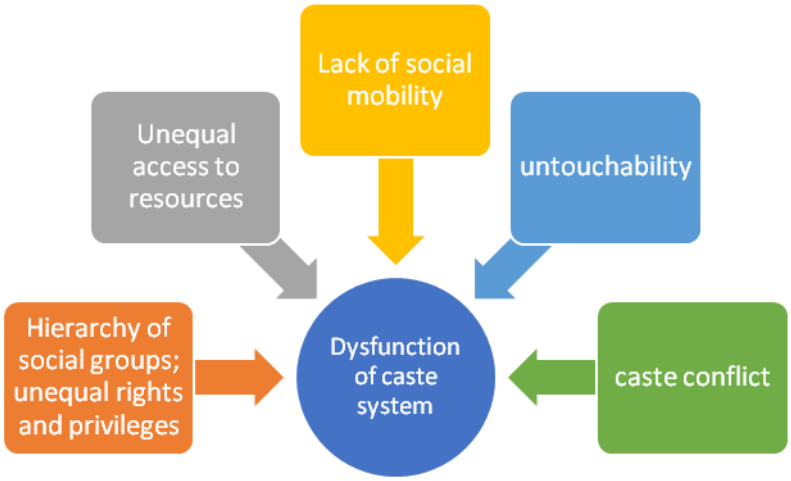


Figure 2.4: Dysfunctions of Caste

Untouchability: One of the most serious problems with caste society is the ideology and practice of untouchability. According to the notions of purity and pollution, the Atishudras were considered impure and polluting. The upper castes did not touch them. In Kerala, some of the lower castes were also treated as 'unseeable'. If an upper caste person saw them while going out for an auspicious task, then the mere sight of the Ati-shudras would pollute them. In general, throughout Indian village caste-society, the lower castes were forced to perform manual labour for the upper castes. They also performed all the dirty-works such as removal of dead cattle, cleaning the village streets and the cleaning the open toilets belonging to upper-caste individual households.

Caste Conflict: Different castes have had different interests and unequal power and resources. The social order that appear to be very smooth and harmonious is maintained by coercive force. Whenever the lower castes have resisted the excesses of the upper castes, the latter have resorted to violence. The former would be abused, beaten up, ostracized or made outcast from the village. There are reports of various forms of caste-related conflict and violence from various part of India that tells us about the burning of the houses of the Dalits, and raping the women from these castes to take revenge.

Caste among non-Hindus

The Hindu religious texts provide the justification of origin of hierarchy of various varnas/castes. Other major religions in India do not have such sacred prescription for having caste-like hierarchy among the followers. Yet, among the Christians, Muslims and Sikhs there are caste like hierarchies. However, it must be mentioned that caste among these non-Hindu religious groups are not as elaborate and as integral as it is in case of the Hindus.

Caste among the Christians: In Kerala, for example, Christianity arrived quite early- by 1st century AD. And those who accepted Christianity were the upper class/caste community known as the Syrian Christians. During 16th Century AD, along with the European traders came the missionaries and converted the local low-caste fisher communities into Christianity, and then the 19th Century Protestants further converted a major section of the low caste communities. Thus there is a strong sense of Dalit Christians and ('upper-caste') Syrian Christians among the Christians of Kerala. There are separate churches for upper and lower-caste Christians. The Dalits are often not welcome into the Syrian Christians churches. In some villages, the grave-yards are also separate for Dalit-Christians and upper-caste Christians.

Caste among the Muslims: Islam is based on the principle of egalitarianism, but in practice there is clear hierarchy among them in India. Owing various historical reasons and their close proximity to Hindu society, the Muslims are divided into two major categories- the *Ashraf* and the *Ajlaf*. The *Ashraf*s are the higher noble groups who are supposed to be of foreign origin, i.e. they are supposed to be the descendants of the people from Arabs, Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan etc. Among the *Ashraf*s there are different categories such as the Sayyad, Shaikh, Mughal and Pathan. This upper section among the Muslims is generally white-skinned, and is political and cultural elites.

The *Ajlaf*s are local converts. Among them are the local converts of high class/caste such as the Rajputs in North India; they also have high status. The rest of the Ajalfs are from common Hindu-Shudra background. Thus, they are the local artisan and other service castes. The last placed along the hierarchy are the local converts from the 'untouchable' category. In general, the Ashrafs and the Ajlafs do not inter-dine or inter-marry. In many North Indian villages, these 'low-Muslims' are even denied entry into Mosques.

Caste among the Sikhs: Similar to Islam, the Sikh religion also does not believe in hierarchy of the followers. However, in practice, the Sikhs maintain caste identities and related discriminatory behaviour. The main categories of Sikh community are the *Aroras* and *Khatris*, the *Jats*, the *Ramgarhias*, and the *Mazhabis*. The Aroras and the Khatris are the top-most category of Sikhs who are basically traders. All the Sikh Gurus are from the Khatri caste.

The *Jat*-Sikhs are the majority in the population. They are mostly farmers by occupation. The *Ramgarhias* are the artisan castes corresponding to the Hindu-Shudras. The lowest among the Sikhs are called the Mazhabis who are converted from the Hindu-'untouchable' castes. In some Gurudwaras, the Mazhabis are not allowed; in some other cases they ware allowed to enter in the shrine, but not allowed to serve food to other devotees. Therefore, in some parts of rural Punjab, the Dalit-Sikhs have built their own Gurudwaras.

To-Do-Activity: See the matrimonial column in the newspaper and various matrimonial websites. See how many people want to marry within caste, and how many want inter-caste marriages. What does it tell us about the marriage preferences of contemporary India?

Caste Society and Sanskritization

Hinduism is a conglomeration of beliefs in diverse set of gods, goddesses, rituals and festivals. The upper-caste and the lower-caste people in a given locality differ in terms of their ritual practices, food, clothing and even dialect of speech. In fact the differences are identifying markers for various castes. However, it is observed that the lower-castes often tend to emulate the customs, rituals and behaviour of the upper-castes. This process is called "Sanskritization". The upper-castes claim that the food, dress, rituals, customs and behaviour etc. is superior than that of the lower castes. Because the upper-castes are dominant in the society, their claims are often accepted by the lower-castes. The lower-castes therefore would often like to follow the upper caste tradition.

Figure 2.5 Some of the Components of Sanskritization

In some cases, the lower-caste communities try to become vegetarians which is the traditional food practice of upper-castes, especially that of the Brahmans. It may be mentioned that not all Brahmans are vegetarians. The Brahmana in Kashmir, Mithila region of Bihar, Bengal, Odisha, and the coastal Maharashtra/Goa are non-vegetarians. The lower-castes may also start performing certain rituals that is performed by the upper-castes; or worship certain deities that was not earlier part of their pantheon. They may start wearing dress as the upper-castes do, or don a thread over their shoulder as the Brahmans do. There are instances where the lower-castes have adopted upper-caste traditions and customs such as child-marriage, banning widow-remarriage, dowry-in-marriage and so on. In rural areas, earlier upper-castes used to prevent women to go out into the public domain, or to work in fields. Some lower-caste upwardly mobile families would also like to stop their women from going out and work in the field. This has some impact on women's freedom and economic independence in the lower-caste families.

Annihilation of Caste

Caste as a social institution has affected the collective psyche the way we think of the individuals. It divided people and treats them as unequal. It is widely accepted that caste is an old institution that has no place in modern democracy as democracy is based on the principle of "equality, fraternity and liberty." As Dr. Ambedkar said- " a society that is not democratic cannot have democracy". For him, Indian society has been deeply entrenched in caste ideology, not just limited to the Hindus, but also among the Christians, Muslims and Sikhs as well. Therefore, for the making of a new India, caste discrimination has to be eradicated, and caste as an institution has to be annihilated. Sadly, rural is India is too far from this ideal.

To-Do-Activity: Watch K. Stalin's movie *India untouched: Stories of a people apart* (2007) and discuss how it portrays caste among different communities.

2.2 Adivasis/Indigenous People

The "indigenous people" in the North-Eastern states and the "Adivasis" of the mainland India constitute 8.6 per cent of India's total population who are otherwise referred to as "tribals". The total population of tribes in India is 104 million. Out of this, 55 per cent are in Central India, 28 per

cent in Western India, 12 per cent in North-East India, 4 per cent in south India and 1 per cent elsewhere.

The official term to refer to these communities is Scheduled Tribe (ST) as they are listed under Schedule-I of Indian constitution. The suitability of the term "tribe" to refer to the indigenous population groups or the Adivasis has been debated. It is argued that the term "tribe" came to be used by the colonial authorities across the globe to refer to the 'uncivilized' populations and thus carries a pejorative connotation. The communities themselves prefer to be identified as "indigenous people" or "Adivasi" rather than as "tribe". In the local language, the indigenous communities in central Indian and other major states other than north east refer to themselves as "Adivasis". The tribes in the north-east prefer the term "Indigenous People". Therefore, we have used here the terms "Adivasi" and "indigenous people" instead of "tribe".

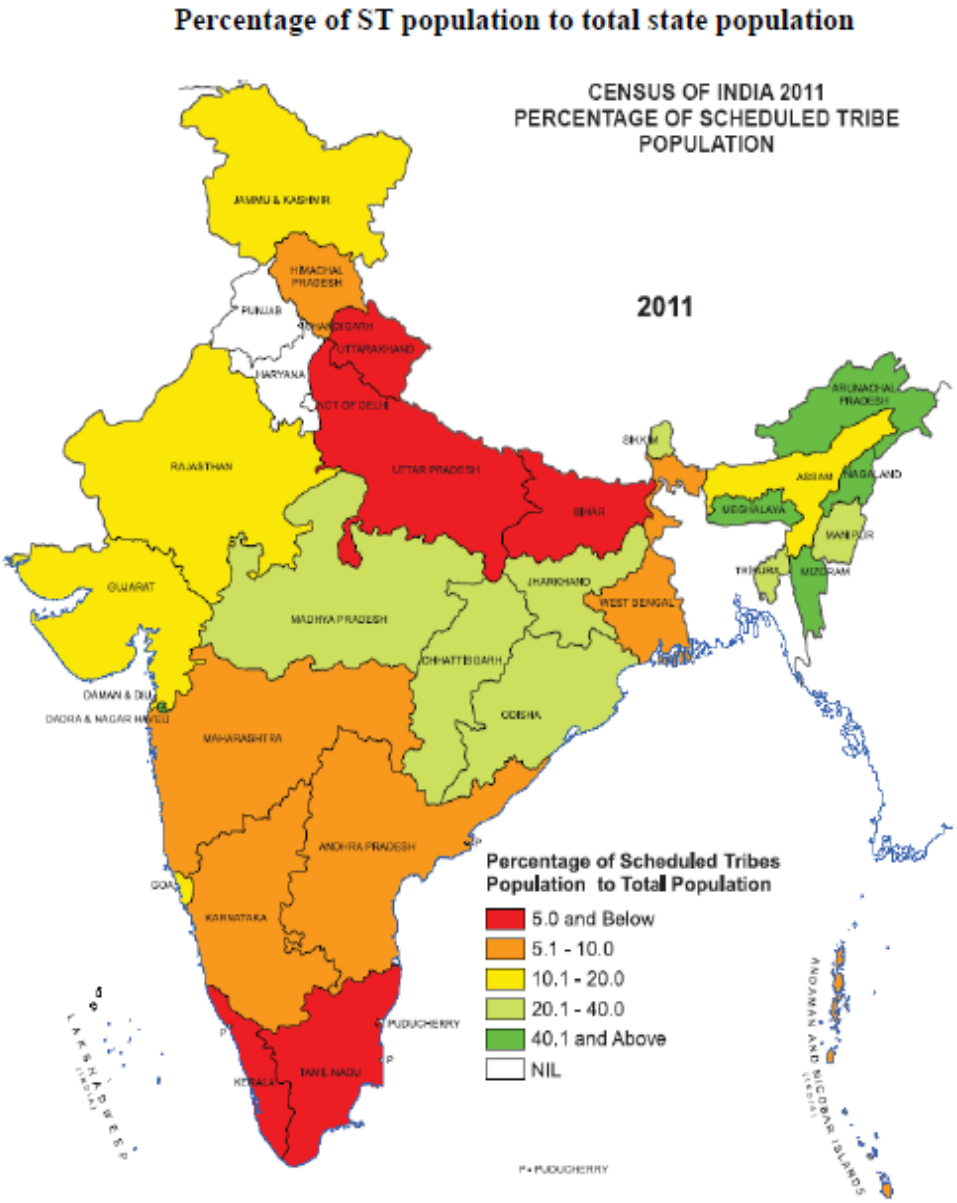


Figure 2.6 Map of Tribes in India

Meaning and Definition

The terms Adivasi and indigenous people both carry the same meaning- 'original inhabitants'. Most of the people belonging to these communities live in rural areas, though some of them over the period have migrated to cities and towns and settled there temporarily or permanently.

Adivasis or indigenous people in India have not been clearly defined, even by those scholars who have extensively worked in this area of study. The Indian constitution also stops short of defining them. Article 366(25) of the Indian constitution defines scheduled tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution". The Lokur committee in its report submitted in 1965 to the Indian Government identified five criteria for the tribes – primitive way of life, distinctive culture, shyness of contact with the community at large, geographical isolation and general backwardness in all aspects. However, the criteria are very vague and general, and difficult to apply with precision.

Characteristics

The characteristics of the Adivasis/Indigenous People listed below are the most common ones to be associated with tribes:

1.Homogeneity
2.Isolation and non-Assimilation
3.Territorial integrity
4.Consciousness of unique identity
5.Animism
6.Absence of exploiting classes and organized state structure
7.Multi-functionality of kinship relations
8.Cooperation for common goals

Presently, many Adivasi/Indigenous people groups in India display only a few and at times none of these characteristics. And on the other hand, some non-tribal communities may also display some or all of these characteristics. Therefore it should be noted that they are indicative and not definitive. This is because the Adivasi/Indigenous people are not a static entity and due to their contact with the mainstream non-tribal communities have undergone significant changes in their social structures, economic institutions, political systems and cultural identities.

Adivasis and the State

Colonial Period: The colonial history is replete with examples of tribes rising against the British forces in defence of their forests and land. In the later part of 19th century with the introduction of Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, Indian Forests Act 1878 and entry of moneylenders, traders and immigrants in the Adivasi areas, the Adivasis felt threatened and their revolts intensified. The revolts by Santhals (1855), Naikdas (1868), Kolis (1873) and Mundas (1895) are only some of the most prominent ones. Scholars have documented more than 100 smaller and less prominent rebellions during this period. The 1895 Munda rebellion was one of the most famous rebellions, popularly

known as *ulgulan* in the Mundari language of Mundas, which saw the central Indian tribe of Mundas rising against the British rule under the young and dynamic rebel leader Birsa Munda (1874-1901). His portrait hangs in the parliament museum as one of the first freedom fighters of India and in 1988 Indian Postal Service commemorated him by issuing a stamp with his portrait.

Birsa Munda (1875-1900)

Rani Gaidinliu (1915-1993)

Figure 2.7 Indian Postal Stamps in Honour of the Freedom Fighters from the Adivasi/indigenous Communities

Rani Gaidinliu was a Naga tribal girl who joined her cousin Jadonang's movement against the British for Naga self-rule in 1927 when she was just 13. She emerged as a spiritual leader in 1931 after the arrest and hanging of her cousin. She fought against the British and was arrested after many efforts by the British army in 1932. She was released in 1948 after India became independent. She was a supporter of the idea of the Heraka religion, traditional Naga religion and a separate Zeliangrong district within the Indian union. Rani was opposed to the Naga movement for secession from India and for an independent Naga nation. The secessionist movement was dominated by the Christian Nagas and they considered her close to the Indian government and thus opposed her politics.

Post-colonial Period: The tribal unrest did not die even after independence. In the northeast many tribal groups (the Nagas, the Mizos) demanded either complete independence or substantial amount of autonomy and self-rule within the Indian union. Indian government however, was unrelenting for a very long time. The tribes did not bow down to the Indian state in spite of their use of military forces to suppress the dissent. It was in response to these demands that later on separate states were carved out of Assam - Nagaland (1971), Meghalaya (1972), Mizoram (1987), Arunachal Pradesh (1987), Tripura (1972), Manipur (1972). Many groups gave up their demands for independence from the Indian Union. But some of them, like the Nagas, refuse to give up their dream of Nagalim.

In central and eastern India the tribal unrest continued because the Indian government never really discarded the colonial policies that had caused the tribal revolts. For instance, the state monopoly over the forests, which was a policy introduced by the British, continued even after independence. In this region during the colonial era different Adivasi groups rose in armed rebellions against the British. Even after seventy years of independence, Adivasis seem to be still at the receiving end and are facing a number of development challenges. Poverty levels are high, malnourishment, maternal

mortality, infant and child mortality is still high. Literacy levels are below average. Health care facilities are minimum. Road and other infrastructure in Adivasi areas are also in a pathetic state.

Construction of dams, mining, industries have left many Adivasis virtually landless and homeless. The benefits of these development projects have gone to the non-tribal elites. The tribals of Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, eastern Maharashtra, northern Karnataka and Telangana consider this to be the failure of the Indian state to take care of the interest of the Adivasis. This has led to the "Naxal movement" as the Naxals claim that they are fighting for the rights of the tribals. The naxals and the state are engaged in fights, and many innocent tribals get trapped. In addition to this, the forest guards, the government officials and the industrial or mining agents keep on harassing the Adivasis for various reasons.

The table mentioned below shows the high level of poverty low level of educational attainment among the STs (and SCs) in comparison to other population groups in India.

Table 2.3 Percentage Distribution of Expenditure Classes by Social Identity, Informal Work Status and Education, 2004-2005

Sl. No.	Economic Status	Social Categories (percentage share in own total)				Percentage of Un-organised Workers	Education[1]	
		STs/SCs	All OBCs except Muslims	AllMuslim except STs/SCs	Others* (without STs/SCs, OBCs & Muslim)		Illiterates	Primary and below Primary
1	Extremely Poor	10.9	5.1	8.2	2.1	5.8	8.1	5.0
2	Poor	21.5	15.1	19.2	6.4	15	19.0	14.2
3	Marginally Poor	22.4	20.4	22.3	11.1	19.6	22.2	19.4
4	Vulnerable	33	39.2	34.8	35.2	38.4	36.9	40.0
5	Middle Income	11.1	17.8	13.3	34.2	18.7	12.8	18.9
6	High Income	1	2.4	2.2	11	2.7	1.0	2.5
7	Extremely Poor and Poor (1+2)	32.4	20.3	27.4	8.5	20.8	27.1	19.2
8	Marginal and Vulnerable (3+4)	55.4	59.6	57.1	46.3	57.9	59.1	59.4
9	**Poor and Vulnerable (7 + 8)**	**87.8**	**79.9**	**84.5**	**54.8**	**78.7**	**86.2**	**78.6**
10	**Middle and High Income (5+6)**	**12.2**	**20.1**	**15.5**	**45.2**	**21.3**	**13.8**	**21.4**
	All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	All (million)	**302**	**391**	**138**	**258**	**423**	**270**	**164**

Note: 1. Refers to persons aged 15 and above.
Source: NSS 61st Round 2004 - 2005, Employment-Unemployment Survey. Computed.

(Reference: National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector(Arjun Sengupta Report 2009)

Tribal Policy of the Indian State

The debates informing the policy of Indian Government regarding Adivasis immediately after independence revolve around the ideas of three key figures – Verrier Elwin, G S Ghurye and Jawaharlal Nehru. Significantly, none of them was a tribal. Elwin was an Englishman studied English literature and theology in Oxford University and came to India in 1927 as a missionary. He never went back as he lived with the Adivasis and

Nehru's *Panchsheel* principle (Five pillars of tribal development):

1. Non-imposition of outside values
2. Respect for tribal rights customs
3. Development of tribal youth
4. Simplicity of administration
5. Emphasis on human growth

developed a close bond with them. Initially he advocated a policy of non-interference and isolation with respect to the Adivasis. He felt that contact with the mainstream society did more harm to tribals than good. Ghurye, though a sociologist by training, never really had any first hand interaction with the Adivasis. He held a view just the opposite to that of Elwin. He called the Adivasis "backward Hindus" and advocated for their assimilation into the Hindu society. Jawaharlal Nehru, on the other hand, advocated a policy of integration famously known as *Panchsheel* principle. He appointed Elwin as Tribal Advisor for NEFA (North Eastern Frontier Agency) now popularly known as India's North East. Elwin changed his earlier stance of advocating complete isolation for Adivasis and became a supporter of a middle path – integration – neither complete isolation nor complete assimilation.

In the light of the above discussion it may seem that after independence a major shift in the approach of the state towards the tribal question took place. Independent India also continued some of the colonial policies. For instance, the provision for special administration of areas inhabited by the Adivasis, a British policy found a place in the Indian constitution in the form of 5th and 6th Schedule. The 5th Schedule provides for the constitution of tribal advisory councils in the tribal dominated areas of central India. The council is supposed to have a stipulated proportion of representatives from Adivasis and the council advises the federal state on matters related to tribes. Panchayati raj institutions, a form of local self-governance, came in place in India in 1996 with the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) *Act,* 1996 (popularly known as *PESA Act*). The earlier central-state-district-block system was replaced with panchayats at three levels – village, block and district in tribal areas.

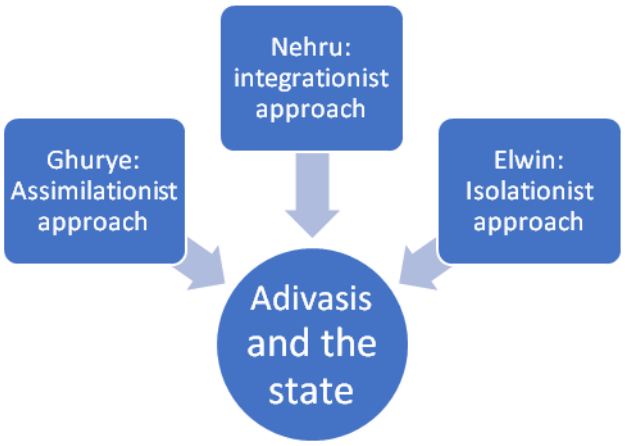


Figure 2.8 Various Approaches about the Adivasis and their Relationship with the Larger Society

The 6th schedule provides social, cultural and political autonomy for the tribes of north-east India through autonomous districts and autonomous regions. Every autonomous district has a district council and autonomous region has a regional council. It is a form of self-governance on the basis of tribal customary laws. These councils make laws related to land allotment, use of forest and canal waters, shifting cultivation, establishment of village and town committees, marriage and other social customs.

The country in its first five year plan started with Community Development Programs which were later replaced by Community Development Blocks. These were envisioned for the tribal areas but were later replaced with Tribal Development Blocks. Areas with more than two third population

belonging to tribal communities were selected for this purpose. Areas with less than two third but more than 50 per cent tribal population had Community Development Programme.

Tribal Sub-plan

On the realisation of the fact that Adivasi population in India was still lagging behind the concept of tribal sub-plan was introduced in the 5th Five Year Plan (1974-79). Under this sub-plan, funds were earmarked for the development of Adivasis.

Forest Rights Act

The Scheduled Tribe and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006 (known as FRA) was an attempt to restore the Adivasi and other forest dwelling communities' rights over forest.

Development and Displacement of the Adivasis

The provisions made by the state to protect and emancipate the Adivasi communities in India failed to achieve the goals that were set before them because the larger vision for India's development stood in direct contradiction with these provisions. Large scale industrialisation, mining and infrastructure projects (dams, irrigation and power) caused displacement, deforestation and pollution. Among the people affected by these massive projects Adivasis were disproportionately high. According to one estimate of the total of 21.3 million people displaced due to various development projects between 1951 and 1990, a staggering 40 per cent were Adivasis when their proportion in the total Indian population is little over 8 per cent. According to another estimate till 2004 a total of 60 million people were either displaced or affected by various development projects. The total land acquired during this period was 25 million hectares, which included 7 million hectares of forests and 6 million hectares of other common property resources.

Table 2.4 Information on the Community of Displaced Persons (DP) or Project Affected Persons (PAP) from Some Selected States

Source: Xaxa Committee Report (2014)

State	Tribals	%	Dalits	%	Others	%	NA	%	Total
Andhra	970654	30.19	628824	19.56	1467286	45.63	148856	04.63	**3215620**
Assam	416321	21.80	NA	NA	609015	31.90	893538	46.30	**1918874**
Goa	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	66820	100	**66820**
Gujarat	1821283	44.43	462626	11.29	1791142	43.70	23818	0.58	**4098869**
Jharkhand	620372	40.08	212892	13.75	676575	43.71	38178	02.47	**1548017**
Kerala	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	552233	100	**552233**
Orissa	616116	40.38	178442	11.64	671351	48.01	0	0	**1465909**
W. Bengal	1330663	19.16	1689607	24.33	2566223	36.95	1357999	19.55	**6944492**
Total	**5775409**	**29.15**	**3172391**	**16.01**	**7781592**	**39.28**	**3081442**	**15.55**	**19810834**

Denotified Tribes (DT) and Nomadic Tribes (NT)

Another set of highly marginalized communities who have only recently caught the attention of the mainstream society is the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes. There are two distinct sets of communities here. They are often merged and called DNTs partly because there is considerable overlap between the two groups. The Denotified Tribes are communities which were notified as Criminal Tribes by the British under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. A list of such tribes was prepared and they were kept in confinement. They were considered born criminals. After independence in 1952 the act was repealed and these communities were denotified, thus the nomenclature Denotified Tribes. However, the Criminal Tribes Act was replaced with another set of acts called Habitual Offenders' Act enacted by a number of different states in India such as Karnataka, Bombay, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Kerala, Madras and Uttar Pradesh. This new act preserved most of the provisions of the earlier act except the premise that these communities were born criminals. Some of the DNTs were also nomadic.

A large number of communities are there who lead a nomadic way of life but are not necessarily branded as 'born criminals'. They are called Nomadic Tribes. They are also quite vulnerable and stigmatized owing to their nomadism though not as much as the criminal tribes. The British found nomadic tribes difficult to control, and therefore, dangerous.

According to the Renake Commission, the first National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic tribes (2008), the total population of NT and DNTs in India would be above hundred million. However, since Indian Census does not collect information about caste/tribe identities except for the SC and ST we do not have a reliable estimate of NT and DNT population. The NT and DNTs can be classified into four broad categories on the basis of their occupations - Pastorals and Hunter Gatherers, Service Nomads, Entertainers and Religious Performers. Apart from the social stigma, general backwardness and poverty, these groups face a number of other issues. Almost all of them have lost or are on the verge of losing their traditional livelihood and have taken up wage labour, petty trade, begging, distilling, theft, pickpocketing as the alternative sources of livelihood. They also lack of access to credit, quality education and basic health care. Gender relations for some reason are extremely skewed among many of these communities. Though women play an important role in economic activities they also are subjected to considerable amount of violence within these communities. Caste panchayats still hold much sway over the communities and are known to be quite powerful and anti-women.

To-Do-Activity: Watch Anand Patwardhan and Simantini Dhuru's documentary film- *A Narmada diary* (1995) and discuss the problems of dams and displacement with the classmates.

2.3 Class in Rural India

In large and complex societies, the population is not homogenous. They are divided along different axes. Economic stratification is one of them. This is known as "class stratification". In the following pages, we shall discuss the notion of class in general, and the notion of class in rural society in particular.

The Concept of Class

Karl Marx made class analysis popular in social sciences. In any given economic system (mode of production), there are different groups having different economic interests depending on their position in the system of production. For Marx, a "class" is a collective of individuals having common economic interest in that system. Accordingly, the modern capitalist-industrial economy may be differentiated into two primary classes- the property-owning "capitalist class" (bourgeois) and the property-less "working class" (proletariats). The capitalists control the economic production system, and exploit the working class. However, Marx has not written much on the class structure of the rural agrarian economic system. It was left to the later Marxist leaders such as Vladimir Lenin and Mao Zedong to theorise on that.

Class in Rural Areas

Agrarian societies in rural areas primarily depend on cultivating the land or other related activities such as animal husbandry to derive livelihoods. These economic activities are interlinked with other economic professions. The typical *jajmani* system that traditionally prevailed in the Indian countryside had ensured the interdependence of the agriculturist and other service providers such as potter, ironsmith, and carpenters.

The most important aspect of rural agrarian society is the pattern of land-ownership, and the nature of relationship between those who own/possess land and those who cultivate them. Those who cultivate land do not necessarily own them. Often it is taken on lease from the landowners who do not want/need to cultivate on their own. Moreover, the landowners or those who have taken land on lease do not necessarily cultivate on their own. They often use farm-labourers who are mostly landless. The small or marginal farmers cultivate their own land as well as work in the land of others as farm-labourers. The terms of employment of farm-labour also vary. Some of the labourers are on a daily wage; some others have a long-term contractual relationship with the land-owners.

These forms of employment and land-relationship form the core of rural agrarian social -structure. Those who have landownership have more power and prestige vis-à-vis the landless people. This is the power of class. Before we proceed further, we need to discuss how to understand class in agrarian rural society.

The Idea of Peasant Society

During the post-war period, which is after 1945, the Western anthropologists developed the notion of a "peasant community". This society is supposed to be the first settled life that emerged after the disintegration of the nomadic way of life. The human beings started living in small settlements and derived their livelihood through agriculture. A typical peasant society is seen to be pre-industrial and the traditional "peasant way of life" was disturbed after the onset of urbanization in modern times.

The following are the characteristic of a peasant society:

a. The peasant society as a simple and homogenous group, not much differentiated in terms of their class.

b. A peasant is a small agricultural producer who uses family labour and simple equipment (low level of technology) to produce mostly for consumption of the family.

c. Their economy is not profit oriented unlike the capitalist economy of later phase. Some surplus that is produced is usually paid as tax to the higher authorities.

d. Peasant society is attached to the land through the bonds of emotion and sentiment. Agriculture for them is 'a way of life, not a business for profit'.

e. Their society follows a traditional way of life which is about more close personal interaction with the fellow community members.

f. Politically, the peasants are dominated by the outsiders. The political subordination is also linked with cultural subordination and economic exploitation.

Fakir Mohan Senapati, the father of modern Odia literature, wrote a novel called *Chha maana aatha-guntha* (*Six Acres and a third*) in 1896. It is probably the first novel of India on the exploitation of rural peasants by the landlords. This novel, written in Odia has been published in different languages in India. It has also been translated into English and published by California University Press.

Premchand's *Godaan* (*The Gift of a cow*) (1936) is another popular novel written in Hindi about the miserable life of the rural poor. English translation is also available. The students are expected to read these two.

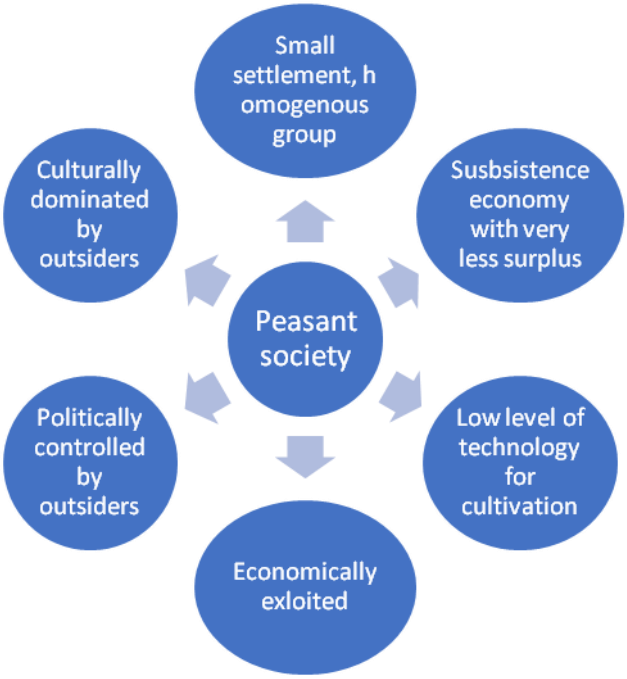


Figure 2.9 Characteristics of Peasant Society

This typical image of a peasant community emerges from European experience. However, in different parts of the world, peasant societies were different in nature. In India for example, they were differentiated into different castes. In some other places, including in Europe, there were feudal societies within which the peasants lived.

The Feudal Society

The peasant society, in due course of history, developed into a feudal society where all the land was in control of the feudal lord(s). The cultivators in the feudal economy were a subordinate class. They did not own the land legally, and paid taxes to the "overlord" or the "feudal lord". There existed a relationship of "dependency" and "patronage" between the feudal lord and the cultivators. The cultivators/peasants were also expected to display loyalty towards the lord not only by paying tax, but also working extra for the well-being of the lord without being paid anything. The feudal lord, in return, was expected to have a duty of protecting the interest of the peasants in the sense that the peasant would not die of starvation. Feudal societies declined after 19th century with the advent of industrialism and capitalism in Europe. However, in some other places, the system continued well into 20th century.

Agrarian Society in Contemporary Times

The agricultural practice has changed a lot in modern times. In the Western countries, agriculture became a minor economic activity as they focused on urbanization and industrial growth. Even their agricultural production also became commercialised and capitalistic. Only a small proportion of working population work in agriculture sector.

In contrast to that in India and many other Asian, Latin-American and African countries, agriculture remained the backbone of the economy. In India, only after 1990, agriculture became secondary to industrial and service sectors productions in terms of gross output. Nevertheless, majority of the population still depend on agriculture for livelihood and food security. The changes that has occurred in Indian agriculture will be discussed soon. Now, we shall discuss the Agrarian structure of India during colonial and post-colonial times.

Agrarian Change in India during Colonial Rule

The rural India of pre-British period has developed feudal systems of agricultural production whereby the land was mostly controlled by kings or the intermediary zamindars. The individual peasants/cultivators cultivated the land and paid tax in the form of certain portion of the harvest. With colonial rule, the British introduced new systems of revenue collection. In most parts of India- Bihar, Bengal, United province and in parts of Madras province, they gave land rights to the zamindars who had only the responsibility of collecting tax. With the zamindars becoming land-owners, the tax collection pattern also changed. Now farmers/cultivators were asked to pay in terms of fixed cash irrespective of the amount of harvest. Thus the farmers suffered when there was loss of crop due to flood or drought etc. as they had to pay fixed amount of tax in cash.

Famines during colonial rule was very frequent and severe. More than 10 million people died due to lack of food during 1850s to 1900s. About 24 severe famine outbreaks occurred during this period. The most severe form of famine experienced during this time was during 1966 (Odisha), 1868-70 (Central India), Bengal famine 1873-74 (Bengal), 1876-78 (Deccan) and 1897-98 (Madras).

Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen's work *Poverty and Famines* (1982) analyses the causes of poverty. He blames the economic policies and the undemocratic nature of British government as responsible for the repeated occurrence of famine that impoverished the Indian economy and decimated the rural population.

This led to emergence of money-lenders in rural Indian society. The cultivators needed money to pay the taxes in cash even when crops failed, and became indebted. As a result the zamindars and the money-lenders took their lands away when they failed to pay back, and rural landlessness increased. The misery of the rural cultivators increased as new class structure emerged in the countryside. For the landless, the motivation to work hard in others field also declined. The British rulers also enforced change in the cropping pattern by forcing peasants to produce cash crop such as indigo, cotton, rubber, sugarcane etc. instead of producing food grain. This led to several famines in India during the British rule. For 150 years, the landlords hardly invested in improving the agricultural condition, and reduced the tenants or cultivators into servitude.

Agrarian Change after Independence

During freedom struggle, the nationalist leaders had mobilised the peasants with the promise of changing the agrarian situation to uplift them from penury. Therefore, after independence immediate steps were taken to implement some of the long needed measures for structural change in agriculture sector. Two most important steps taken were abolition of zamindari/land lordship and land reform.

Soon after independence Zamindari Abolition Act was passed in 1951. The excess land from the landlords/zamindars were taken away and distributed among the tenants. Some states also fixed the "upper ceiling limit" of holding land- a single household cannot hold land exceeding the limit.

The land reform, unfortunately, did not become very successful as self-interested politicians and bureaucrats from the landlord community tries to dilute the provisions. This is was the case especially in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where landlordism exists to certain extent even today. In these states, as we find in news reports, the conflict between landlords and the landless communities come out in public in the form of brutal violence/killings against each other.

In addition to the land reform, the other development that took place was introduction of science and technology for improvement of agricultural productivity. Under five year plans initiated by the first Prime Minister of India Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, irrigation facilities were created through construction of dams, agricultural research universities were established for research on crop productivity that included producing high-yielding varieties of food crop etc. It has already been discussed in Chapter-1. The 'green revolution' and 'white revolution' that we discussed are a direct result of the state-intervention in agriculture and allied activities. All these led to increased food and milk productivity and increase in income of the farmers. The big land-owning farmers of North-Western India such as Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, parts of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra became the main beneficiaries of this new development. Thus a new class stratification emerged in rural areas with the medium and big farmers further enhancing their economic positions, and small/marginal farmers could not improve much.

More on the agrarian issues will be discussed in Chapter-5.

Agrarian Class Structure in India

Traditional caste society of rural India was mainly governed by the *jajmani* relations. With the rule of the British, the pattern of land-ownership changed and thus *jajmani* system as an economic

relationship on the basis of reciprocation more or less ceased to exist. After independence, the process of modernisation and undertaking different development initiatives led agriculture to became more commercialised. The relationship of land-holders and the landless labourers also has changed considerably. With out-migration from villages to cities, the lower-caste landless people are finding more lucrative jobs and land-owners find it difficult to get labourers to work in the file especially during the sowing/transplantation and harvesting seasons. This has led to labourers having more bargaining power vis-à-vis the land-owners. Of course, the dynamics of relationship between the land-owners and the landless-labourers vary from region to region. Therefore, we may not be able to present a singular picture of the same.

Given below are some of the schematic representations of the village class structure. Well known economist Damiel Thorner (1956), who worked on Indian agriculture, has provided the following classification of agrarian class structure in rural India:

a. **Maliks:** These are big land-owners who derive their income from holding lands. They are of two types- the big landlords and the rich landowners. The big landlords are those who have huge land tracts in different villages. They are the absentee land-lords who are interested in tax coming from these lands but without having any interest in managing or improving the land. The second category of Maliks are those who have big land-tracts but located mostly in one village. They give attention to the land management and improvement, and often supervise the cultivation. They sometimes lease out land to tenants or share-croppers.
b. **Kisans:** They are the working peasants who own small plots of land and use their own labour as well as family labour to cultivate. Kisans may be of two types- small land-owners and subsistence tenants. The former holds land that is sufficient to support the family. The latter is a peasant who may hold small piece of land or not hold any land, but cultivates other's land to sustain the family. Usually they do not have to work as wage-labourers.
c. **Mazdoors:** They are the landless labourers who work in other's field for a wage payment. They may sometimes take small amount of land on rent, or as share-croppers to cultivate for their own sustenance.

Figure 2.10 Agrarian Class Structure in India (as proposed by Daniel Thorner, 1956)

However, a lot has changed since the time Thorner presented his classification. The Maliks, for example, have lost most of their land due to land ceiling act. Those who still manage to hold relatively large tract so land have become enterprising farmers. Many small farmers are compelled to sell land to pay for marriage and dowry, other rituals, alcoholism, indebtedness etc. They have become landless labourers. On the other hand the middle level farmers are increasing. Therefore, a new system of class stratification has emerged that is more popularly referred to by the scholars. That scheme is as follows:

a. **Big Landlords:** In some regions of India, there are some big landlords who have very large landholding- sometimes exceeding one hundred acres. Unlike the old landlords, these new landlords generally cultivate this land by employing managers and many farm-labourers. These kind of landlords are found in the backward regions of India such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

b. **Big Farmers:** In the agriculturally developed regions of India, one find big farmers having land between 15 to 50 acres, or even more. They generally supervise the cultivation of the land, and use machines such as tractors and other modern technologies for higher production output. They are mostly from the local dominant caste and hold influence in local and well as higher level of politics. They often lobby with the government for getting benefit for the farmers. The farmers movement is usually led by this sections of farmers.

c. **Middle Farmers:** These are the farmers whose landholding is between 5 to 15 acres. Socially, like the big farmers, they also come from local dominant caste, but they cultivate the land by themselves, using personal and family labour. They do employ additional farm-labourers usually during the peak sowing or harvesting seasons.

d. **Small and Marginal Farmers:** The fourth category of farmers hold between 1 to 5 acres of land. They perform almost all types of labour for their farm production and hardly employ any farm-labourers. Sometimes, they themselves work in the land of other cultivators for a wage or for labour-exchange. This class of farmers are mostly indebted and are vulnerable to selling their land and becoming landless. With increasing population, their land is also getting fragmented with every passing generation.

e. **Landless Labourers:** A large majority of the landless labourers are from the Dalit communities. Mostly they do not have land of their own and they depend on others land for their livelihood. They are among the poorest in rural areas and are vulnerable to becoming indebted. As condition of loan, they are often bound to work for the big landowners. And in many cases, if they fail to pay, they were forced to work for the landowner for long years, and even the family members were forced to work for the same. They are called the “bonded labourers”. The Bonded Labour System(Abolition) Act 1976 was brought in to abolish the economic an physical exploitation of these landless laboures. The Act has been successful in abolishing the extreme inhuman conditions of labour, though is some places it is still prevalent.

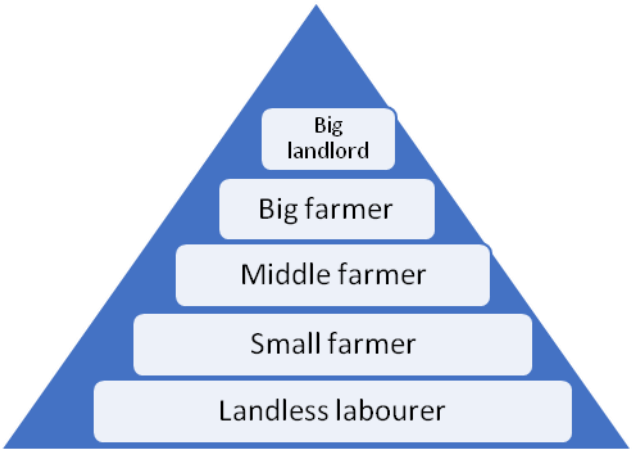


Figure 2.11 Contemporary Agrarian Class Structure in Rural India

The above representation is only a broad framework. As mentioned earlier, the regional agrarian history of different regions within India is different. In addition to this, the post-independence developments in different regions also have affected the agrarian class structure in diverse ways.

To-Do-Activity: You may visit the nearest big market where people from rural areas come to sell grains, vegetables and other farm products such as fish, poultry etc. There are various types of people who congregate there. Observe and identify their class and make a list of things that they have in common within each class and the differences between them. Talk to the village farmers about how they cultivate the land, irrigation facility, how they get seeds, fertilizers and pesticides etc. Also inquire the difficulty they face in marketing and getting a fair price for their product(s).

2.4 Gender

Gender is an important social dimension of human social life. In rural social context, therefore, we need to see gender plays an important role in the way people live their lives. Before, we proceed further, we need to understand some of the basic concepts such as gender, sex, masculinity, femininity, patriarchy and socialization etc.

"Sex" and "Gender"

We are familiar with sex and/or gender categories in our society. The sexual division of the human species (*Homo sapiens*) is primarily about male and female. The sex of a person is determined at birth depending on the primary sexual organs, and later they develop secondary sexual characteristics. However, some people change their sexual characteristics through medical intervention- sex change surgeries and hormonal therapy etc. They may be called trans-sexual; the persons who have changed their sex after birth.

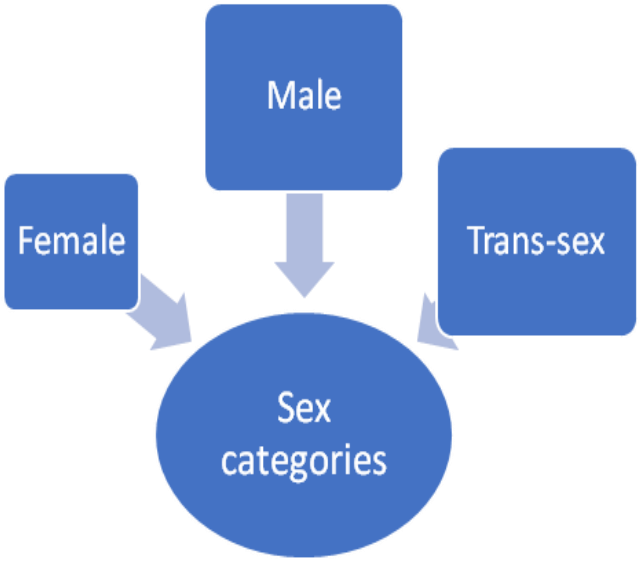


Figure 2.12 Sex Categories

"Gender" is about social identities of persons based on their sex. A person born as a female would be called a girl or a woman as she grows up. Similarly a male-child grows up as a "boy" and later a "man". Girl/boy and woman/man are gender-identities. In sociology, the term "gender" has a special meaning. It refers to "socio-cultural definition of woman and man, the way societies distinguish women and men and assign them social roles." Accordingly, there are different roles and responsibilities attached to woman and man. Behavioural attributes are also assigned to men and women differently. Accordingly, "masculinity" is considered the quality of being a man- the way he is expected to behave; and "femininity" is the quality of being woman- the way she is expected to behave. These attributes or characteristics is called "gender norms" in a society.

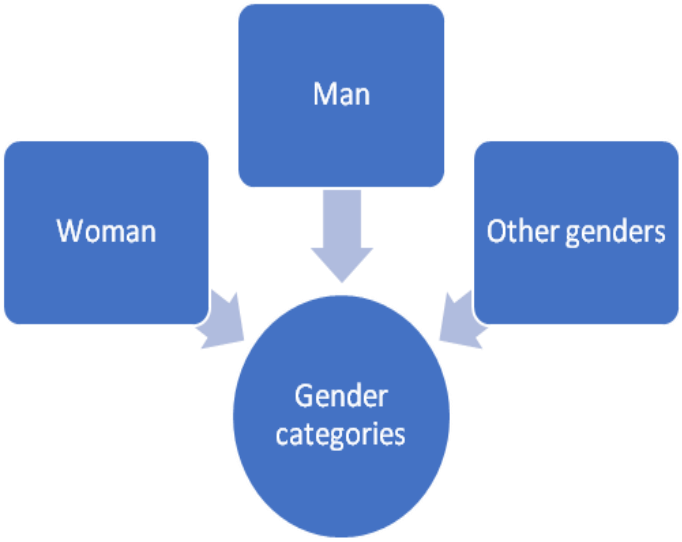


Figure 2.13 Gender Categories

It is important to note that gender norms are not fixed for ever in a society. It varies from time to time. What a woman is expected to do today in India, for example, was not the same a century ago.

Similarly, gender norms vary widely across cultures and societies. What a man in rural household is expected to do at home is not same a man in an urban society. Again, the masculine behaviour of an upper-class urban man in India will not be same as an upper-class urban man in China or Sweden. Nevertheless, the norms related to gender in a given society at a given point of time is very strong and people are under tremendous pressure to conform to those norms. Thus we can say that gender norms and values are not 'natural' qualities to be associated with people, but are 'socially constructed'. 'Socially constructed' means each society, at a given space and during a given period of time constructs these gender norms and imposes on people. It is variable, and historical analysis would show how many gender norms/values have changed profoundly over centuries.

Table 2.5 Some Examples of Feminine and Masculine Characteristics

Feminine Traits	**Masculine Traits**
Weak, dependent	Strong, Protector
Soft, caring	Tough, Decision maker
Submissive	Dominant
Emotional	Rational

While the vast majority of people accept their social identities as man or woman, not all are able to meet the social expectations. Many struggle to conform to the norm set for women and men. As we know not all men are strong; many men are also emotional. Not all men want to dominate women, or fight in war. We also know many women are strong and some are less emotional than other women. Not all women are comfortable in cooking, taking care of babies and/or the household. However, the social norms are strong and most people try to conform to these. It is through the process of "socialization" since our birth that we learn and internalise these behaviour. Deviations from these norms are often ridiculed and even punished severely.

Some people feel very uncomfortable with the socially assigned roles as man or woman. They often like to identify themselves as member of another gender not assigned to them by society. They may be called trans-genders. Thus a transgender man is one who was born with female genitalia, but she chose to live as a man instead of as a woman. Similarly, a person born with male sex organs may feel like a woman and start dressing and behaving accordingly. In most of the countries in contemporary world transgender identities are not legally recognised and they face serious public harassment and discrimination. In our country, transgender people such as the Hijras are highly discriminated in public places and in terms of finding job opportunities. At present, many Western countries have started recognizing the rights of transgender communities. In India, Tamilnadu government has officially recognised the transgenders as "third gender".

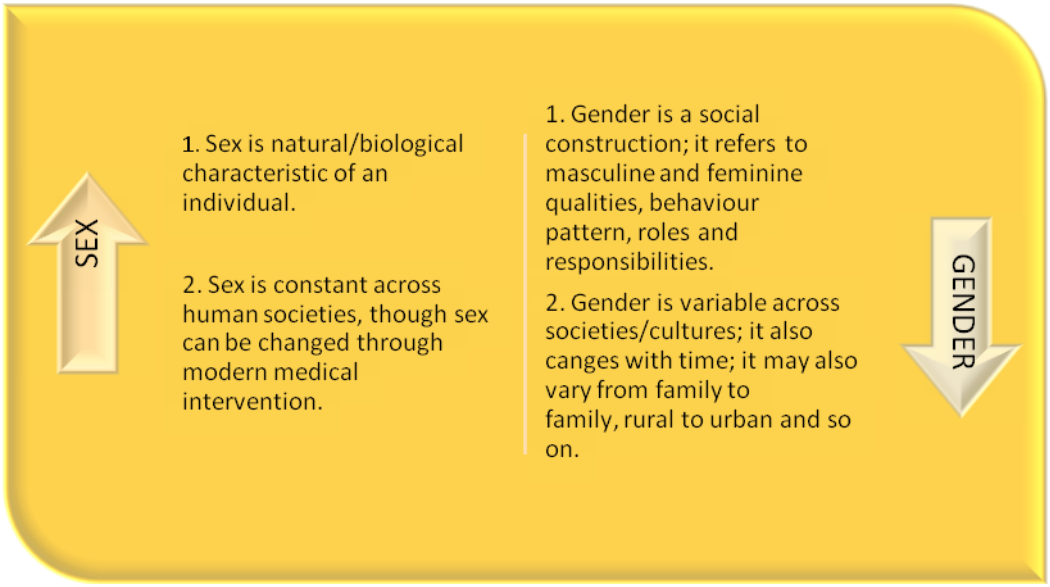


Figure 2.14 Differences between Gender and Sex

Why is gender important?

Like caste and class, gender is another key dimension of social inequality. Unfortunately, most of the societies in the world are "patriarchal" in nature, that means men control the society as it is believed that they are superior to women. As feminist scholars point out, patriarchy is the based on the belief in the ideology of inequality of men and women. This is possible through control of power that operates through various social institutions such as family, judiciary, politics etc. to deny women their rightful share in various types of resources. Patriarchy also determines unequal privileges, rights and duties for men and women. Men not only have more rights and privileges, but they also control women's lives as father, husband, brother and so on.

> "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"
>
> -Simon de Beauvoir, French Philosopher, in *The Second Sex*(1973)

One of the academically fruitful ways of understanding patriarchy is to take into cognisance that men have more power in the society. This leads subordination and exploitation of women in very intimate sphere as well as in the domain of the public. Because men are more powerful, they control almost all the institutions within the society such as the family, the political, legal, religious and economic institutions. The process of knowledge production is also controlled by them, and through that they justify that controlling and subordinating women is justified. Through various socio-cultural and legal mechanisms women are not granted the right to make choices for themselves. They have no dignity of life as they are seen as weak, and a burden for the family. They do not make choices and/or get secondary treatment as compared to boys/men in terms of getting education, health care and property rights. They also face harassment in public places. The degradation of social status is so high that people do not want to give birth to a girl child and abort them before they are born.

In the following pages we shall discuss more on the nature of this inequality and how it affects lives of women in rural India profoundly.

What gender hierarchy does to women and men in rural society?

While women are the oppressed social group for centuries in India, the situation may not be the same in rural and in the urban India today. Due to the influence of modernity, the urban India has changed to a large extent, and its impact can be seen in terms of women getting education and pursuing jobs. This is not to say that they do not face any discrimination or harassment, but to point out that the degree of freedom and opportunity is now more easily available to them in urban areas. The rural areas too have changed, but to a much lesser extent.

Take the general condition of women for example. The rural society is still struggling with poverty and lack of education. The women are not highly educated and often work as agricultural-labourers in their own fields or as wage-earners, or work as housewives (home-makers) taking care of family. Depending on their caste or religious community, they are bound by various social customs and are not free to leave the house premises to out on their own. In many villages, they have to cover their face, and accept restrictions in interacting with non-family members even within the village.

The custom and tradition in most part of rural India enjoins women to serve food to all others and then only take her own food. As a result she ends up eating less than others. Other cultural practices such as frequent fasting, not consuming non-vegetarian food also lead to malnutrition and ill-health. Often, women's health care is neglected and they are the last in the family to go to the hospital.

Gendered Division of Labour: The gendered division of labour within the family ensures that women do the cooking, cleaning, care-giving work. The lower-class women also work in their own field and take care of cattle and other domestic animals. It is well known that women work from early morning, and are the last to go to bed. Yet, these kinds of labour are not seen as important as these are not paid-labour. Only paid labour is seen as important labour, and the men's labour is seen as more valuable.

Men Control Women's Lives, and Bodies too: Within the family, women often do not have a voice. They hardly take part in the decision making process related to family or even about their own personal lives. For example, before independence, men across caste and class did not allow women to take education. Until a few decades ago, girl children in villages used to drop out of school in large numbers. They were made to take care of the younger siblings and the daily household chores such as cleaning and cooking. After education became free and compulsory, parents are sending the girl-children to school, but many do not get the chance to take up higher education, thus forgo the opportunity of getting a job in formal or in the skilled sector.

Marriage choices for girls (and boys, of course) are often decided by the family which is again bound by the caste and other cultural norms. The marriage happens early, often before the legal age of 18. Early marriage and then frequent pregnancy leads to serious health consequences for women. Whom they marry, and number of children they would give birth to- all these decisions are taken by the elderly male members. Moreover, a woman is blamed if she fails to give birth, or if she fails to

give birth to a male child. She is often forced to keep on reproducing till a male child is born. Thus men exercise full control over women's reproductive activities.

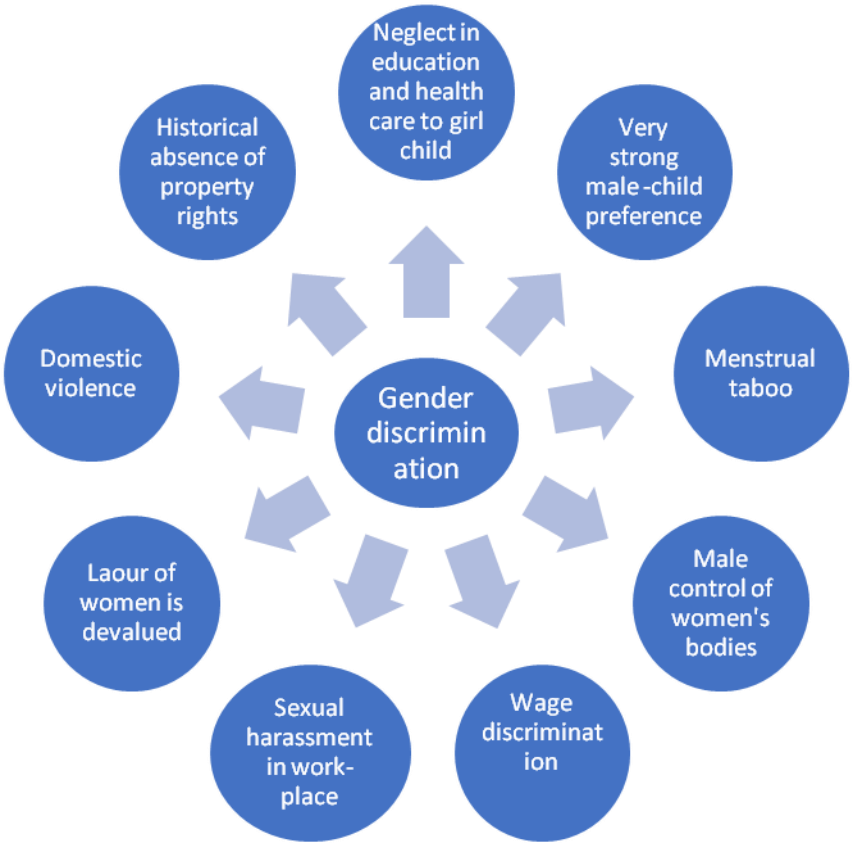


Figure 2.15 Types of Gender Discrimination

Menstruation as Taboo: Another instance of controlling women's body is to consider menstruation, a natural biological process, as shameful and polluting. In rural India, even today, menstruation is seen as the natural logic why women are inferior to men. During menstruation, women are often not allowed to enter the kitchen, touch other members in the family and the sacred objects including idols of deities. Many times, they are asked to stay outside the house, sometimes in cow-sheds for four days till menstrual flow stops. This kind of tradition makes women look naturally inferior and polluting. Often it is humiliating and even dangerous to live outside the house in places like the cow-shed. This kind of taboo around menstruation is generally observed more among the so-called upper-caste and the middle-caste families, and less among the so-called low-caste communities.

Control of Property: In patriarchal societies, men control not only women's bodies, but also their right to property. Women are traditionally not allowed to own property including land; they remain depended on their fathers, husbands or sons in different phases of life. This also considerably weakens their power and status in family, and their participation in the decision making process within and outside the family. This is also one of the reasons that women are seen as less valuable as individuals and less capable than men to manage public affairs. While most of the religious communities traditionally deny property rights to women, there might be some variation among them. Muslim women, for example, have traditionally some rights to property. Among the Hindus,

property rights of any kind was not granted to women. However, with successive legislative changes property rights equal to men have come in to effect. The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005 grants equal rights to daughters and sons of a Hindu family to share parents property including agricultural land and the house-estate.

Wage Discrimination and Harassment: In rural India, it is a common practice that women wage-labourers are paid less than men for the same type of work. This is called wage-discrimination. Many people employ women (and children) especially for harvesting various products such as cotton, chilli, rice or wheat etc. and pay them less, though they perform same amount of labour. As women have less bargaining power, wage discrimination continues till today. As they work in informal sectors, the legal protection against wage-discrimination does not help them. In addition to this, harassment in work place is also what the rural women experience when they go out to work outside home.

Last year (2019) it was reported that in Beed district of central Maharashtra, the wombs of thousands of migrant women-workers have been surgically removed (hysterectomy). These are all women from low-class families who migrate every year to western Maharashtra for cutting sugarcane. The sugarcane farmers recruit the labourer couple as a 'unit' who work under very exploitative conditions. The couple have to work without taking any break; if one of them is absent for any reason them they have to pay heavy fine to the contractor. Women generally have to take a break during menstruation, but that hampers sugarcane harvesting. Therefore, many of these women, including those in their early twenties, are forced to surgically remove their uterus so that they would not menstruate again in life. This is inhuman and has serious health consequences for women.

And the story is not limited to Maharashtra only. Elsewhere in India, for various other reasons, women undergo hysterectomy to avoid menstruation. They are often tricked by the doctor that it would help them to get rid of pain of lower back, cancer etc.

Gender and Domestic Violence: Common Story in Rural India

As sociologists point out, in a patriarchal society marriage is of two types- 'his marriage' and 'her marriage'. For the man, marriage begets more power and privilege; for the woman, it brings in more duties and further loss of independence. The wife is expected to perform many duties not only for the man, but also for the whole family. Married women do all that, but the reward often comes in the form of violence.

Domestic violence is common in rural India as women end of being beaten up, abused or sexually tortured by husband, or by other family members. The abusers often find faults with the woman's attitude, behaviour or inability to get the work done properly and/or in time; and of course not getting enough dowry (We have discussed dowry problem in Chapter-1). The extreme form of domestic violence leads to death of the woman- either by commitment of suicide or murder by the relatives. All this happens when we eulogize the *bohu* (daughter-in-law) as Lakshmi (goddess of wealth), but are so cruel when it comes to the real *bohu*! In general the Indian society would like to describe women as "*devi*" (goddess), but the way majority real women are treated in the family or outside is anything but that!

Image: “Abused Goddesses”

This image of “abused goddesses” was very widely circulated in media in 2013. This was part of the campaign- “Save our Sister” by an NGO- Save the Children India. The advertisement read: “*Pray that we never see this day. Today, more than 68 per cent of women in India are victims of domestic violence. Tomorrow, it seems like no woman shall be spared. Not even the ones we pray to*."
(Photo credit: India Today: https://www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/gangrape-bruised-goddesses-plight-of-women-in-india-crimes-ad-campaign-210094-2013-09-06 retrieved on 4th February 2020).

Domestic violence is essentially a result of men having power over women in a patriarchal social setting. Men control property and economy, and also political power. The cultural values of the society justify men having absolute right over women. Therefore, most of the men believe women are the property of men and should behave as men want them to, and serve men. The relationship of equality does not exist between them in most of the social relationships. Men, after drinking do not go and beat their superior bosses or people who are more powerful, but beat their wives. This means, men know that they can exercise power over the weak, and drinking only becomes an excuse to do so. Now that we have come to the issue of drinking, let us discuss the issue in more detailed in the following paragraphs.

Alcoholism as a Social Problem in Rural India The culture and economy of drinking alcohol in India has changed over a period of time. Earlier, in rural areas, women and men from the so-called lower caste or the Adivasis communities used to drink together. The drinks were fermented plant extract and home-brewed. These drinks had low alcohol content. They were not only economical, but it also had important health benefits. However, with colonial rule, local alcohol production was criminalised and factory-made liquor with high alcohol content and high price were forced on people. Moreover, it also became gender segregated activity- men drank while women abstained. Drinking now got entangled with the idea of masculinity.

Women Resist Alcoholism in Rural Andhra Pradesh:

By late 1980s, production and sale of arrack- a variety of country liquor, had become wide spread with the active planning by the state in Andhra Pradesh. Liquor trade was associated with excise revenue collection for the government, and the liquor contractors and politicians were the other main beneficiaries. The suffers were the poor women who had to deal with the drunken husbands who not only spent most of their income on drinking, but also regularly abused children and women at home.

By 1990, the women in rural Andhra Pradesh (especially the districts of Nellore, Chittoor and Kurnool) had enough of this everyday torture. They came together and fought against the state policies, and demanded total prohibition. The movement emerged organically from the grassroot level, and soon became a state-wide phenomenon. Finally it led to success as total prohibition was imposed in the state on 1st October, 1993. This is the story of success of rural women's struggle against the state, liquor contractors and **Dr.VergheseKurien** (1921-2012) is known as Father of White Revolution and the Milkman of India.

As cost of liquor is high, the habit of drinking excessively ruins the family economy in rural areas. People from the lower economic strata, when get addicted, need money each day to drink and spend almost all the money that they earn per day on drinking only. The money that could have been spent for buying food, medicine or on education goes to the alcohol vendor (and the revenue exchequer); and the family often starves if the woman of the household does not earn. When men do not earn enough money to buy alcohol, they demand that from the women of the households, or force them to sell their ornaments or other family assets. After drinking the men come home and abuse or beat up children and women. Women are even sexually assaulted within the family by drunken husbands or fathers. This affects social dignity, mental and physical health of children and women, and jeopardises education of the children.

Story of 'Rising Sons and Setting Daughters': Skewed Sex-Ratio in the Country-Side

Sex-ratio is understood as number of women per 1000 men. In most of the developed countries, the number of women is slightly higher than men. However, in most of the countries within Asia and Africa sex-ratio is lower which is not considered as a good indicator of social development.

At the beginning of the century, in 1901, India's sex-ratio was 972, and it came down to 927 by the end of the century (in 1991). The census data of 2011 points at the improvement of the ratio, but that is far from being satisfactory. What is alarming is the child sex-ratio (0-6 years age group) has

come down to 919 in 2001. This is a strong indicator that people do not prefer girl children to be born, and are indulging in female foeticide. Though sex-selective abortion is illegal in India, many doctors indulge in illegal abortion of female foetuses.

Table 2.6 Sex-ratio of India (selected information)

Source: Census of India (2001 and 2011)

		2001 census		**2011 census**	
		Sex-ratio	**Child sex-ratio**	**Sex-ratio**	**Child sex-ratio**
Sex-ratio of	India	933	927	943	919
Sex-ratio of	India-rural	946			
Sex-ratio of	India-urban	900			
State with highest sex-ratio	Kerala	1058	960	1084	964
State with lowest sex-ratio	Haryana	861	819	879	834

Social scientists are alarmed at the continued low sex ratio (including child sex-ratio). In earlier decades, the trend of sex-ratio showed that the sex ration among the rural, the poor and the so-called low-caste population had better sex-ratio. In general, it was observed that the urban and economically developed regions had low-sex ratio. However, recent trend shows that the rural-areas are also showing similar trend of declining sex-ration. This may be due to easy access to private hospitals that practice illegal prenatal screening for to abort female foetuses. Amartya Sen calls these aborted foetuses as “missing women”. It is estimated that the result of female foeticide has led to more than 100 millions (10 crores) of ‘missing women’ in India.

It is important to understand the reason of people’s son preference or their dislike for girl-children. As summarised in the image below, Indian society has a cultural belief in sons to continue the lineage. In addition to that it is also the son who only can perform some religious rites such as funeral rites of the parents. Moreover, the son is also seen as the bread-winner of the family and provides social security to parents during old age.

The daughters, on the other hand, are seen to be born to be married off to another family. She is considered, therefore, as a *paraya dhan* (other’s property); the parents place is seen as a temporary abode for the daughter till she gets married. Marriage is associated with huge amount of dowry, a common practice across caste and communities. This makes marriage a costly affair and many people sell their land, cattle or ornaments to meet the marriage expenditure. Thus a daughter is always seen as a burden for the family. So far as labour is concerned, the daughters/women, though

perform more labour than men within the household, are seen as not 'working'. Their labour is mostly unpaid, therefore it is invisible.

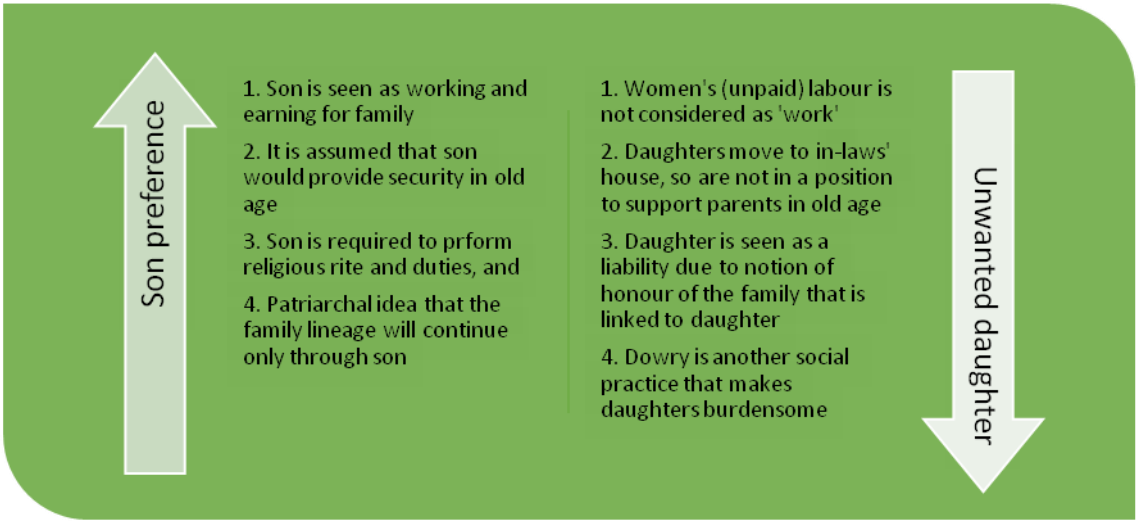


Figure 2.16 Reasons for Son Preference and Daughter Abhorrence

The abhorrence for daughters leads to many serious consequences for daughters as well as for women. The daughters who somehow escape abortion, and are born, are treated as unwanted members of the family. They are not given adequate attention for their health, education or other needs. The negligence within family has severe impact on the physical and mental growth. They also are not given opportunity for higher education if family resources are limited. In rural India, most of the girls end of getting married in an early age, soon after puberty, as marriage is considered the 'destination of life'. Marriage in early age leads to early pregnancy, and that affects the health of the young mother and the child.

Undignified Life: 'Unwanted' in Maharashtra, 'No More' in Tamil Nadu

Like most part of India, there are many families in rural Maharashtra who would prefer at least one son in the family. They keep on trying to beget a male-child even after the birth of one or two girls. When they expect a male-child and a female-child is born then they name them "nakushi" or "nakusha" that means unwanted. This name also enters into school record and everybody calls them by that name. One can imagine the psychological impact of this on the girl child. This practice became so widespread that the Government of Maharashtra finally had to officially instruct the authorities to change the names of these girls and give them a proper respectful name. In 2011, for example, in the schools of Satara district about 280 such girls were found whose names were changed.

This sad story of gender inequality is not just limited to rural Maharashtra alone. In Tamilnadu also, the 'unwanted' girls are called "Vendam" which means "no" or "not any more"; they carry the shame and neglect of being born a girl. Excessive obsession of male child has led to emergence of such extreme insensitive social practices.

In Haryana, where sex-ratio (including child sex-ratio) is the lowest in India, the illegal sex-selection facilities are available even in small towns. It is even reported that there are mobile medical vans

that comes to the villages and the sex-detection and abortion activities are conducted. The result of this is that there are so many men who do not find brides for marriage. This has created a serious social problem for the rural Haryana society that has many forced bachelors, and those who can afford get the brides from other states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Bengal, Odisha, Assam etc. These girls/women are from poor families, and in Haryana they are referred to as *paro* (from the far side) or *molki* (purchased). There are bride-traffickers who arrange the brides for a payment. According to a newspaper report, there are about 1.3 lakh purchased brides in Haryana (30th November, 2019, *Times of India*).

Through there are some reports that show some of these women lead a happy married life, other reports show that these women are exploited in many different ways. Their marriage are not registered, and they do not get the status of the proper wife. In addition to providing sexual-service and managing the household, they also work as agricultural labourers in their field . Sometimes a single women is married to more than one brothers in the family. The traffickers also often force the brides to marry multiple men one after another in case of death of the husband(s) or desertion by them. With no property rights and devalued socially, these women in rural Haryana struggle to survive. Their parents are too poor and too far to help them out.

To-Do-Activity: Do you know about "Ring the bell" (bell bajao) campaign? It was an anti-domestic violence campaign launched by Government of India and the UN. From YouTube, find out various short films produced under this title (Ring the bell or *bell bajao*). You should also watch Episode 7 (When Masculinity Harms Men) in Session-3 of the TV Series *Satyamev Jayate*. This would explain to you how patriarchy harms men as well, and what role men can play to bring an end to domestic violence.

2.5 Intersectionality: The Cross Cutting Aspects of Life in Rural India

Life of an individual or a group is not lived in a unidimensional way. For sake of analysis, we may see individuals as a member of a class, community or gender, but their lives are not just limited to any one aspect independently. A "woman" is not just a woman, but is simultaneously a member of a particular class, and also a member of a particular caste or religious group. Her life chances, opportunities or disadvantages are linked to her being a member of that caste/religious group, class and gender. A poor girl from an Adivasi community would find it very difficult to get higher education. Add to that her rural background and uneducated parents, and you would see that it is almost impossible for her to study in a university located in a metropolitan city and take up a middle-class job. Conversely, a boy belonging to Hindu upper caste family, and whose parents are highly educated and has middle class job in a city would find it easy to take up higher education and migrate abroad for a higher middle class job. Here, gender, class, community, parent's education etc. are playing a significant role for determining 'success' or 'failure' in academics.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand the intersectionality of life. Gender, caste, class etc. do not operate independently, but cross cut each other at various points. Analysis of rural life is not adequate if we refer to some of the important dimensions of life- caste/community, class or gender independent of each other. It is very important that we know the intersectional aspects of all these factors. In the following paragraphs, we shall discuss on these.

Gender and Community

A woman, for example, is not just a woman. She is a Dalit woman, a Brahman woman, a Muslim woman or a Manipuri woman. "Woman" as an identity is not complete in itself, and often socially not useful for the people as they interact with each other not just on the basis of gender categories. The identities of women and men are linked to their communities. They dress as per the traditions of their ethnic community, religious affiliation or caste. In rural areas, the way men wear caps or turbans, or the way women wear clothes of different types indicate their caste or community identity.

Gender-identity is not just limited to dress; it entails may other social custom and behaviour. Men in a community decide what kind of dress a woman/girl would wear at home or when she goes out in public. *Ghoonghat* (veil) and burqa etc. are indications of men imposing dress codes on women that are often inconvenient. A major part of rural north Indian women follow these traditions of covering their face when outside the house. Men do not face such restrictions of covering their bodies that are inconvenient. The idea of covering the body is associated with the notion of "honour" of the community. And it is through controlling women that the honour of the community is preserved in a patriarchal society.

Woman as Embodiment of Honour of the Community: In a caste society, the upper caste rural women used to be behind veils, and hardly came out of the house. While in urban areas, these restrictions have come down, and veils are used less frequently, the rural society still emphasises on this tradition. The women are seen as signifiers of the honour of the community. When the women are restricted ('protected'), the honour of the community is preserved. In contrast to the upper castes, the lower caste women practice less of this restrictive dressing pattern. The reason may be that they have to go out more frequently to work in their own field and in others fields and clothes have to be worn accordingly. Highly restrictive clothing would not allow them to work efficiently in the fields. It is for this reason that often the lower-caste women are seen as less honourable or even immoral as they are not restricted by their communities. It may be mentioned that, in Adivasi communities, and among the indigenous communities in the North East part of India, the rural women are much freer and participate in public life such as in the market more freely than the caste-dominated societies.

The notion of women embodying the honour of the community, and therefore are the property of the community that needs to be protected, has a long history in human society. Therefore, during war etc. when men fight against their enemies, they try to insult women through abduction and/or rape etc. When they insult the women from the enemy community, it is considered as insulting the honour of entire community of the enemy. Such practice is also seen today. In rural India, we come across instances of men raping the women of other community to take revenge in the context of inter-caste or inter-religious rivalry.

You have heard of "honour-killing". When a woman marries a man from other community (caste/religion) out of her own choice which is normally not accepted, then the family/community members resist this. If the girl does not obey the diktat, then she is killed. Marriage against the wishes of the family/community when one marries outside the traditional caste/community boundary is supposed to tarnish the honour of the community. The National Crime Records Bureau

(NCRB) data shows that the cases of honour killing stands at 28 cases in 2014, 251 cases in 2015 and 77 cases in 2016. Most of these happen in rural India, though urban India is not totally free from the bias against inter-caste or inter-faith romantic relationship or marriage.

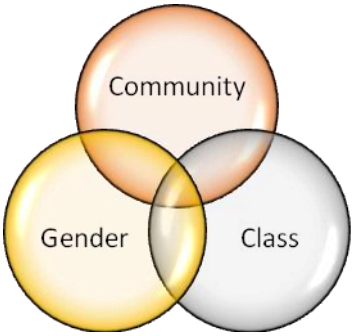


Figure 2.17 Intersection of Community, Gender and Class in Village Life

Class and Gender

Class or economic situation in a rural society can be seen having a gendered nature. In land-owning communities, men exercise dominance on the basis of power that they derive through ownership of the land. As discusses in the previous section under "class", there are different categories of landowners. The big landowners do not own in their own field. The middle level landowners work alongside other wage labourers, and the small landholders work in their own field as well as in the field of others to meet their economic need.

In general, women of the poor households work in their own fields. They may work in the fields of others as wage labourers if family needs cannot be made without doing so. In the family of those who are landless, both men and women would have to work as daily or contract wage labourers, because the wages are so low that a man's labour might not be sufficient for family needs. When such women go out for wage labour they are exploited by being paid less than the men for the same type of work. This has been discussed earlier; what we are emphasising is that the labour of low-class women is exploited by the upper class. On the other hand, the upper class women in rural India generally do not work for others. They perform labour within their household mostly as care-givers. They might work from early morning till late night, but their labour, being not-paid, is not considered as "work". Thus labour of women is exploited by men, but the nature of the exploitation is different for low class and for the upper class.

When poor families fail to meet their needs through local wage-work, they migrate. Again, the burden of sustaining the family are primarily taken by men. They are the first to migrate to nearby cities of faraway industrial zones in search of livelihood. Because of uncertainties at the destination, they migrate alone and send money home for sustenance. This creates inconvenience for both the men and the women who take care of the home. The men are deprived of the support of the family, and women are deprived of the male-head, the absence of which creates lot of inconvenience to manage everyday life in a male-dominated society. The extremely lower class sometimes migrate with family. Men, women and children migrate in search for work, and the couple generally work as

a unit. They work in brick kilns, mining areas, or as farm labourers, and more often than not end of getting exploited by the middle men or by the job-providers.

Gender and Livelihood- Chipko Movement: You might have heard of Chipko movement. It was a movement by women to save their environment and ecology so that their livelihood can be available. When we analyse this from the perspective of gender and class, we see that these women are from the lower class whose livelihood depended on the preservation of local ecology (forest). For the upper class, livelihood come through exploitation or even destruction of natural resources. For the poor class, the availability of natural resources, such as the common property resources are vital for sustenance of livelihood. From the common land, they graze their cattle or goats etc., get the fodder or firewood, root, fruits and berries for consumption or selling for a small profit. Many Adivasi women and those who live near or inside the forests, the natural richness of common land/forest needs to be preserved. And it is women who deal with these natural resources while men may seek job outside. Thus in Uttarakhand when trees were being cut, the women were at the forefront to protest and preserve the ecology, and thereby their livelihood.

Class and Community

In the field of economics, a class is often treated as an individual phenomenon. However, to understand holistically, an individual's class position is not an individual problem/privilge, but it is linked to the community s/he belongs to. It is linked to other social dimensions. Poverty in rural areas cannot be understood fully without taking historical account of poverty of the community into consideration. It is a result of lack of access to land and/or lack of control over the market condition as a group, rather as individuals.

Historically, who had land? Before modern period of history, the Shudras were denied land and property rights. Thus, the upper castes had ownership of land. The right to individual ownership of land by the lower-castes came after the British rule. However, as the lower-castes were poor, many of them could not buy land, and if one looks at the landless people, it would be very clear that vast majority of the landless people are from the lower-caste communities. Similarly there are other social groups in India who are historically poor, and they continue to struggle to overcome poverty. In rural society, the possibilities of overcoming poverty are limited as new avenues of livelihoods are limited. Thus the Adivasis, Muslims, Dalits are among the poorest communities whereas the upper-castes, Jains etc are either landowners, job-holders or have good control over market. The figure below would indicate a clear picture of income of different social groups. This figure, if framed in the rural context would give even a starker picture of difference of wealth between different social groups.

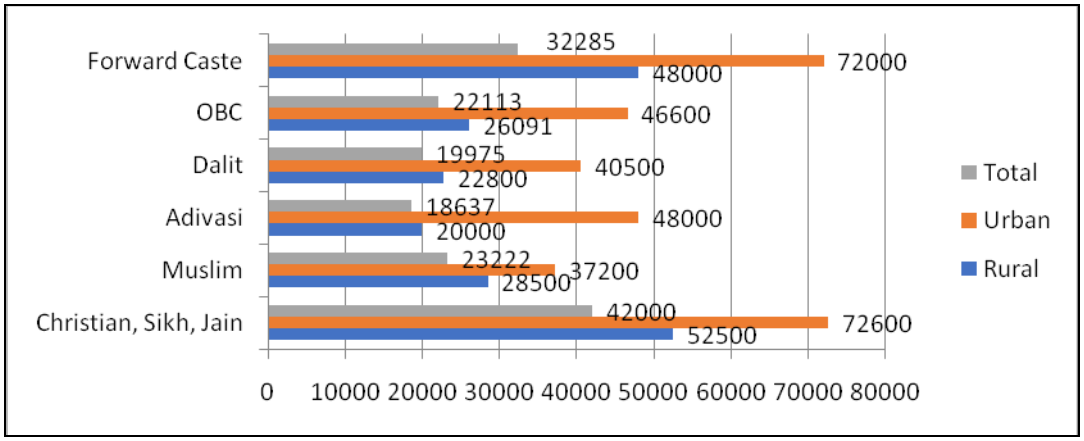


Figure 2.18 Median Household Income for Different Social Groups

Source: Desai et al (Ed.) *Human Development in India: Challenges for a Society in Transition* (2010)

Thus the poverty of the people in rural areas is not to be understood as an individual problem, but is linked to the historical inequality of different social groups. The landless Dalits and small land-holders such as the OBCs have limited resources at their disposal compared to other higher castes. The Adivasis who were having a self-sufficient economy, are now struggling to make end meet as the forest they were living have become depleted due to industrialisation and other reasons. The Muslims are also traditionally poor in India, especially in rural areas. There are other nomadic communities who also have very less capital with them. This explains the intersection between class and community.

Class, Community and Gender

To capture the complexity of social life, one can incorporate more and more aspects of society and see how they affect the life of an individual. We have now discussed two dimensions of different combinations. In addition to class, community and gender, one can add many more dimensions to understand rural society holistically. For example the life of a rural-Christian-Adivasi-uneducated-woman farmer is so multidimensionally different than an urban-Hindu-upper-caste-educated professor in a city university. Social status of an woman in rural Meghalaya where the dominant communities practice matriliny, faces less challenges than a woman in rural Rajasthan where patriarchy is very strong. If the latter is from an upper-caste landowning community then her life is very different if she is from a landless Dalit caste.

Let us take the case of human trafficking in India. We know that many women and children get trafficked within India or even across the border. Who are these women and children? Are they from the middle class and upper caste Hindu communities? Of course not. Generally, it is the girls who are poor from the rural communities, and who do not have enough education are victims of trafficking. Many Adivasi girls from central India, who do not have adequate social support are trapped by the traffickers. They are lured into the cities with the promise of giving a better paying job, marriage or so on. The precarious rural life, and sometimes the attraction of city life is what makes them vulnerable.

Health issues can be understood better if we look at the cross sectional areas of various aspects of social life of an individual. One's health depends on the nature on food intake. A poor and rich persons access to good quality food varies so enormously that one overeats and the other goes hungry. What kind of food we eat, does not depend on out economic capability, but also the cultural norms regarding food. Giving up non-vegetarian (protein) food seems to have negative impact for the poor as vegetarian food such milk and cheese (protein sources) are costly. However, for the middle/upper class this is not a concern. Again, Hindu woman go for ritual fasting so much in rural areas that it affects their health. Repeated fasting and not getting adequate nutrition during hard work at home or in the field affects the strength of the body. Moreover, take the patriarchal norm of the rural families where woman take their food after serving everybody else. Often they are not left with adequate amount for themselves. Therefore, health condition depends on one's class position, gender, food-culture and also how government provides health care facility in rural areas.

To-Do-Activity: Talk to a woman and a man from rural background, and collect her and his life history. See how the life histories reflect the intersectional aspects of gender, class and community. If you cannot find rural people, then you can very well talk to a woman and a man from urban area, and follow the same exercise. Analyse their life histories to understand the intersectionality of social life.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, we have discussed the basic social structures of rural society in India. The structures of the community on the basis of caste, ethnicity, class and gender are primordial in nature and these are central to our understanding of any given society. Moreover, these aspects do not affect our lives independently, but more interconnectedly.

In Unit-1, we discussed various aspects of caste society. A majority of Indian population who are Hindus follow caste system. The non-Hindus also follow caste like practices, though may not be as elaborately as the Hindus do. The characteristics and the function of caste system have been discussed from functionalist and conflict perspectives. The practice of untouchability is still prevalent in rural India, and that is a big challenge to overcome for inculcating democratic values in Indian society.

In Unit-2, the discussion is on the so-called tribes (the Adivasis, and the Indigenous people of the NE India). Here, the problem in defining the "tribe" has been discussed, and various aspects of a tribal life has been brought out. The nature of relationship of the Adivasis/indigenous people with the state- from colonial to postcolonial- has been discussed to bring home the point that the people have been constantly struggling against the state to claim their rights over forest resources. The modern means of development by setting up mines and factories has forced these people to get displaced from their homeland. It remains a major concern for people, the academicians and policy makers to deal with the question of development and forest conservation including the traditional livelihood of people dependent on the forests.

Unit-3 discusses the class structure in rural society. Landownership remains the main source of economic power for people. There are people who are landless, and there are big landowners. The

traditional social inequality that existed in pre-colonial period, did continue into the colonial and postcolonial period. The majority of the farmers or peasants were exploited by the colonial government through heavy taxation as well as through other anti-people policies. Great famines that occurred during this period is a testimony to the cruel nature of the British policy.

Gender is one of the most fundamental aspects of social structure. Unit-4 brings out the nuances of understanding gender, and how it shapes lives in rural society in India. While men enjoy the power and privilege, women suffer at the hands of patriarchy. Dowry problem, domestic violence, and female foeticide are some of the common problems related to gender.

Last, but not the least, the last unit of this chapter brings out the interconnectedness of the rural social life. Various social structures such as caste/community, gender and class intersect each other and act together to affect peoples' lives. To understand society more holistically, one needs to be careful about avoiding unidimensional analysis, and focus on the intersectional aspects.

Model Questions

1. What are the characteristics of caste in rural society?
2. Explain the institution of caste from functionalist and conflict perspectives.
3. What is the relationship between the Adivasis and the state in colonial and postcolonial India ?
4. Write an essay on the struggle of the Adivasis and their problems in Central India.
5. What is the nature of landownership patter in rural India?
6. Why do we need to study gender? How does it help us understand discrimination in rural India?
7. Discuss the social status of women in our society and how it is linked to very low sex-ratio in our country.
8. Write an essay on domestic violence in rural India.
9. Do you think intersectional analysis is important to understand society? Explain the reasons.
10. Discuss the intersection of class, community and gender and its impact on the lives of people in rural India with suitable example(s).

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Chapter 3 Panchayati Raj Governance in Rural India

Introduction

Panchayati Raj (PR) is a salient feature of the political and governance system of the Indian sub-continent. As a system of local self-governance, Panchayati Raj has been practiced in India since a long time. However, it was not necessarily functioning as a true democratic institution in the modern sense. Local caste/class hierarchy was ingrained into it. During nationalist movement, Gandhi had emphasized on village level local self-governance (*gram swaraj*). His dream for independent India was to establish Panchayati Raj to empower the local people to self-rule, rather than establishing rule from above.

After independence, the local level *Panchayat*s operated, but with lot of limitations. The Article 40, one of the articles under the Directive Principles of State Policies in the Constitution, directed the government to enact laws for proper implementation of local self-rule with political and financial authority, and provisions for representation of the marginalized sections and women. Accordingly, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992 provided constitutional status to our Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Afterwards, the PRIs became recognised as the *third level* of India's federal democracy.

Panchayati Raj can be understood as a form of *direct democracy* at the village or local level in contrast to the practice of *representative democracy* at the state/provincial and country level. It means that in the PRIs, powers of the government is directly exercised by the common people who are immediately impacted by its decisions. Local people's direct involvement in the decision making process at the village level is a paramount feature of Panchayati Raj. Thus, PRIs are the cornerstones of local self-governments and peoples' participation in India.

The idea behind Panchayati Raj is to ensure that democracy becomes more meaningful by making governing institutions functionally more responsive to the local/rural people's needs and aspirations. This makes democracy more substantive at the local or grassroots level. In our democratic system, the PRIs actually materialize the idea of devolution of power from the Central or State government to the periphery or local level. In fact, the practice of Panchayati Raj is driven by citizens' everyday needs and with their active and continuous participation.

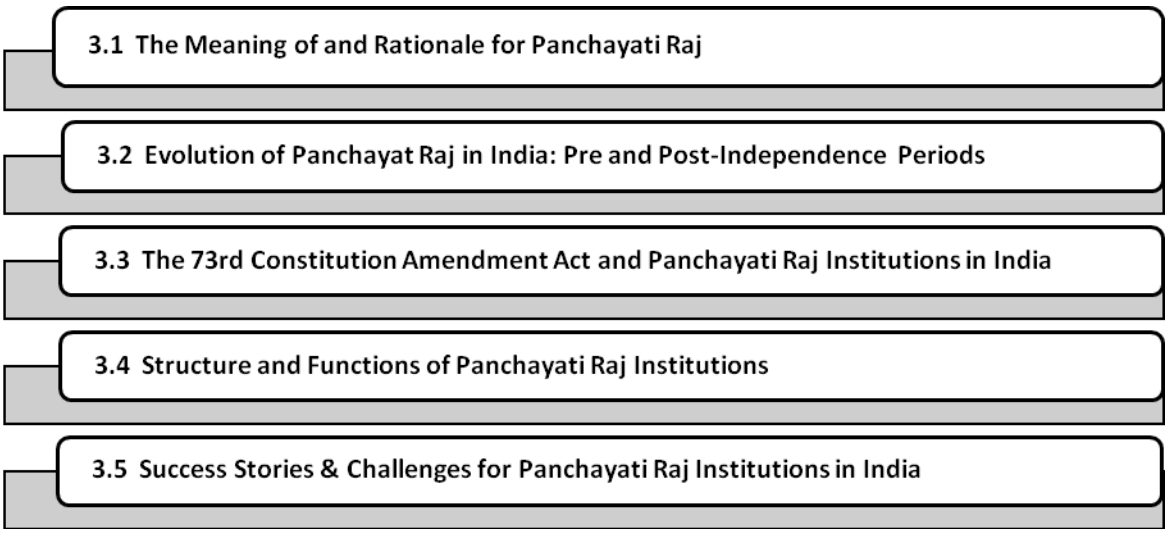
Since the 73rd Amendment Act coming into effect in April 1993, Panchayat Raj Institutions are tasked with many activities for economic development as well as to ensure the social justice in rural India. Besides, the PRIs have become principal channels or agencies through which many Central and State Government initiated/sponsored schemes or programmes are implemented at the local level.

If we assess the performance of PRIs post-1993, we will find varying levels of achievement in different States and Union Territories of India. However, we will notice an overall steady progress in establishing PRIs and devolving powers to them to act as efficient local governing institutions. Our experience in decades of democratic governance tells us that democratic decentralization with people's active participation is essential for an equitable distribution of development benefits.

Objectives

1.To explain the meaning of Panchayati Raj and provide the rationale of its emergence
2.To acquaint students with the Constitutional basis of Panchayati Raj in India with particular emphasis on 73rd Constitutional Amendment
3.To explain the organization/structure and function/role of Three Tier PRIs
4.To highlight the issues/challenges for PRIs to become effective in grassroots democracy

Structure



3.1 The Meaning of and Rationale for Panchayati Raj

Meaning of Panchayati Raj

The word *panch* means five and *raj* means 'rule'; thus, *panchayat* means the 'governance by five persons'. In India's traditional rural governance framework, *panchayats* referred to assemblies of respected elders chosen by the local or village community. Of course, such assemblies exhibited variations. These assemblies of wise village elders settled disputes between individuals and between villages as well.

Usually, the leader of the panchayat in rural India was referred to as the *mukhiya* or *sarpanch.* This was an elected/nominated or traditionally acknowledged position in villages steeped in traditions and customs. However, we should not equate the modern Panchayati Raj system of India as established by our Constitution with that of either the traditional village panchayat of the past nor with the present-day extra-constitutional/extra-legal *khap or caste panchayats* found in a few north Indian states.

Panchayati Raj can be defined or understood as a system of local self-government in a decentralized democratic framework. We can define the Gram Panchayat as a village level governing institution with the Sarpanch as its elected head. The members of the gram panchayat are called "ward members" or *panch*s. These ward members are elected by the voters who are all members of the Gram Sabha for a period of five years.

The Panchayati Raj system in rural areas consists of three levels: *Gram Panchayat* (village level), *Mandal Parishad* or *Block/Panchayat Samiti* (block level), and *Zilla Parishad* (district level). The 73rd

Amendment Act to the Indian Constitution made this *three-tier PRI* as mandatory and uniform pattern of local self-government across India. Similarly, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act provided for *three-tier* local self-government institutions for urban areas.

The Rationale for Panchayati Raj

India is the largest democracy in the world. It's a country of sub-continental size with large and complex diversity. India's democratic government is structured as a federation, with the Union or Central Government at the national level and twenty-eight State Governments at the provincial level. Besides, there are 8 Union Territories administered under direct supervision of the Union Government.

The governments at both the National and State levels are of Representative nature. It means that the people's representatives chosen to the Parliament and State as well as some UT Assemblies make the decisions and policies of the government. People themselves don't directly make the decisions and policies that impact their everyday life. In fact, it's impossible for all citizens to gather together at one place to directly discuss and decide about their own affairs at the National or even at the State levels. Though the Union and State/UT governments have legislative bodies and executive agencies to take care of people's welfare, the vastness of our country, the complex diversity of our people and the enormity of their issues makes it difficult for them to attend to the every-day life needs, interests and aspirations of the people at the local level.

In India, having elected or representative governments at the central/federal and state/provincial levels is not just enough. It doesn't solve people's problems and their everyday needs at the local level. Even at the local level, we always need elected governments to look after our local needs or aspirations more effectively. Hence, our Constitution provides local government in the form of Panchayati Raj Institutions or PRIs at the village, taluk/block and district levels.

Local government is that governing institution which is closest to the common people. It deals with the everyday needs and problems of the citizens at the local or grassroots level. That is why the common citizen at the local level are so concerned with what the local government does or doesn't do. It has a direct bearing on their every-day lives. Local government system is built on the idea or belief that local knowledge and local interests are quite important in the democratic decision making process. There are certainly some advantages of the local government; it's relatively closer to the people and thus it becomes convenient for them to approach it to address their grievances promptly and with lower expenses. Hence, we can reasonably conclude that local government could really provide an administration which is efficient and responsive to people's needs.

What is good about a healthy democracy is that it helps foster a sense of agency among people as they meaningfully participate in the decision making about their own lives. It also gives common citizens a sense of confidence as they could hold the government to account. People's active participation and their ability to hold officials to account are critical aspects to make the local governments efficient. Therefore, it's important to strengthen the local governments to make India's democracy more vibrant.

To-Do-Activity: Watch two video documentaries from YouTube- *Panchayati Raj in India* (2014) telecast by Rajya Sabha TV under the episode Nazariya, and *For the Dorbar of the People* (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, 2017). Collect information on "Khap Panchayat" as well. Compare both ideas of "panchayat" and discuss what are the difference between the two types of Panchayats.

3.2 Evolution of Panchayat Raj System: Pre and Post-Independence Periods

Panchayats or traditional village councils are quite an old feature of India's political history. They have been a part and parcel of India's long tradition. Readings of India's history tell us that almost every village in India had a Council of Elders or Panchayat that was responsible for managing the village affairs. Local self-governing bodies, with remarkable self-sufficiency and autonomy, had flourished throughout India's civilization. They were a key aspect of public life in India. In our study, we can find the presence of local government in India's long indigenous as well as colonial history.

Highlighting the significance of Panchayati Raj in India's political history, Sir Charles Metcalfe observed: "*Panchayats seemed to last where nothing lasted. Dynasty after dynasty tumbled down; revolution succeeded revolution; Pathans, Mughals, Marathas, Sikhs and British were all the masters in turn, but the Village Communities and their autonomy remained the same"*. (Aggarwal & Bhatnagar: 2005). Let's discuss the evolution of Panchayati Raj or local government in India taking two broad time frames: Pre and Post Independence Periods.

Pre-Independence Period

The evolution of local government and Panchayats before India's Independence is discussed through the following periods: Ancient, Medieval and The British Period.

A.Ancient Period

India's legacy of Panchayati Raj is quite long. It goes back to the ancient times. We can find references to the existence of rural local self-governing bodies in various forms in the epics of 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata'. The *Rig-Veda* and *Samhitas* also contain references to the existence of such self-governing bodies. The village Panchayat, known as '*Samiti*', was the basic unit of administration during the *Vedic* period. The head of a *Samiti* was called *Gramin*. In the '*Arthashastra',* Kautilya mentions about the system of governance during the Maurayan period. This great treatise of politics and administration highlights the significance of local self-governing institutions. The principle of administrative decentralization was followed during Chandragupta Maurya's regime. Then the village was regarded as the smallest unit of governance. In Kautilya's scheme of administration, the king had very little interference in the governance of local bodies.

In his book *Indica,* the ancient Greek diplomat, historian and Indian ethnographer Megasthenes, who visited India around the later part of 3rd Century B.C.E., describes India's society and political system as a 'plurality of local rulers and autonomous communities operating under the vague control of the King'. (Bosworth:1996) There is also mention about six committees consisting of five members each were in charge of administering Pataliputra, the capital city of the Mauryan Empire.

Similarly, the government system of the Guptas was known to have a largely decentralized structure. The local authorities and social groups has significant autonomy in their functioning. Villages enjoyed

considerable autonomy in administration. The village council popularly known as the *Panchayat* was managing the affairs of the village. *Gramik*, the village headman was at the apex of administering the affairs of a village. Village councils, variously known as *Pancha-Mandali* or *Grama-Janapada* or *Parishad,* assisted the Gramik in his work. Almost all functions of the government like looking after village security, settlement of disputes, carrying out public welfare works, collection of government taxes/dues were discharged by village councils. Village Councils also enjoyed the authority of issuing documents under their own seals. Further, provinces and districts had their own administrative setups indicating that local administration was far from the King's regular intervention.

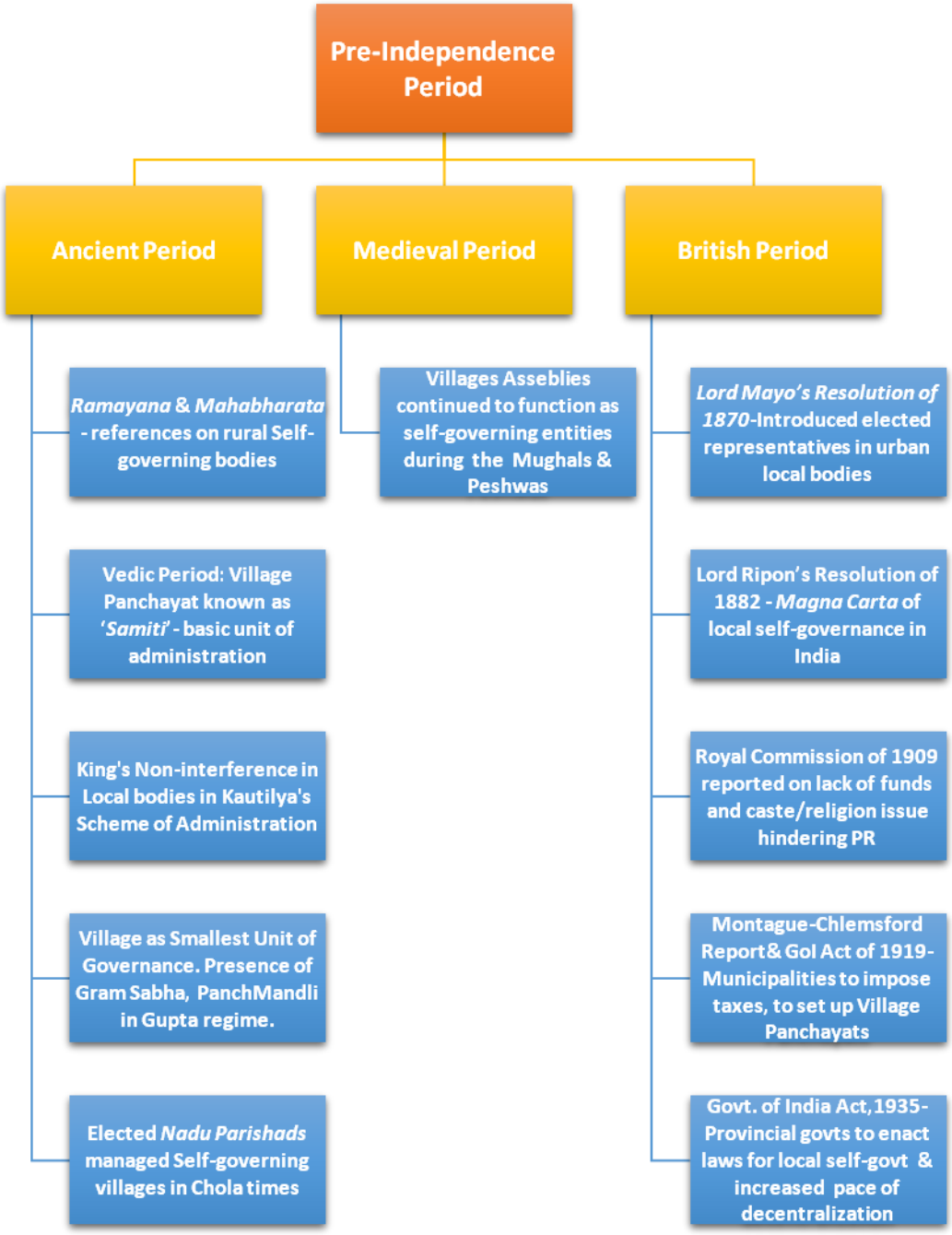


Figure 3.1 Evolution of Local Government/Panchayats in Pre-Independence Period

Thus, it can be fairly observed that the Village Communities in ancient India were self-sustained as mini republics with minimal control from the central or provincial government. Village Communities

and other local bodies enjoyed a greater level of autonomy. This was because the ancient Indian polity was characterised by a distinctive presence of the state and society as independent entities. Ancient customs and traditions had played a vital role in the formation of this autonomy of the village republic. The economic self-sufficiency of village communities was quite evident. Besides, the absence of faster transportation and communication systems compelled the King or central government to allow more space to the local bodies at the village level. Villagers used to elect village assemblies or committees consisting of either the heads of all households or all adult members to manage their own affairs. These assemblies functioned democratically with definite rules and regulations (Venkatarangaiya and Pattabhiram: 1969).

Such Village Assemblies in South India had attained a higher level of organizational development. The Uthiramerur stone inscriptions in Kancheepuram district of Tamil Nadu speaks of a long history of local self-governance in the region. Historical accounts indicate that these village Councils were levying taxes, improving community life and administering justice in their local areas. The reign of Cholas during 10th and 11th Centuries witnessed the peak of this dynamism of these village communities. Very interestingly, the village members 'used the secret ballot method called "*Kuda Olai Murai*" to elect members to the Village Councils. With the downfall of Cholas, the State experienced a decline of such Village autonomy and the consequent rise of a centralized administrative system' (Akilandeswari: 2017; Ramakrishnan: 2019).

In North-Eastern India too, there were small republics which were quite independent in the management of internal matters. The Village Panchayats enjoyed sufficient administrative autonomy, and the king's interference was minimal.

B.Medieval Period

The indigenous rural administrative system with self-governing Village Councils (VCs) retained its character in the early phase of Mughal rule. Major changes happened at the higher levels of administration leaving villages at the bottom to themselves. The governance setup of the villages with Village Councils of elected village elders was not much disturbed and remained as the primary unit of decision making. Except the judicial powers and land management, these Village Councils continued to carry out all other previous functions. The villages were incorporated into the larger administrative system of the Mughal rule only as units for revenue collection and police purposes.

The Empire's central authority did not involve itself in the day-to-day regulation of the local affairs. Management of village affairs was the responsibility of village officials, who were primarily accountable to the village councils. The village headman known as *muquaddam,* was responsible for maintaining law and order matters in the villages. In fact, the Sultans in Delhi were aware of enormous difficulty or even the impossibility of governing vast territory under their rule in India. Hence, they were averse to directly and regularly intervene in the local affairs of far off villages.

Similarly, the Peshwa rulers constituted local self-government institutions in the rural as well as urban areas of Maharashtra. However, the long heritage of local-self governing institutions and administrative system started crumbling steadily. In due course, the situation worsened with village headmen, the upper castes and rich peasants dominating the village councils. Subsequently, in the aftermath of the fall of Mughals, the rural self-governing councils lost their sheen and disintegrated

due to several factors like the developments in transportation & communication, increased commercial contacts of the rural society with the outside world, rapid changes in the production system, increasing urbanization and the decline in the influence of customs and traditions in people's everyday life, etc.

C.The British Period

Introduction of new legal and judicial systems as well as emergence of newer institutions for revenue collection like Zamindari under the British rule gave substantive blow to Panchayats' significance. Village panchayats lost their autonomy and became weak under the British regime, though India saw the re-emergence of local representative institutions since 1870s. Of course, local self-governance was introduced by the British rulers primarily as an administrative convenience for the imperial Government. It was to protect the colonial interests like reducing the financial burden on the State exchequer rather than to promote self-governing bodies in India for its inherent benefits for Indians.

Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870

Famous Mayo's Resolution of 1870 was a milestone in the evolution of local self-governing institutions in India. It proclaimed the need for local interest, local supervision and local care on issues like education, sanitation, medical relief and public works. This Resolution introduced the concept of elected representatives in urban local bodies and emphasized the necessity of associating Indians in local administration. In fact, the Revolt of 1857 had caused considerable strain to the imperial finances and it was convenient to finance local services out of local taxation. Thus, Lord Mayo's resolution on decentralization could be seen as a result of fiscal compulsions of the Colonial rule.

Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882

Lord Ripon's Local Self Government Resolution of 1882 was the most important Act on local self-government in British India. It was regarded as the '*Magna Carta'* of local self-governance in India. It provided the much needed democratic framework to the municipal bodies as well as local boards in rural areas. As per Ripon's Resolution, the proportion of non-official members in local bodies was increased to not less than two-thirds of total members. The non-official members were to be elected and the chairman had to be only from among the elected non-official members. The government officials were to guide them rather than control them.

Royal (Hobbehouse) Commission on Decentralization of 1907

The Royal Commission lead by C.E.H. Hobbehouse brought out a Report on Decentralization in 1909. It suggested that local government should start from the village level rather than the district level. It also highlighted about the limitation or scarcity of funds as well as caste and religious disputes standing as primary obstacles in the effective functioning of the local bodies.

Montague-Chlemsford Report& Government of India Act of 1919

The Montague-Chelmsford Report of 1918, which became background paper for the Government of India Act of 1919, suggested that local boards should be filled with elected representative than mere official members. It further advised that the government's intervention in the everyday functioning of these local bodies should be the minimum. The suggestions of the Royal Commission were also

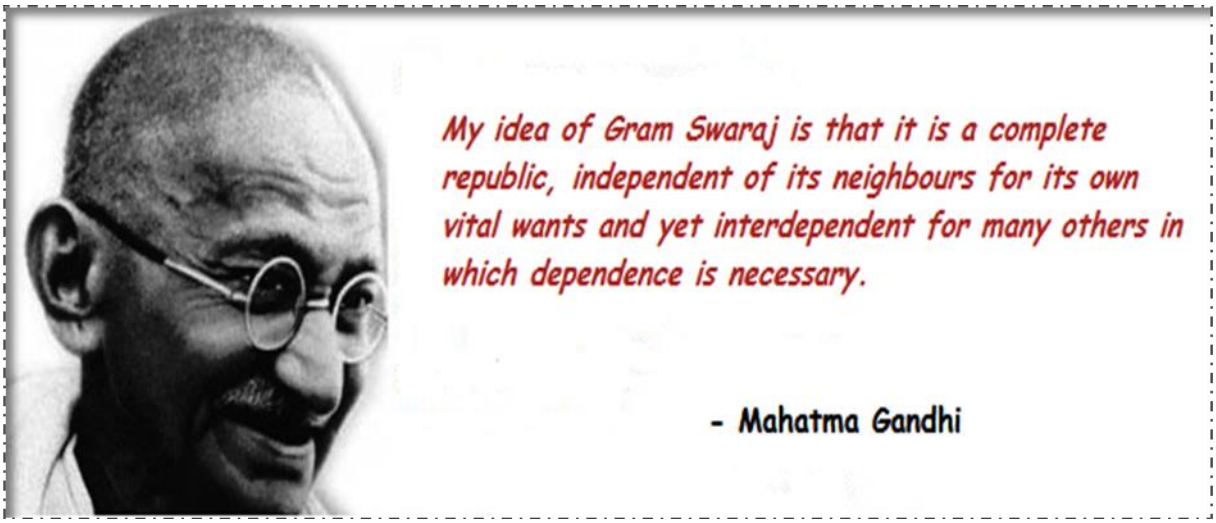
incorporated. The municipalities were vested with more powers to impose local taxes. The Village Panchayat Act was passed and Panchayats were established in many provinces as a legal body.

The Government of India Act of 1935

The Government of India Act, 1935 assigned more powers to the elected governments in the Provinces with greater provincial autonomy. Provincial governments were allowed to enact legislation to take the democratic decentralization process to the next level by establishing local self-governments including the Village Panchayats.

D.India's Freedom Struggle & Gandhi's Advocacy of 'Gram Swaraj'

The idea of Panchayati Raj was prominent in the agenda and as well as a strategic factor in India's freedom struggle. Post-1920, Mahatma Gandhi had emerged as the principal anchor and architect of India's freedom movement. For him, Panchayati Raj is a *swadeshi* institution. He set the tone of the nationalist movement on the *Panchayat*s. His vision of a free nation in India was characterised by village self-rule (*Gram Swaraj*) and all-round development at the grass roots level in the rural areas. Strengthening of village panchayats was an effective means of de-concentrating political and economic power.



As Gandhi famously told*, "the independence of India should mean the independence of the whole of India.....Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village would be a republic....It follows therefore that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its own affairs. In this structure composed of many villages, there will be ever–widening, ever-ascending circles. Life will be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom".*

Besides Gandhi, many leaders of our freedom movement were also concerned about too much concentration of powers in the Governor General's hands during British rule. Hence, to them, independence of India should also mean decentralization of power and a move towards participatory democracy. The Indian National Congress at its Lahore Session in 1909 had urged the colonial Government to take steps to make all local bodies functional with adequate financial authority.

With the backdrop of Gandhi's emphasis on Panchayati Raj as a crucial component of India's future polity, the Constituent Assembly held detailed discussion on this important question so as to give an appropriate place to Panchayat system in our new Constitution. However, it was incomprehensible to note that the word 'Panchayat' did not occur even once in the Draft Constitution. Huge controversy emerged on this emphatic miss of Panchayati Raj from the Draft Constitution. Fortunately, with Gandhi's intervention, Panchayati Raj or local self-government got some honourable place in India's Constitutional scheme.

Post-Independence Period (Upto 1992)

The evolution of Panchayati Raj in Independent India is discussed in two parts. The first part is from 1947 to 1992 and it is discussed in this section. The second part is from 1992 (73rd Constitutional Amendment onwards) and it is discussed in the section that follows.

A.From 1947 to 1992 : The Making of India's Constitution and the Panchayati Raj

In spite of our Freedom Movement's call for decentralization of power and participatory democracy, the subject of local government and panchayats did not initially get adequate importance in our Constitutional scheme . In framing the modern Indian Republic's Constitution, the Constituent Assembly was split between Gandhi's vision of and strong belief in Panchayati Raj and Ambedkar and Nehru's opposition to it. Thus, it was evident that the inclusion of panchayats into the Constitution was not unanimously agreed upon by the Constitution-makers.

Leaders such as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, Begum Aziz Rassul, Dr. Man Mohan Das, A.D. Gorwala and several Marxists were opposed to the inclusion of the provision of village panchayats in the Constitution. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee did not favour more power to panchayats. The faction and caste-ridden nature of rural society was considered as to defeat the noble purpose of local self-government. To Ambedkar- "the Indian village was a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism". Besides such negative view on village society, the immediate historical context was the turmoil due to India's Partition which lead many constitution makers to favour a strong Union or Centre.

On the other, leaders such asSeth Damodar Swaroop, H.V. Kamath, Prof. N.G. Ranga, Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, Mahavir Tyagi, T. Prakasham, M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar & Dr. B.N. Rau advocated for the inclusion of Village Panchayats in the new Constitutional scheme. For instance, Ananthasayanam Ayyangar argued in the Constituent Assembly that "[I]n the interest of democracy, the villages may be trained in the art of self-government, even autonomy... We must be able to reform the villages and introduce democratic principles of government there."

Gandhi came to know about the voices against inclusion of Panchayati Raj in the Constitution. He insisted on including the provisions relating to village panchayats in the Constitution. With Gandhi's strong view favouring Panchayati Raj, a provision on it was included in the Constitution's Directive Principles of State Policy (**DPSP**) under Article-40. It stated that "the State shall take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government".

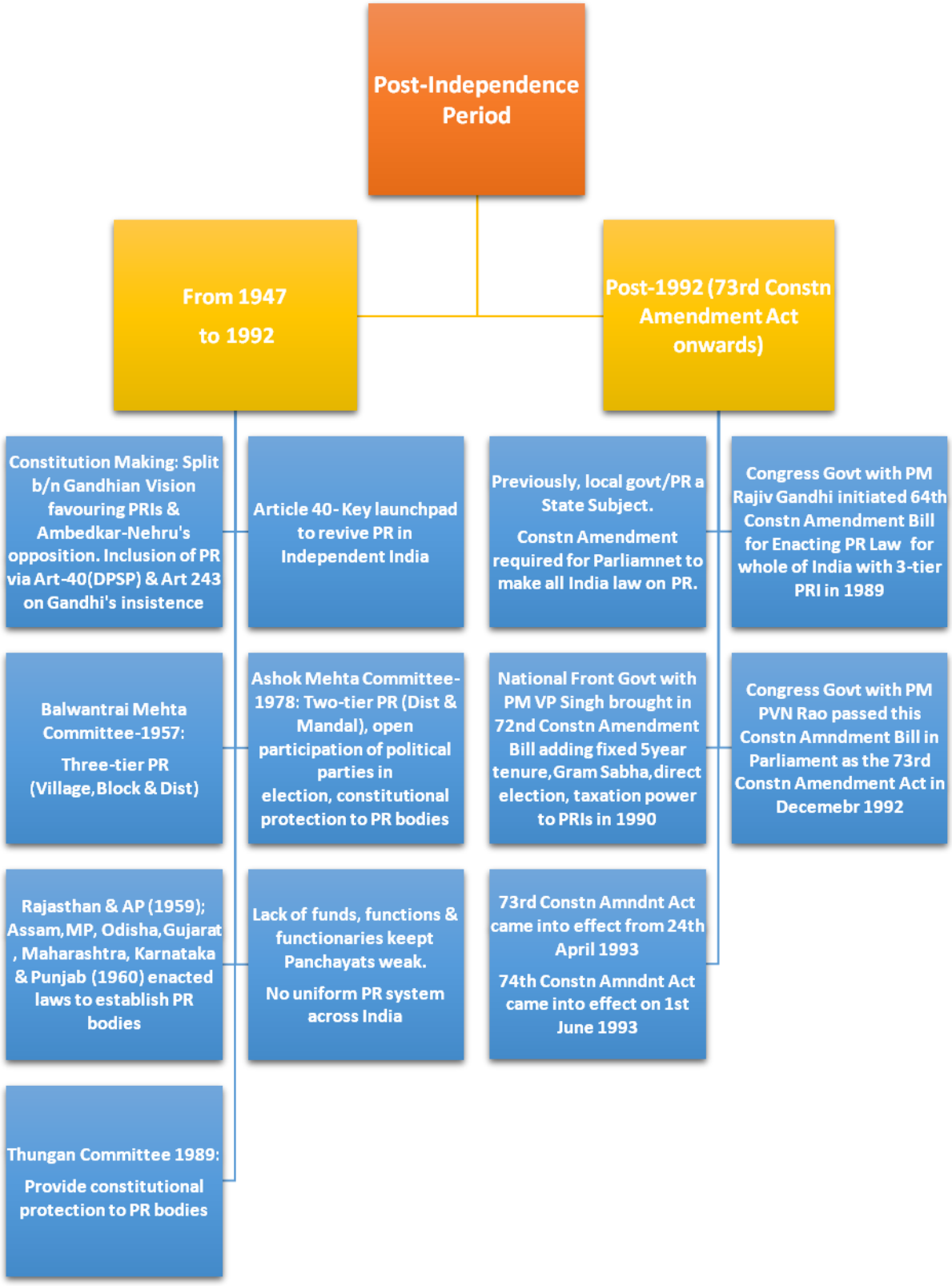


Figure 3.2 Evolution of Local Government/Panchayats in Post-Independence Period

With the Constitution coming into force, Article 40 in the DPSP and Article 243 empowered the state legislatures to legislate with respect to any subject relating to local self-government. However, as a part of the DPSP, the provisions under Article 40 were non-justiciable. It was not legally binding on the government and was primarily advisory in nature. As a consequence, there was the absence of a

uniform structure of Panchayati Raj bodies throughout the country. Besides, the subject of local government was assigned to the State List, meaning that only state governments would be doing something about it. Despite all these inherent constraints, Article 40 of the Indian Constitution can be considered as the key launch-pad towards the revival of Panchayats in post-Independent India.

Balwantrai Mehta Committee

The Union Government had launched the Community Development Programmes (**CDP**)in 1952 and the National Extension Service Scheme (**NESS**)in 1953. The goal was to promote people's participation in local development through a range of activities. A Committee under the chairmanship of Balwantrai Mehta was set up to examine the working of CDP. Its Report submitted in 1957 observed that "primary reason for the failure of Community Development Programme was the lack of people's participation".

On the basis of B.R. Mehta Committee's recommendations, a *three-tier* Panchayati Raj system for rural areas was introduced. It included the Gram Panchayats (GPs) at the village level, Panchayat Samiti (PSs) at the block level and Zilla Parishad (ZPs) at the district level. The plan was to *organically link* all three levels in the Panchayati Raj system, with chairpersons of lower level bodies to be included as *ex-officio* members of the higher levels. In explaining the rationale of its recommendation, the Committee observed, "*Panchayati Raj system establishes a linkage between local leadership enjoying confidence of local people and the government and it translates the policies of the government into action"*.

The B.R. Mehta Committee highlighted the potential of Panchayati Raj system as a mechanism to ensure the involvement of local people and their representatives in various development programmes of the government. These local bodies or councils would take up various planning and development works in the rural areas. As recommended, the village panchayats were considered as subordinate agencies of the government to implement its programs at the local or lowest levels. This was *not* to make the PRIs as institutions of self-government or Gram Swaraj as Gandhi had envisioned. Subsequently, Panchayati Raj system lost its importance/sheen. Afterwards it was noticed that people's participation gradually weakened as elections to the panchayats were not held regularly.

Ashok Mehta Committee

In 1977, the Janata Party Government came to power at the Centre. The Morarji Desai lead government tried to revitalize Panchayati Raj (PR) institutions and appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Ashok Mehta in December 1977. This Committee was to suggest a viable organization of grass-roots councils to mobilize the participation and active support of the people. In its landmark 1978 Report, the Committee suggested PR structures with a development orientation at *two levels*-District Panchayats and MandalPanchayats covering 15,000- 20,000 people. It also recommended for open participation of political parties in Panchayati Raj elections and constitutional protection to PR bodies. This was to entrench the decentralization of process at the grass-roots level and strengthen the PRIs to become effective agencies for development in rural India.

B.Issues/Factors Keeping the PRIs Weak

Subsequently, many states like Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh in 1959**;** Assam, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Punjab in 1960 enacted their own state laws to set up Panchayati Raj Institutions in their respective states.

Though elections to PRIs were held for several years in many of these states, powers and functions were not appropriately delegated and finances were not adequately available. The lack of appropriate funds, functions and functionaries kept the Panchayats weak. The PRIs remained dependent on the state and central governments for financial assistance to run their show. Besides, many state governments did not consider it necessary to establish elected local bodies. They continued the provision of indirect elections to most local bodies. In several instances, elected PRIs were indiscriminately or whimsically dissolved before the expiry of their due terms. On many occasions, the local government bodies were taken away from elected representatives and handed over to the government officers. In many cases, elections to the local bodies were postponed persistently.

However, the leadership at the national level realized that real development of villages was possible only through active and efficient PRIs. In 1989, the P.K. Thungan Committee recommended *constitutional status* to local government institutions. Afterwards, concerted efforts were made to bring the needed Constitutional Amendment so as to give the PRIs a constitutionally guaranteed existence. The intent was to make them function as *institutions of self-government* in the real sense of the term as well as to give them an all India uniform pattern.

To-Do-Activity: You should visit the local Panchayat Office of the village, or the local Municipality office of the town/city. Find out from the concerned officials what kind of work they do for the everyday problems that people face. Check the claims by talking to people of the area about what the Panchayat or the Municipality is doing. Try to find out if there is any discrepancy between the two and the reasons for that.

3.3 The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and Panchayati Raj in India

Constitutionalisation of Panchayati Raj in India

With these varied experiences/experiments from across India, the necessity of constitutional mandate for Panchayati Raj was felt. Many state governments were not sincere about creating durable and efficient Panchayati Raj Institutions and sharing power with them. In fact, some states had taken the devolved powers back from the PRIs. Status and dignity are crucial factors to make PRIs function effectively. This required Constitutional guarantee or Constitutionalisation of the Panchayats. Previously, local self-government or Panchayat Raj was a State Subject. Hence, the Union government could not bring any legislation on Panchayati Raj. This prompted it to amend the Constitution under Article-368 enabling the Parliament to enact laws on Panchayats applicable to the whole of India.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 on PRIs has a chequered history. This Legislative Bill on Panchayati Raj took nearly three years of Parliamentary process to emerge as an Act. Let's find out the notable historical steps taken by successive Governments at the Centre towards

Constitutionalisation of the Panchayati Raj system in India. Below are some of these Parliamentary milestones:

a)The Union Government headed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced the 64th Constitution Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha in 1989. It proposed to constitute an uniform *Three-Tier* Panchayati Raj system for the whole of India. Though approved by the Lok Sabha, this Bill couldn't become an Act as it wasn't passed in the Rajya Sabha.

b)Then in September 1990, the Union Government lead by Prime Minister V.P. Singh introduced the 72nd Constitution Amendment Bill on PRIs. This Bill included the provision to constitute Gram Sabha in each village, direct elections to all seats in Panchayats at the village level as well as to not less than 50% of seats in Panchayats at other two higher levels. It proposed to confer financial powers and authority on these local bodies like the power to levy, appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees. Significantly, it proposed to constitute a Finance Commission to review the financial position of PRIs, fixing five years tenure for PRIs and to hold elections within a period of six months in the event of PRIs' dissolution. However, this Bill could not be taken up for consideration by the Parliament and lapsed with the dissolution of the 9th Lok Sabha in 1991.

c)Later, in September 1991, the Union Government headed by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao again introduced this Constitution Amendment Bill, with some modifications, to constitute PRIs. And fortunately, this time with Mr. Rao at the helm, the Panchayati Raj Bill was to see the light of the day as an Act.

"Though PRIs have been in existence for a long time, it's observed that these institutions haven't been able to acquire the status & dignity of viable and responsive people's bodies due to reasons.... absence of regular elections, prolonged super-session, insufficient representation of weaker sections like SCs, STs and women, inadequate devolution of powers & lack of financial resources..Art 40 of DPSP lays down that the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats & endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-govt....In light of experience in last 40years and in view of short-comings..., it's considered that there's an imperative need to enshrine in the Constitution certain basic & essential features of PRIs to impart certainty, continuity & strength to them"

❖***Quote from the STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS appended to the Constitution (72nd Amendment) Bill, 1991 which was enacted as the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992***

d)Ramnivas Mirdha lead Joint-Parliamentary Committee submitted its Report on the proposed Bill on PRIs to the Parliament. Both Houses of Parliament conducted extensive debates on it and brought in crucial amendments. With Lok Sabha on 23rd December and Rajya Sabha on 24th December 1992, Parliament almost unanimously passed the Constitution 72nd Amendment Bill.

e)Afterwards, 17 State Legislatures ratified this Act by 23 April 1994, with the Kerala Assembly as the first to ratify it and West Bengal and Tamil Nadu Assemblies not giving their consent.

f)On 20th April 1993, the President of India gave his assent to this Bill passed by the Parliament. With this, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 (introduced in Parliament as the 72nd Amendment Bill in September 1991) came into force from 24th April 1993.

g)Along with it, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act was passed by the Parliament to create similar *three-tier* local bodies or councils in the urban or municipal areas. On 1st June 1993, this Amendment Act to establish urban local self-governments was enforced.

h)This Act also provided for a District Planning Committee with responsibility to consolidate the plans prepared by Panchayats and Municipalities (Article 243 ZD).

i)This Act inserted Article 243 to Part IX of India's Constitution and gave Constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. As per Article 243 M, all state governments became duty bound to amend or enact their respective State Panchayat Acts in conformity with the Constitutional provisions.

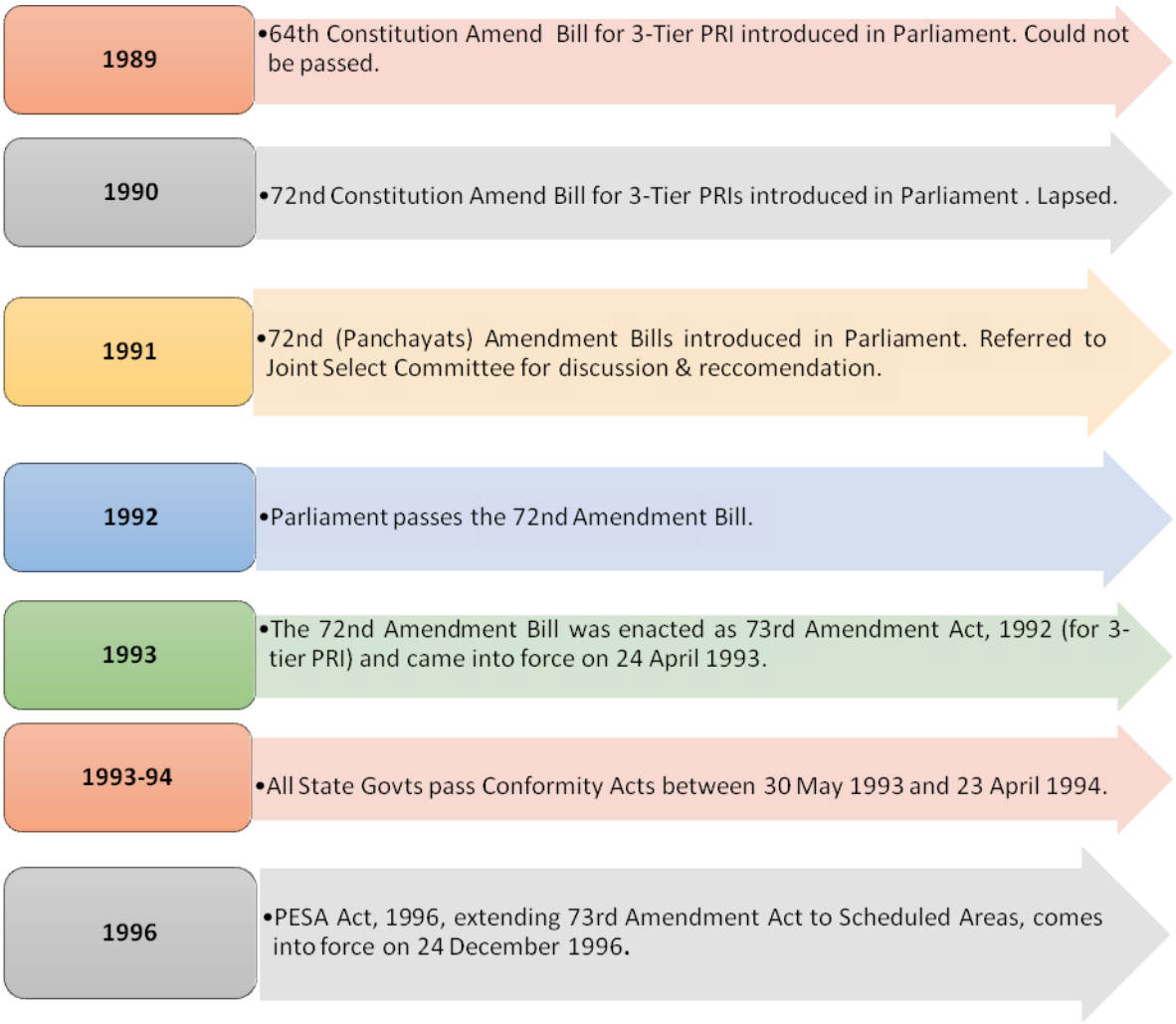


Figure 3.3 Milestones towards Constitutionalisation of PRIs

The 73rdConstitution Amendment Act, 1992: Implications for PRIs in India

The 73rdConstitutional Amendment Act, 1992 provided *constitutional status* to PRIs as *institutions of local self-government* for rural India. It guaranteed fixed tenure and perpetual existence to PRIs by adding *Part IX* titled as "The Panchayats" to India's Constitution covering provisions of Article 243 and Articles 243 A to O. It added S*chedule XI* which enlisted 29 subjects as functions and powers of PRIs. This Amendment turned the Constitutional goal mentioned in Article 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) into a reality. It says "States shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to

function as units of self-government". In some way, we can say that Article 40 long incubated the seeds of Panchayats and the PRIs' baby was delivered through the surgery of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act.

'Local government' is a *State Subject* as per India's Constitution. Earlier, state governments enjoyed the freedom to make or not make or in whatever form they wanted to make their own laws on this subject. Significantly, this Constitutional Amendment brought generic uniformity to the organization of Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country. With the Constitution being amended, states had to change their laws on local bodies to bring them in conformity with the 73rd Amendment Act.

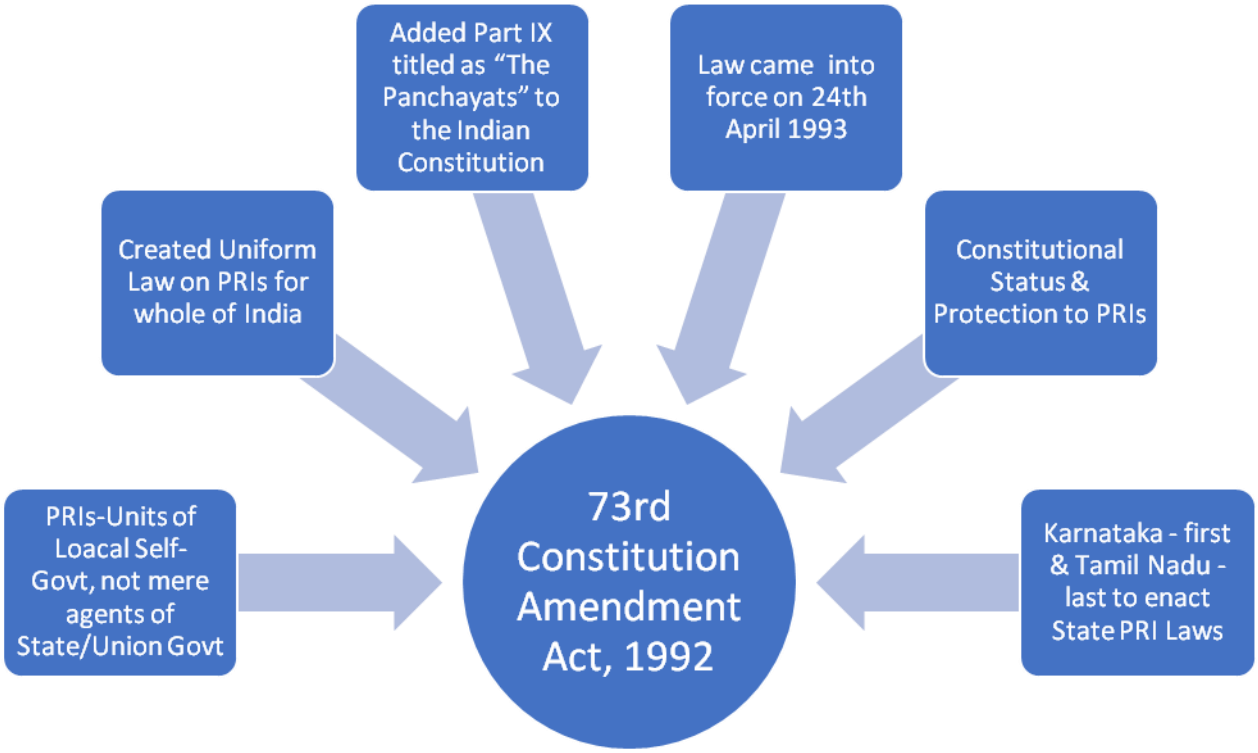


Figure 3.4 Significant Points about 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992

With this PRI Act coming into effect on 24th April 1993, it became incumbent upon the states either to enact a new state PRI law or conduct full-scale amendment in the existing PRI law. The reason was to bring all State PRI laws in conformity with the amended constitutional provisions, within one year from the Act coming into force, i.,e., by 24th April 1994. Government of India's Ministry of Rural Development with technical help from National Institute of Rural Development (**NIRD**), Hyderabad had prepared a Model Bill. This Model Bill was circulated to the states as a basic guideline or foundational framework to follow in preparing Stat PRI laws. It was to accelerate the pace of action by state governments on this front. In bringing the new state PRI law, Karnataka became the first state. Then Gujarat, Bihar, Tripura, Sikkim, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh followed suit. Tamil Nadu was the last state to enact its new state PRI law as per the Constitutional mandate on 19th April 1994. The constitutional deadline was 23rd April 1994. All states and Union Territories passed the PRI law by this date to conform to the constitutional requirements.

This Amendment brought a significant change to the Constitution by inserting a new part- ***Part IX*** - into the Constitution, which contained provisions relating to PRIs. It gave constitutional recognition to PRIs and their elected representatives. Afterwards, Panchayats became, at least in principle, Institutions of Self-Government in their own right. They no mere remained as mere administrative extensions of the State or Union Government. With it, the magnitude of democratic representation increased manifold as about 3 million representatives get elected to Panchayats in India.

To-Do-Activity: Watch the documentary *Swaraj Mumkin Hai* (Self-rule is Possible) by Pankaj Shukla (2016). This is the story of the Baghuvar village in Madhya Pradesh where the village Panchayat could bring tremendous change in the village life. Compare it with other village panchayat that you know, and discuss how villages can be transformed.

3.4 Structure and Functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions

Structure and Composition of PRIs

A.Three-Tier Structure of PRIs: Panchayati Raj is organised as a *three-tier* system - Gram Panchayats at the village, Panchayat Samiti at the intermediate level (block or taluk) and Zilla Parishad at district level. Smaller states with populations below 20 lakhs given the option not to have an intermediate level Panchayat.

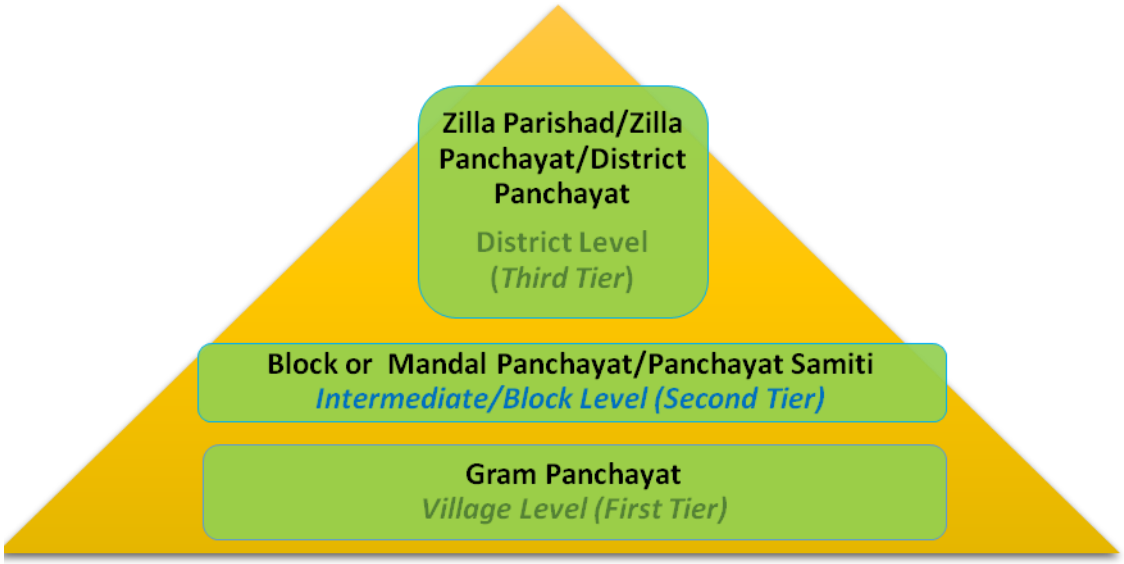


Figure 3.5 Structural Diagram of Three-Tier PRIs

Constitution in *Part IX* lays down a broad outline for *3-Tier* PRIs in rural areas. It creates a baseline upon which States would enact their own PRI laws taking into account the variations in their population, social structures, economies and political frameworks. While the detailed provisions or features relating to PRIs in different states were not uniform earlier, this Act ensured a great level of uniformity among them. While Article 243B says- "There shall be constituted in every State, Panchayats at the Village, intermediate and district levels", State legislatures finally decide how these are defined, though Art 243 Q of the Constitution provides guidelines for this.

B.Gram Sabha refers toall voters or persons registered in the electoral roll of a village within the area of a Panchayat. Gram Sabha is the *only* permanent body or perpetualentityin the Panchayati Raj system. It does not have a fixed tenure; no such time-frame or period for it to be dissolved. For the Panchayati Raj system, the Gram Sabha is the foundation. But it's not among the three tiers of the PRI system. It's visualised as the soul within the framework of Panchayat Raj System. State legislatures are free to assign or allocate powers and functions to the Gram Sabha by law, however, its creation is mandatory (Article 243A).

People's widespread participation in the Gram Sabha meetings boosts the efficiency of Panchayats. It helps in identifying and consolidating the needs and requirements of beneficiaries at individual and community level. It also prioritizes the tasks for the Panchayat on the basis of people's needs. It's obligatory on the part of Gram Panchayats to consider all suggestions and ideas for planning and expenditure coming from the Gram Sabhas. After filtering and selecting, the Gram Panchayat sends such proposals to the Panchayat Samitis or Block Panchayats for budgetary approval and allocation.

Difference between Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat

In the provisions relating to PRIs, we come across an interesting difference between two institutions at the primary level of the Panchayati Raj system. Let's no one be confused between the Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat. They are not synonymous with each other though both are found at the village level. The table below brings out the difference between them.

Table 3.1 Difference between Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat

Gram Sabha	Gram Panchayat
a)Gram Sabha comprises of all adults members registered as voters in the village or group of villages covered under a Panchayat.	a)Gram Panchayat consists of Sarpanch and *panchs (*ward members) elected by voters of Gram Sabhas or the village/s. The head of the Panchayat is known as "Sarpanch".
b)Anyone who is 18 years old or more and a registered voter in the village is a member of the Gram Sabha.	b)Only, the Ward Members/ Panchs and the Sarpanch are office bearers of Gram Panchayat.
c)Gram Sabha is a Permanent/Perpetual Body without a fixed tenure.	c)Gram Panchayat is elected for Five Years.

C.Direct Election of Members from Territorial Constituencies: Article 243 C (1) lays down the provisions for the composition or organization of Panchayats. Its members are to be chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies. All members of the three-tiers of the Panchayat Raj system are chosen by Direct Election. Moreover, the principle that guides these elections

is that "the *ratio of the territorial area* of the local body to the number of seats it elects should be, as far as possible, the same throughout the state". Further, "the state legislatures are empowered to make specific provisions for the inclusion of other elected representatives such as Members of Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies as members in the PRIs". The minimum Qualifying Age for Election to any level of Panchayat is 21 years.

D. Disqualification for Membership: Article 243F (1) enumerates the provisions for disqualification of a person for being chosen as or continuing as a member of a Panchayat:—

i. "If he is so disqualified by or under any law for the purposes of elections to the State Legislature". Of course, such disqualification excludes the age bar of 25 years as 21 years is the qualifying age for election to the PRIs.

ii. "If he is so disqualified by or under any law made by the Legislature of the State concerning Panchayati Raj Institutions".

As the 73rd Amendment allowed States to legislate detailed laws on PRIs in conformity with the Union Law, states have enacted laws on the qualification of candidates seeking election or criteria for disqualification from membership. The criteria or norms included educational qualification, number of children and even having or not having a toilet.

E.The Constitution provides for *uniform five-year term* for all levels of Panchayats. It also lays down that elections to constitute new Panchayati Raj bodies should be completed before the five year term expires. In case, the PRI bodies are dissolved before their regular five years' term, the state government is duty bound to compulsorily conduct elections to these PRIs within six months' time. In such cases, the reconstituted Panchayats will serve only for the remaining time period of the five-year term. In this way, by providing a fixed and reasonably guaranteed tenure, the Constitution has protected the PRIs from any whimsical or illegal takeover of Panchayats by the state government. Ensuring such durability has helped PRIs to function more independently and efficiently.

F.Election of Chairpersons/Presidents Article 243 C (5): Further, this Act empowers state legislatures to make specific law or regulations for the election of Chairpersons or Presidents of PRIs. Chairpersons of panchayats of the intermediate and district level have to be elected by indirect method from among the elected members. But at the village level, election of the Sarpanch or Chairperson of Gram Panchayat can be conducted by either direct or indirect election as per state's own Panchayati Raj Act. However, the election of Sarpanch of the village Panchayat is usually by direct election in all states.

G.Reservation of Seats (for Membership &Office of Chairperson) in PRIs:(Article 243 D)

i. **Reservation of Seats for Membership: The Act lays down** that seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population at each level of PRIs. Out of the Reserved Seats, 1/3rd has to be reserved for women belonging to the SC and ST Community.

ii. **Reservation for Women-** Out of the total number of seats to be filled by the direct elections, 1/3rdhas to be reserved for women. Even, 1/3rd seats to be reserved for women out of the reserved seats for SCs and STs. While reservation of SCs& STs is in proportion to their share in population, that for women is at least 33.33%. However, many States have increased the reservation of seats and chairperson posts for women in Panchayats even up to 50%.

iii. **Reservation of Offices of Chairpersons**- There is also provision foe reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Panchayats at the village or any other level for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and Women in such manner as per the State enactment.

iv. **Reservation by Rotation**: This Act directs the states to make reservation by the policy of rotation in the Panchayats at all three tiers.

v. **Reservation for Backward Classes**: The Act provides that If a State finds it necessary, it can make provisions for for reservations for candidates of the other backward classes (OBCs).

H. State Election Commission: As per the Act, states are duty bound to establish an independent State Election Commission for conducting elections to the Panchayats. The State Election Commission would have powers to supervise, direct and control the elections to the PRIs. Earlier, the State administration administrative agencies were performing these tasks. Now, the office of State Election Commissioner enjoys autonomy like the Election Commission of India. (Article 243 K)

Functions and Powers of PRIs (**Article 243G**)

a)Twenty-nine Functions: ***Schedule XI*** added to the Constitution through 73rd Amendment enumerates distribution of powers between the state government and Panchayats. Twenty-nine subjects, which were in the State List earlier, got listed with the Eleventh *Schedule* and devolved /transferred to PRIs to prepare plans for economic development and social justice at the local level. State legislatures were mandated to enact laws to endow powers and authority to Panchayats to enable them to function as local self-government. The actual transfer of these subjects depends upon the state legislation. Each state decides how many of these 29 subjects would be transferred to the local bodies. States are to devolve adequate power to Panchayats to prepare plans for economic development and social justice.

Table 3.2 Functions Entrusted to PRIs under the 11th Schedule (Article243G)

Twenty-nine Functions of PRIs under the Schedule-XI			
1.	Agriculture, including agricultural extension.	16.	Poverty alleviation programme.
2.	Land improvement, implementation of land reforms & consolidation &soil conservation.	17.	Education, including primary and secondary schools.
3.	Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development.	18.	Technical training and vocational education.
4.	Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry.	19.	Adult and non-formal education.
5.	Fisheries.	20.	Libraries.
6.	Social forestry and farm forestry.	21.	Cultural activities.
7.	Minor forest produce.	22.	Markets and fairs.
8.	Small scale industries, including food processing industries.	23.	Health & sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries.
9.	Khadi, village and cottage industries.	24.	Family welfare.
10.	Rural housing.	25.	Women and child development.
11.	Drinking water.	26.	Social welfare, including welfare of persons with physical & mental disability
12.	Fuel and fodder.	27.	Welfare of weaker sections, in particular, of SCs and STs.
13.	Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication.	28.	Public distribution system.
14.	Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity.	29.	Maintenance of community assets.
15.	Non-conventional energy sources.		

b)Adequate Funds: The Act mandates that adequate funds shall be allocated to the PRIs to carry out their functions as institutions of self-government. Panchayats' finance consists of the budgetary allocation from State Governments, share of revenue of certain taxes, collection and retention of the revenue it raises, financial support for Central Government programmes and grants, Union Finance Commission grants **(Article 243 H**).

c)State Finance Commission: (**Article 243 I**) - Limitation of financial resources had been the principal cause for Panchayati Raj's failure in the past. To overcome this financial crunch, this Act authorizes the Panchayats to levy and collect appropriate taxes, duties, tolls, and fees. Besides, the PRIs are entitled to grants-in- aid from the Consolidated Fund of the State. Under this Act's directive, State Governments appoint State Finance Commission each *five years* to review the financial position of Panchayats. The Commission makes

recommendations to the Governor on the actions needed to augment/improve the financial position of Panchayats:-

i. "The Distribution of the taxes, duties, tolls, fees etc. levied by the state which is to be divided between the Panchayats.
ii. Allocation of proceeds between various tiers.
iii. Taxes, tolls, fees assigned to Panchayats
iv. Grant in aids."

This provision helps in deciding the principles upon which adequate financial resources can be ensured for Panchayats. The Act tries to make sure that allocation of funds to the rural local governments will not be left to political whims and fancies.

Areas Not Covered under Part IX (Non-Applicability of the 73rd CAA)

Part IX of the Constitution applies to most parts of our country. But, Article 243M (1) of the Constitution exempts the Scheduled Areas and tribal areas enumerated in Clause (1) and (2) of Article 244 from the application of provisions contained in Part IX. The areas mentioned below are exempted from the operation of the Act due to some socio-cultural and administrative considerations:

a. "Scheduled areas listed under the 5th Schedule in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan.
b. The Schedule areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
c. The hill areas of Darjeeling District of West Bengal for which Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council exists".

The **Sixth Schedule** of the Constitution deals with the administration of the tribal areas in the four north-eastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram as per Article 244.

The **Fifth Schedule** of Constitution deals with the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes residing in areas other than States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
In this regard, Article 243M (4) (b) "empowers the Parliament to legislate and extend the provisions of Part IX to the Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas referred to in clause (1), subject to such exceptions and modifications as may be specified in such law".

Presently, we can find Fifth Scheduled Areas in 10 States: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana. Let's find the details of the notified Fifth Schedule Areas as mentioned in the following table:

Table 3.3 Notified Fifth Schedule Areas (FSA)

Sl. No.	Name of the State	Villages	Panchayats	Blocks	Districts	
					Fully Covered	Partially Covered
1.	Andhra Pradesh	1586	588	36	0	5
2.	Chhattisgarh	9977	5050	85	13	6
3.	Gujarat	4503	2388	40	4	7
4.	Himachal Pradesh	806	151	7	2	1
5.	Jharkhand	16022	2074	131	13	3
6.	Madhya Pradesh	11784	5211	89	5	15
7.	Maharashtra	5905	2890	59	0	12
8.	Odisha	19311	1918	119	6	7
9.	Rajasthan	5054	1240	26	2	3
10.	Telangana	2616	631	72	0	4
Total		**77564**	**22141**	**664**	**45**	**63**

(*Source*: Basic Statistics of Panchayati Raj Institutions, MoPR, GoI, New Delhi, 2019)

Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996

Initially, the 73rd Amendment Act was not applicable to the Scheduled Areas inhabited by Adivasis in some states of India. Later on, in conformity with provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act, an Act titled as *Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) or PESA Act,1996* was passed by India's Parliament in 1996. This Act extends the application of *Part IX* of the Constitution, with certain modifications and exceptions, to the Fifth Schedule Areas notified under Article 244(1).

There are certain notable exceptions that PESA Act brought in for the Scheduled Areas. The reservation of seats in all Panchayats of the Scheduled Areas shall be in proportion to the population of the concerned community in the concerned Panchayat as per *Part IX* of the Constitution. But, the reservation for the Scheduled Tribes in these PRIs shall not be less than one-half of the total number of seats. Further, all seats of Chairpersons of Panchayats at all levels shall be reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. Again, the State Government may nominate persons belonging to such Scheduled Tribes who have no representation in the Panchayat at the intermediate or district level.

The PESA Act protects the rights of tribal communities to manage their resources in ways acceptable to their longstanding customary practices. With this purpose, the Gram Sabha is vested with more powers compared to their counter parts in non-PESA areas. In their functioning, the elected PRIs have to get the Gram Sabha's consent in many respects. The idea behind this Act is that local traditions of self-government should be protected while introducing modern elected bodies.

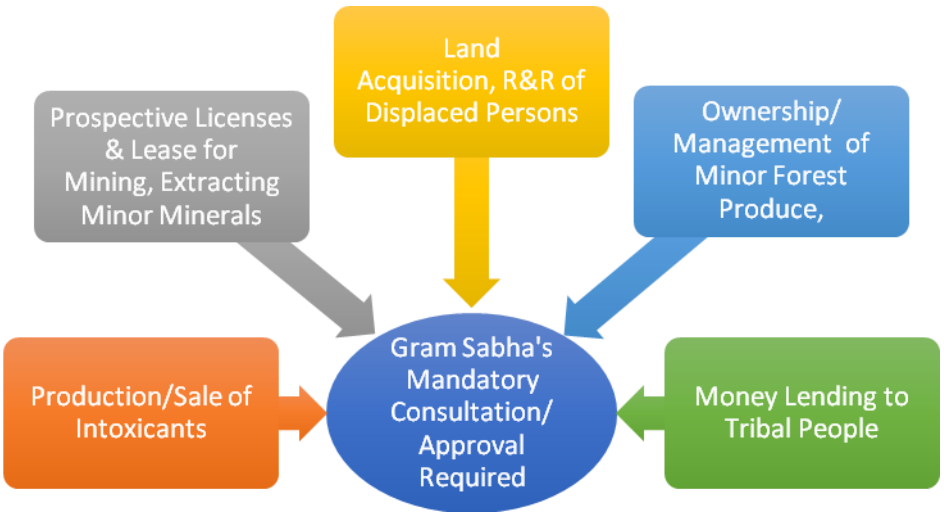


Figure 3.6 Significance of Gram Sabha in PESA Areas

a)For land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced persons
b)For Ownership & Management of minor forest produce, water bodies and village markets
c)For prospective licenses/lease for mines and concession for extracting minor minerals
d)With regard to regulating production, sale or consumption of intoxicants
e)With regard to money lending to Scheduled Tribe population
f) With regard to local plans, Tribal sub plans and over Social sector Institutions & Functionaries.

The vision of the PESA Act is that its effective implementation, besides bringing development, will deepen democracy in the Fifth Schedule Areas. The expected benefits can be listed in the following diagram:

Figure 3.7 Envisioned Benefits of PESA Act 1996

3.5 Success and Challenges for Grassroots Democracy in India

PRIs Success Story- Deepening Grassroots Democracy in India

Provisions laid down by the 73rd Amendment Act have far reaching consequences for the PRIs to become institutions of self-government in a significant way. Its mandate on regular elections to the PRIs in every five years, ensuring financial strength of Panchayati Raj bodies and facilitating their involvement in grassroots-level micro-planning to usher in economic and social development at the local or village level are quite far-reaching and impact-full. State governments were given a time-bound mandate of just one year to fast pace the enactment of state specific PRI laws. It helped in enforcing the 73rd Amendment Act and helped in bringing full and uniform coverage of PRIs throughout the country very quickly. The Act also protects the autonomy of the States by providing them the scope to fill up the details in State level Panchayati Raj Acts as well as giving them power of supervision and control over Panchayats matters. Let's discuss some notable achievements of PRIs in India in the following paragraphs.

A.Significant Rise in the Number of PRIs and Elected Representatives

Since the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act coming into force in 1993, we can find a phenomenal rise in the number of PRIs at all three levels across India. Now, we have about 630 Zilla Parishad/Panchayats at the District level, about 6614 Panchayat Samitis or Mandal Panchayats at the Block/Taluka level and about 2, 53,268 Gram Panchayats at the Village level. Now, there are about 31, 00,000(31lakh) elected members of PRIs in India. Besides, there are about 13776 Traditional Bodies functioning in the 5th and 6th Scheduled Tribal Areas where the PESA Act of 1996 is applicable.

Table 3.4 Consolidated Data on No. of PRIs & Elected Representatives (esp. Women) in India

Sl. No.	Unit	Numbers
1	Number of PRIs in the Country	2.60,512
2	Number of Village Panchayats	2,53,268
3	Number of Intermediate Panchayats	6,614
4	Number of District Panchayats	630
5	Number of Elected Members of PRIs	31lakh (approximately)
6	Number of Elected Women Representatives	13.75 lakh (approximately)

Source: Sl.No.1, 2, 3&4 http://lgdirectory.gov.in Report generated on 18/04/2019
Sl.No.5&6 MoPR Compilation as on 27.03.2018 (Basic Statistics on PRIs, MoPR, New Delhi,2019)

B.Average Population per Gram Panchayat

The National Average population per Gram Panchayat stands at 3,416 people per GP. It indicates that the highest density of population per Gram Panchayt is in the states of West Bengal, Kerala and Assam. The lowest density of population per GP is in the states of Punjab, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh

C.Overwhelming Presence of Elected Women Representatives (EWR) in the Panchayats

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act made it mandatory that not less than one-third of the total seats in the PRIs or local bodies should be reserved for women candidates or members. In fact, this is the only level of government in India which has ensured higher participation of women

through reserving seats for them. Today, there are about 14 lakh Elected Women Representatives (**EWR**s), making India the country having the largest number of women in elected positions in the world. Further, seats for Sarpanch/ Pradhan /Chairperson at all the three levels are also reserved for SCs, STs and women. It's a huge leap forward in India's effort towards Women Empowerment by creating women's agency in the public-political domain. The following table shows the huge number of elected representatives as well as the substantial number of women representatives in PRIs.

Table 3.5 State/UT-wise Number & Percentage of Women Representatives

Sl. No	State/Union Territory	Total Elected Representatives	Total EWRs	%EWRs
1	Andhra Pradesh	156050	78025	50.00
2	Arunachal Pradesh	9383	3658	38.99
3	Assam	26820	13410	50.00
4	Bihar	127391	57887	45.44
5	Chhattisgarh	170285	93287	54.78
6	Gujarat	144016	71988	49.99
7	Haryana	70035	29499	42.12
8	Himachal Pradesh	28723	14398	50.13
9	Jammu & Kashmir	33847	11169	33.00
10	Jharkhand	60782	30757	50.60
11	Karnataka	104967	50892	48.48
12	Kerala	18372	9630	52.42
13	Madhya Pradesh	392981	196490	50.00
14	Maharashtra	240122	121490	50.60
15	Manipur	1723	868	50.38
16	Mizoram	3502	828	23.64
17	Odisha	107487	53551	49.82
18	Punjab	97180	32393	33.33
19	Rajasthan	124854	70527	56.49
20	Sikkim	1096	548	50.00
21	Tamil Nadu	117599	39975	33.99
22	Tripura	6646	3006	45.23
23	Telangana	103468	51735	50.00
24	Uttarakhand	64606	35957	55.66
25	Uttar Pradesh	826458	272733	33.00
26	West Bengal	59402	30157	50.77
27	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	136	47	34.56
28	Daman & Diu	172	92	53.49
29	Goa	1564	516	32.99
30	Chandigarh	169	58	34.32
31	Lakshadweep	110	41	37.27
32	A&N Island	858	302	35.20
Total		3100804	1375914	44.37

(Source: *Basic Statistics on PRIs*, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 2019)

In India, we come across many instances where woman Panchs or Sarpanchs have shown exemplary leadership in making the PRIs vibrant and responsive to people's needs and aspirations. Let's discuss some notable stories or cases of women's leadership in this context. It will help us understand the grit and determination with which these women leaders have faced the challenges to make their mark in the arena of India's grassroots politics. A news article published in The Times of India on 9th January 2017 tells the story of an educated young woman's tryst with Panchayati Raj politics in rural Odisha.

Along with Arti Devi of Odisha, we have many more examples of women of mettle in the domain of grassroots politics bringing positive difference to the lives of people they serve. Meena Behen in the district Vyara in Gujarat is the first woman sarpanch of her village which could elect an all-women Panchayat board. Similarly, Sarpanch Sushma Bhadu of Haryana is credited for improving the education and sex ratio levels of her villages. Radha Devi of Rajasthan is known as a dynamic Sarpanch who improved school enrollment and reduced the drop outs in her Panchayat.

On eve of the 25th anniversary of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, researchers and commentators brought out critical appraisals on the status and effectiveness of PRIs with special focus on the role and position of women *vis-a-vis* Panchayati Raj in India. A news article had highlighted the positive impact on governance due to the increasing presence of women, particularly from SCs and STs communities citing various social research findings.

"Evaluating the Panchayati Raj Institutions at 25"

"Research using PRIs (by Lakshmi Iyer, Anandi Mani, Prachi Mishra, and Petia Topalova) has shown that having female political representation in local governments makes women more likely to come forward and report crimes. Further, female PRI leaders are more likely to focus on issues pertinent to women. R. Chattopadhyay and E. Duflo show that in districts with female sarpanch/pradhans, significantly greater investments are made in drinking water, a priority public goods issue for women. They also show that SC sarpanch/pradhans are more likely to invest in public goods in Scheduled Castes hamlets—an important change in the severely segregated villages of India. In a country where access is determined by gender and caste, even more than economic status, these changes are remarkable".-**Shruti Rajagopalan, *livemint.com*, 30 Apr 2018**

A. Significant Presence of People from SCs/STs Communities

The 73rd Amendment mandates reservation of both membership as well as Chairperson-ship in favour of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes at all three-tiers of the PRIs. The Act requires that "the extent of such reservation in a state should reflect the SC/ST population share in that state". It also lays down that "no Gram Panchayat be reserved for the same group for two consecutive elections". This provision in the PRI Act has brought a positive change for the usually marginalized communities by pulling more of them into the public sphere.

Today, about 7 lakh members belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities are elected to the PRIs in India. An increased presence and involvement in the local-government sphere has significant impact for everyday life of these social groups. Here, the SC/ST representatives can exercise a more effective and genuine voice in governance matters affecting their lives than their counterparts in the national or state level politics.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Banker-turned-sarpanch a role model for women in grass root level politics

TNN | Jan 9, 2017, 10.29 PM IST

BHUBANESWAR: Last five years were quite eventful for Arati Devi. Elected as country's youngest sarpanch five years ago from Dhunkapada gram panchayat in Ganjam district, the 31-year-old MBA graduate has become a role model for many women in grass root level politics.

Arati left the lucrative job of an investment officer in a leading bank to bring some change to her village said situations have changed in the last five years so are the issues in rural polls. Aimed to reach parliament from panchayat, Arati is hopeful of getting a BJD ticket for Zilla Parishad Member in the ensuing panchayat elections.

"My political journey was not at all hunky-dory. Things were very different and difficult at the ground level from what I had in mind before joining politics. But I am really happy that I could bring some positive changes in my panchayat, which I hope will remain there after me," said Arati.

Unlike previous elections, women candidates will not fight for name sake is the major change her panchayat will witness in the coming rural polls, she said. "I am quite confident that women in my panchayat have become aware of their rights and will no more be rubber stamps. Women empowerment was always the first in my priority lists. Earlier none except a few men used to participate in palli sabhas. After I started women palli sabha over 1000 women are attending each meeting and discussing their issues. This I am sure is not going to change," she added.

ps://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/banker-turned-sarpanch-a-role-model-for-women-in-grass-root-level-politics/articleshowprint/58427115.cms 1

/2020 Banker-turned-sarpanch a role model for women in grass root level politics - Times of India

Her efforts are evident as pucca roads, electricity connections to several villages, streamlined PDS system, no teacher vacancies in schools, women attending palli sabhas, planting over 1.5 lakh trees in her panchayat and reviving folk art troupes in her gram panchayat. As a result of a literacy campaign 'Tipa nuhen Dstakhat' (no thumb impression only signature) she launched in her panchayat around 700 women are now able to sign and have basic reading and learning abilities.

But to achieve these she had her share of challenges and bottlenecks. "The first challenge I faced was from men around me and their insecurity complex. I had undergone mental harassment, people came to attack and abuse me physically, they lodged police case of dalit atrocity against me. But it was my strong will power for which I could overcome everything," said Arati, who represented India at the International Visitors Leadership Programme on state and local governments in USA in 2014.

Thus, the PRIs are steadily becoming more representative of the social reality they operate in. This has significantly altered the social profile and the impact factors of the local bodies. Of course, there are instances of social conflicts due to the intense struggle for power with the previously entrenched dominant groups in rural India. We can fairly realize that the increasing presence of the previously marginalized groups in local public institutions is going to make democracy more dynamic/substantive and give more power to those who did not enjoy it earlier.

B. Increasing Grants of Union Finance Commissions for the Panchayats

The Union and state governments are providing programmatic support for building up the capacity of PRIs and strengthen them through financial support. This can ensure efficient delivery of services at the grassroots level through decentralized, participatory local self government. This will help attain inclusive development with social justice.

Article 280(3) (bb) of our Constitution inserted via the 73rd Amendment states that "the measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of Panchayats in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State".

As per this Constitutional mandate, the Union Finance Commissions make recommendations to increase the Consolidated Fund of the State. This in turn helps the States to give more money to the Panchayats on the basis of recommendations made by the State Finance Commission. Successive Union Finance Commissions have substantially increased fund allocations for local bodies and also the grants have been increased. The 15th Finance Commission is also considering to further increase the allocations for local governments to match the international standards. Let's see the status of actual allocation and release of grants to the rural local bodies under the 13th and 14th Finance Commissions. These following tables indicate a steady and substantial growth in the allocation of funds for the PRIs over the years.

Table 3.6 Year-wise Allocation and Release of the 13th Finance Commission (TFC) grants to Rural Local Bodies during 2010-11 to 2014-15. (Rs. in crore)

Sl. No.	Year	Allocation	Released
1	**2010-11**	**5959.11**	**5781.25**
2	**2011-12**	**10203.41**	**8403.18**
3	**2012-13**	**14407.44**	**10216.95**
4	**2013-14**	**16547.89**	**17644.29**
5	**2014-15**	**18042.86**	**16210.96**
	Total	**65160.71**	**58256.61**

(Basic Statistics on PRIs, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI, New Delhi, 2019)

Table 3.7 Year-wise Allocation and Releases under the 14th Finance Commission (FFC) grants to Rural Local Bodies (2015-16 to 2019-20) (Rs. in crore)

Year	Basic Grant		Performance Grant		Total	
	Allocation	Release	Allocation	Release	Allocation	Released
2015-16	21624.46	21510.46	0.00	0.00	21624.46	21510.46
2016-17	29942.87	29209.14	3927.65	3499.45	33870.52	32708.59
2017-18	34596.26	32157.00	4444.71	1106.90	39040.97	33263.90
2018-19	40021.63	33393.15	5047.53	0.00	45069.16	33393.15
2019-20	54077.80	0.00	6609.33	0.00	60687.13	0.00
Total	180263.02	116269.75	20029.22	4606.35	200292.24	120876.10

Source: Basic Statistics on PRIs, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI, New Delhi,2019

C. Capacity Building & Training for Effective Functioning of PRIs

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI implemented the **Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyaan(RGPSA)** during 2012-16 to strengthen Panchayati Raj System across the country. This was to address the critical gaps that constrain the functioning of Panchayats. The strategy adopted was to promote devolution of powers, to encourage participatory decision making, to enforce accountability in PRIs, to strengthen institutional infrastructure for knowledge creation and capacity building of Panchayats. Further, during 2016-18, financial support was provided to States under Capacity Building-Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (CB-PSA) with focus on Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) to enable them to discharge their mandated functions effectively.

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA): Government of India launched the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) to strengthen PRIs so that they could meaningfully work towards realizing the targets under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The thrust of RGSA is to have Self-Help Group-Panchayati Raj Institution (**SHG-PRI**) convergence to ensure effective community mobilization and greater public ownership of government flagship programs. Use of e-governance and technology driven solutions at Panchayat level is emphasized to attain administrative efficiency, improved service delivery, and greater accountability.

D.Gram Panchayat Development Plan Towards Participatory Development in Rural Areas

With the aim to converge all available resources over which the PRIs exercise command including FFC funds, MGNREGS funds, Swachh Bharat funds, State specific guidelines for Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) have been developed. Such GDDPs provide an opportunity for the community to be engaged in setting local development agenda and finding local solutions to development issues. The table below indicates how PRIs are engaged in participatory public policy making from below in a significant way. Many states have implemented it progressively.

E.Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in PRIs

The National e-Governance Plan (**NeGP**) was introduced in the year 200. The goal was "to make all Government services accessible to the common citizen in his locality, through common service delivery outlets with efficiency, transparency and reliability as well as at affordable costs". The **e-Panchayat** is Government of India's Mission Mode Project in its **Digital India programme.** It aims to transform the PRIs into responsive agencies with modernity, transparency and efficiency. The strategy is to generate extensive people's participation in decision making, programme implementation and delivery of services. This is to be done taking help of automating the functioning of nearly 2.55 lakh PRIs.

F.Incentivization of Panchayats & Celebrating National Panchayati Raj Day

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI provides incentives to the best performing Panchayats on the recommendation of State/UT Governments. The awards are given on the ***National Panchayati Raj Day*** (NPRD) celebrated on the **24thApril** every year. Such financial incentives encourages Panchayat representatives who toil hard to make grassroots democracy more meaningful. It brings up bright examples to public attention and encourages others to improve their performance. In fact, PRI representatives and leaders from across India can learn and emulate the best governance practices.

Year-wise number of Award Application received and Incentivized Panchayats under the Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar (PSP)/Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar (DDUPSP) indicating the enthusiasm among PRI Representatives as well as Government's continuous encouragement is reflected in the table below:

Table 3.8 PRIs' Applications & Govt's Award under PSP and DDUPSP Schemes

Source: Basic Statistics on PRIs, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI, New Delhi, 2019

Sl. No.	Year	No. of Applications Received	Amount of Award (Rs. In Lakh)	No. of Incentivized Panchayats (ZP,IP,GP)
1.	**2014-15**	**40116**	**3214**	**183**
2.	**2015-16**	**42473**	**3376**	**189**
3.	**2016-17**	**32188**	**3441**	**191**

G.Devolution of Powers to PRIs: An Assessment

Article 243G in Part IX of the Constitution mandates the State governments to give adequate powers and funds to PRIs so that they could function as institutions of local self-government. However, variation can be observed in the extent of devolution of powers to PRIs in different states. Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India undertakes assessment of the level to which States have actually devolved powers to the Panchayats. Performance of States regarding devolution is measured through a Panchayat Devolution Index (PDI), which is prepared by an independent agency.

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) was entrusted for preparing PDIfor2015-16 with an evidence based ranking of panchayats in each tier across States. It was to figure out as to what extent the PRIs actually exercise their constitutionally assigned powers.

Twenty-six States and six Union Territories were covered under this study, which sought to develop composite indicative ranking on devolution of powers and resources to local governments in different States and Union Territories. The cumulative index provides an "indicative ranking of States on *four* different aspects of functioning of PRIs". The study measured and ranked States according to their achievements in four core aspects of devolution:

- Devolution of functions
- Transfer of functionaries
- Devolution of finances to PRIs
- Comparative achievement of States in establishing systems of Infrastructure, Governance and Transparency (IGT) and then aggregating them on the point of Devolution in Practice (DPr)

Table 3.9 Devolution Study 2015-16 Ranking of States in the Component and Aggregate Indices

Source: Basic Statistics on PRIs, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI, New Delhi, 2019

Sl. No	States / Union Territory	Functions Rank	Functionaries Rank	Finances Rank	IGT Rank	Aggregate Rank-DPr
1	Kerala	1	1	2	1	1
2	Maharashtra	3	4	5	5	2
3	Gujarat	2	9	5	4	3
4	Sikkim	4	2	7	6	4
5	Karnataka	9	10	2	3	5
6	West Bengal	6	14	4	2	5
7	Telengana	8	2	5	8	6
8	Madhya Pradesh	5	8	4	10	7
9	Bihar	6	4	4	16	8
10	Punjab	17	15	15	20	8
11	Tamil Nadu	11	3	2	9	9
12	Rajasthan	6	7	8	11	9
13	Jharkhand	7	6	10	12	10
14	Haryana	10	11	1	13	10
15	Andhra Pradesh	8	11	6	16	11
16	Uttar Pradesh	8	11	3	18	11
17	Uttarakhand	12	5	11	18	12
18	Tripura	14	7	7	7	12
19	Chhattisgarh	13	13	69	13	13
20	Himachal Pradesh	16	8	11	8	14
21	Odisha	14	12	13	15	15
22	Jammu & Kashmir	18	5	9	19	16
23	Assam	15	15	12	17	17
24	Manipur	18	9	16	21	19
25	Arunachal Pradesh	18	16	14	22	20
26	Goa	18	17	17	22	21
27	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	2	2	1	2	1
28	A & N Islands	3	1	4	1	2
29	Lakshadweep	1	2	2	3	2
30	Daman & Diu	4	4	3	4	3
31	Puducherry	4	3	6	5	4
32	Chandigarh	5	2	5	6	5

Challenges for PRIs as Self-Government in India

A. Challenges and Hurdles for PRIs as Successful Local Self-Government

In spite of successive governments at the Centre and in States declaring Panchayats a success story, questions are raised whether PRIs, after two & half decades of the 73rd Constitutional Amendments in 1993, have come up as genuine local self-governments. Have the PRIs been able to create an inclusive, responsive and participatory democracy at the grass-roots in a substantive sense? Scepticism abounds on PRIs' capacity, in their current avatar, to usher in an effective

democratic decentralization at the local level. Let's discuss some of these pricking challenges and deficiencies or issues that hold back these PRIs from acting as they were envisioned to.

a)There are certainly deficiencies in the Act, especially in terms of absence of clear and final mandate with regard to functions, funds and functionaries to allow the PRIs to act as 'units of self-government'. The 73rd Amendment Act provided only a generic mandate and broad outline to create *Three-Tier* PRIs, and allowed the state legislatures to enact their own state laws to devolve specific powers, functions and finances to the PRIs.

b)While the Gram Panchayats are loaded with most responsibilities of public welfare and civic administration in the village, they have extremely limited powers of independent taxation. In most cases, only about ten percent (10%) of the Gram Panchayat's total revenue comes from its own sources. For the remaining requirement, the GP has to depend on transfers from higher levels of government- both Centre and State. This causes the crippling limitation for PRIs to come up as local self-governments.

c)This Act broadly outlines the functional items for which states may devolve responsibility to Panchayats. It only lists the functions that could be transferred to the PRIs and left it to the state legislature to actually devolve functions. Even today, these functions are never devolved clearly. Instead, we find state government's agencies are proliferating and carrying out many of these designated functions. Experience over last two & half decades indicates that state governments have been reluctant to part their power with PRIs..

d)Another major lacunae in the Act is the lack of adequate funds or finances for smooth functioning of the PRIs.Usually, most village Panchayats have very little funds of their own; their earnings are way below what they are made to spend. They perpetually depend on the Central and State governments for financial assistance. Such dependency badly reduces PRIs' capacity to operate autonomously as well as effectively. It cripples their status and role as self-governing bodies.

e)For the PRIs, we can find two main sources of revenue generation- local taxes and receipt of inter-governmental transfers. What further complicates the matter is the fact that even on subjects falling within the purview of PRIs, they have to be specifically authorized by state law to levy and collect tax. Left to the voluntary choice or benevolence of States to enact on this matter (as per the 73rd Amendment Act), this option has rarely worked for the benefits of PRIs.

f)Another source of PRIs' revenue generation is intergovernmental transfers. The State governments have to devolve certain percentage of their revenue to the PRIs as per the 73rd Amendment Act. State Finance Commission recommends the revenue share between state and local governments. However, most state governments do not sincerely follow these mere non-binding recommendations. Though State Finance Commissions advocate for greater devolution of funds, one can find no such substantive action on the ground. Hence, Panchayats could not come up with any meaningful project requiring big finances. Even, they cannot carry out the most basic tasks of local governance.

g)Gram Sabhas are viewed as the foundation of Panchayati Raj system, but they are very weak as no specific functions and powers have been specified under law. The only mandatory requirement is that at least twice in a year the Gram Sabha must meet: once at the beginning of the financial year and the second at the end of financial year.

Further, Gram Sabha has been squeezed with a very limited role. The prescribed rule of quorum for Gram Sabha meetings varies from state to state. But, at times, it creates hurdles for a meaningful dialogue. Besides, village communities are more fragmented and faction-ridden on the lines of caste, religion, political party affiliation, and socio-economic status of individual families. Hence, Gram Sabhas are unable to act as cohesive unit in the sense of mutual respect and cooperation.

h)The PRI Act has a provision to allow MPs and MLAs to become *ex-officio* members of PRIs. It creates a persisting controversy and functional complicacy. Article 101 of the Constitution prohibits dual membership in the Union or State Legislatures. However, surprisingly such prohibition does not apply in case of local bodies. It gives scope for interference of area MPs and MLAs in the functioning of panchayats, adversely affecting their autonomy as well as performance. If the Constitutional intent was to allow PRIs to function as independent local self-governments, then this provision flies on the face of it. It defies any rational point as to why only these local bodies be subjected to the dual membership of MPs and MLAs.

i)PRIs also suffer from infrastructural and logistical deficiencies limiting their capability. There is limited or no proper secretarial support and lower levels of technical knowledge restricts the scaling up and realizing the bottom-up planning. Besides, the usual tendency of adhocism or lack clear agenda setting in Gram Sabha / Panchayat / Panchayat Samiti meetings does not help PRIs for appropriate output.

j)The 73rd Amendment Act reserved a sizable portion (about 30%) of total seats for persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities besides Women at every level of PRIs and even for the position of Chairpersons. Though women and SC/STs have got respectable representation in the local bodies, there is still the inglorious presence of *Panch-Pati* (Husband of the Panch) in case of Woman representation and proxy representation mostly in case of PRI Representatives belonging to SC and ST Communities.

k)Also, we can notice the continuing ambiguity on issue of functions and funds of Panchayats. This has allowed higher government officials to arrogate powers to themselves and thereby restraining the elective representatives of PRIs, who are more aware and sensitive to the ground level needs/issues, to function freely as per the Panchayat Raj mandate.

l)Further, accountability arrangements remain very weak even after 27 years of PRIs getting constitutional status and protection. One can also notice variations in the extent and features in different States' devolution of powers to PRIs.

Suggestions for Making PRIs Function Effectively

a)Genuine fiscal federalism stretched to the third tier of India's governance structure i.e. fiscal autonomy accompanied by fiscal responsibility and accountability can bring substantive improvements for PRIs. Else, these PRIs will only be an expensive failure.

b)The Sixth Report of Second ARC (Administrative Reforms Commission) titled "*Local Governance- An inspiring journey into the future''*, recommends for a 'clear-cut demarcation of functions of each tier of the government'. This recommendation has to be implemented sooner than later.

c)States may adopt the 'activity mapping' idea, wherein each state clearly stipulates the roles and responsibilities for each tier of the government with regards to subjects enlisted in the Eleventh Schedule. These activities would then be classified and assigned to the different tiers on the basis of need, capability and accountability.

d)States like Karnataka and Kerala, have taken some novel steps in this direction. For example, Karnataka has created a *separate official cadre for PRIs* to avoid the practice of deputation of officials from other departments who could not provide stability to the functioning of PRIs besides often overpowering the elected representatives. This could be replicated in other states for facilitating the goal of local self governance.

e)Experiences with PRIs over these years tell us that an Act's implementation can't merely depend on the assumed benevolence of a government. Some constitutional mechanism must be there for prohibiting or punishing non-compliance. Can we not have an effective and clear-cut mechanism to make our States comply with the constitutional provisions!! Particular focus in this regard can be on the appointment and implementation of the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions with regard to finances of PRIs.

f) Holding regular election to PRIs every 5 Years is crucial for bringing up enterprising Panchayat Leaders who could devise innovative solution to vexing local problems. State governments should be made to desist from the practice of withholding election to local bodies on any unreasonable/indefensible pretext.

g)Bottom-up Planning is the call of the day. All concerned with PRIs must be trained in and encouraged for bottom-up planning - otherwise known as Grassroots or Planning from Below. It can be taken up at all three tiers of PRIs based on the inputs on the needs and aspirations of people at the local or village level. To materialize this, there is a need to enlarge the scope and capacity of Panchayats' revenue raising ability.

To-Do-Activity: Watch the documentary film *Mahilaon Ke Badhte Qadam*. It is a documentary film on women's role in Panchayati Raj system of governance. This was made as part of SWEEP (Strengthening Women's Empowerment through Electoral Process) to document how women come together to overcome the problem that they face through self-rule.

Summary

Our Constitution, with its 73rd Amendment, created a law to make the Panchayats become institutions of local self-government. The Constitutional strategy was to infuse activism and dynamism into the PRIs so that they can become agents of change and development in the rural spheres of India. Their domain is economic development and social justice. However, local government is listed as a State subject; therefore, the State governments are key actors to make Panchayats successful.

State governments have to consider the twenty-nine subjects illustratively mentioned *Schedule XI* for devolution of power to the PRIs. It is the states who finally determine what powers will be devolved to PRIs so that they could impose on taxes on local revenue sources or what other provisions of funds could be allocated to the Panchayats. In fact, state governments could play a vital role to build Panchayats' capacity as well as can create an appropriate framework for their accountability. Some State governments have provided the rightful statutory framework for devolution of funds, functions and functionaries. This has considerably empowered the local governments. However, many other States have not done so. Hence, one can observe that the level of improvements in local self-governments is state specific and varies significantly across states.

The 73rdConstitutional Amendment Act on Panchayati Raj is in fact a turning point in the history of the movement for local self-governance in India. By giving Constitutional protection, the Act made the three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions as uniform, durable and effective units of local self-government across the country. In this way it helped deepen the democratic practice in India by creating millions of new and aspiring agency in India of villages.

Model Questions

1. What do you understand by Panchayati Raj? Why do we need Panchayati Raj Institutions or local governments?
2. India has had a huge legacy of local self-governance. Delineate it in details.
3. We find differing stands among the leaders and key architects of our Constitution on the question of having Panchayati Raj in India's constitutional scheme. Can you bring this interesting controversy/debate in your discussion?
4. After Independence, the Government of India had set up many committees to advise it for setting up efficient Panchayati Raj system. Discuss the prominent recommendations of these Committees.
5. The Constitution Amendment Bill to enact an all India Panchayati Raj law took several years to become a reality. Bring out the milestones towards Constitutionalisation of PRIs in India.
6. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 is *the* defining factor/development which changed the course how Panchayati Raj exists and operates in our country. Highlight the significant features of this Act to make PRIs as 'institutions of local self-government'.
7. The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 is an important legislation to implement the PRI Act in the tribal and notified Scheduled Areas with special provisions. Bring out its key features.
8. The 73rd Amendment Act is a major step towards political empowerment of women via PRIs. This has helped over a million women coming into decision making in local-government bodies in rural India. This has spurred a lot of debate about women's participation in PRIs. Do you think if this Act has succeeded in pursuing the agenda of equal rights for women, especially with the strategy of facilitating women's equal partnership in the public life?
9. It's said that affirmative action or reservation of seats/positions in all three tiers of PRIs has helped leaders or representatives from the traditionally marginalized communities becoming politically empowered. Can we say that the PRI experiment has also helped these groups in their social-economic life as well? Comment.
10. Some commentators say that the PRI experiment is simultaneously a remarkable success and a staggering failure. If you see its goal was to create another layer of government and political representation at the grass-roots level, then it's a big success. And if you see PRIs as agencies to provide real self-government and better governance, then they are a failure with low chance of success anytime soon. Do you agree with such a view? Provide your critical answer.

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Chapter 4 Fundamentals of Rural Demography and Economics

Introduction

India has substantial demographic diversity. States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu are considered success stories in terms of demographic indicators, much alike a middle-income country. Here, the trends are some of the best in South Asia. On the other, the northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh fare much worse, closer to some of the world's poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, India is also characterized by rapid demographic change. These inter-regional disparities and inter-temporal variations pose significant challenges for development. Despite several interventions recommended on the policy front, development planning and practice have been largely oriented towards urban areas. However, for development to be sustainable and inclusive, there is a need for a renewed emphasis on the rural.

Rural development entails a focus upon areas such as education, healthcare, job creation and poverty alleviation. Capacity-building measures which are conducive to human development are crucial for getting rid of various unfreedoms such as illiteracy, poverty, inequality, and unemployment. This chapter tries to put this into perspective by presenting basic concepts and theories, along with data from census and other surveys. You may also try the To Do Activities suggested.

We take a closer look at rural India. What are its demographic features? What is the structure of rural economy? What are the various occupations practiced? How do rural credit markets work? What are the characteristics of the rural labour force? What do we mean by feminization of labour? What role do women play in rural labour markets? How severe is rural poverty? How is it linked to unemployment? What is jobless growth? How do poverty and unemployment induce distress migration? What are the various types and streams of internal migration within India? Is migration a burden? These are certain questions this chapter tries to answer. However, these are only leads for you to think upon. There are no definite answers; the more you read, the more you shall discover. There is a reading list provided at the end of the chapter. Try reading as many of those resources as possible.

There is only so much that you can learn from books. Read the newspaper. Talk to your peers and those around you who come from rural areas. Listen to their experiences. Visit some of these areas and observe village life closely. This will help you make better sense of what is written in this book. We hope you enjoy reading it. And yes, do not forget to ask questions.

Objectives

1. To introduce basic concepts of rural demography.
2. To acquaint learners with the salient features of rural economy of India.
3. To impart a fundamental understanding of the concepts related to rural labour market.
4. To enable learners to understand the linkages between poverty, unemployment, and migration.
5. To urge learners to compare, contrast, and question rural-urban disparities.

Structure

4.1 Rural Population

Demography

Coined by Guillard in 1885, the term 'demography' originated from the Greek words, 'demos' (people) and 'graphy' (to draw or write). It is the study of human populations using statistical methods. The various components studied include the size, geographical distribution, and composition of human population. The changes in these are also mapped over time.

Sources of Demographic Data

In India, the four main sources of demographic data are as follows.

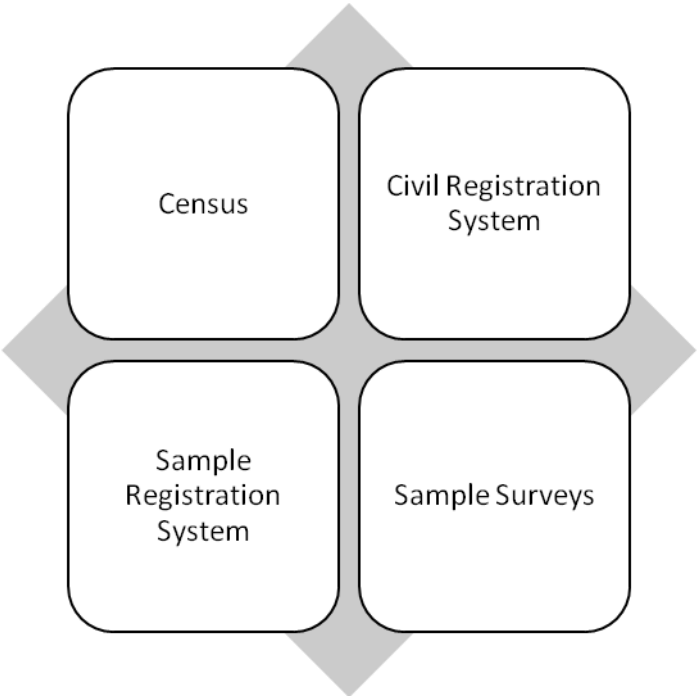

Figure 4.1 Sources of Demographic Data in India

1. Census

After the first census of 1871, it has been conducted decennially since 1882. It is the largest and most authentic source of data because information is collected from every member of the population and not from a sample of individuals (a subset of the population). It provides information about age, sex, and various socio-economic characteristics of the population.

2. Civil Registration System

Dating back to mid-nineteenth century, CRS entails a mandatory registration of births and deaths at state as well as district level. It is also linked to the National Population Register that India is in the process of establishing for creating a National Register of Citizens.

3. Sample Registration System

Initiated in 1969-70, SRS surveys are conducted at a national level and provide estimates for fertility as well as mortality. Annual data is provided for both rural and urban areas. It operates through a dual record system. A resident part-time enumerator undertakes a continuous enumeration of births and deaths in a sample of villages/blocks. Additionally, a full-time supervisor conducts an independent retrospective survey every six months. Data are then matched and re-verified.

4. Sample Surveys

Surveys from which information is collected from a sample are important sources of data on a range of indicators. An example of a large-scale survey conducted in a series of rounds is National Family Health Survey (NFHS). It collects data on health and family planning services, reproductive health, domestic violence, and nutritional status of women and children. The sample of households from which these data are collected are considered to be representative of the population.

To-Do-Activity: Find out more about the NRC in Assam. What about those who were excluded from the final list? What are Foreigners' Tribunals? What are the conditions in detention camps?

Basic Concepts and Indicators

The **size** of the population refers to the number of individuals residing at a particular area at a particular period of time. How they are physically dispersed across a geographical area is explained by its **distribution**. A comparative measure of distribution is **population density** which is measured by the number of persons living per unit of area. The age and gender structure, residence patterns, levels of education, status of marriage and employment, and other attributes are captured by the **composition** of population. Changes in population are induced by three main factors namely birth, death, and migration. These are accounted for using various indicators as follows.

1. Fertility

Fertility refers to the total number of children a woman has given birth to. A common index of fertility is **birth rate**, calculated as the number of live births per 1,000 units of population in a given geographical area during a given year. Crude birth rate refers to the number of live births per 1,000 units of population at mid-year. It is essential for determining the population growth rate.

Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is a direct measure of fertility levels. It is the average estimate of the number of children born per woman between her reproductive span (ages 15 to 49), assuming the

current fertility patterns remain constant and there is no mortality. A TFR of 2.1 is considered to be the replacement rate for a population. Fertility is a prime determinant of population growth as it usually exceeds or is faster than mortality or migration.

$$\text{Crude birth rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of live births in a year}}{\text{Total population at mid-point of the year}} \times 1{,}000$$

The following table presents the crude birth rate for India in 2016.

Table 4.1 Crude Birth Rate in India, 2016

Source: Sample Registration Survey Statistical Report 2016

India and bigger states/UTs	Total	Rural	Urban
India	**20.4**	**22.1**	**17.0**
Andhra Pradesh	16.4	16.7	15.8
Assam	21.7	22.8	15.0
Bihar	26.8	27.7	21.1
Delhi	15.5	17.0	15.5
Gujarat	20.1	22.0	17.7
Jammu and Kashmir	15.7	17.4	11.9
Kerala	14.3	14.3	14.4
Madhya Pradesh	25.1	27.1	19.5
Maharashtra	15.9	16.3	15.5
Punjab	14.9	15.6	14.1
Rajasthan	24.3	25.2	21.6
Tamil Nadu	15.0	15.1	15.0
Uttar Pradesh	26.2	27.3	22.8
West Bengal	15.4	16.9	11.8

For India, the crude birth rate is 20.4 per 1,000 units of population. It ranges from 17.0 in urban areas to 22.1 in rural areas, with the least in Kerala and the highest in Bihar. Clearly, rural areas have higher birth rates than urban areas. Lack of availability of quality healthcare facilities, lower levels of female education and employment, poverty, and higher child mortality are some reasons for the same.

2. Mortality

The number of deaths per 1,000 units of population in a given geographical area during a given year is given by the **death rate.** As per data from Sample Registration Survey (SRS) 2016, the crude death

rate in India is 6.4 per 1,000 population. It varies from 6.9 in rural areas to 5.4 in urban areas. Although death rates have been declining since 1971, the decline is steeper in rural areas due to lower access to education and healthcare facilities.

$$\text{Crude death rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of deaths in a year}}{\text{Total population at mid-point of the year}} \times 1{,}000$$

Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is calculated by the number of maternal deaths per one lakh live births during the same time period. India has achieved a significant decline in MMR from 167 in 2011-13 to 122 in 2015-17. It has reduced to 72 in the southern states which are quite close to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goal of lowering MMR to 70 per 1,00,000 live births by 2030.

The number of infant deaths (age less than one year) per 1,000 live births is referred to as **infant mortality rate** (IMR).The national IMR is 34 per thousand live births. It is 23 per 1,000 for urban areas and 38 per 1,000 in rural areas. It is the lowest in Kerala (10) and highest in Madhya Pradesh (47). The following table presents IMR in both rural and urban areas.

Table 4.2 Infant Mortality Rates by Sex and Residence, India, 2016

Source: Sample Registration Survey Report 2016

IMR			Rural IMR			Urban IMR		
Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
34	33	36	38	37	40	23	22	25

It can be observed that female IMR is higher than male IMR in rural as well as urban areas. In the former case, it is much higher (40). This also lowers the sex ratio. The reasons for this are discussed below.

3. Sex Ratio

Sex ratio refers to the number of females per 1,000 males. Census 2011 states that sex ratio is 940 females per 1,000 males in India. It is 947 in rural areas as compared to 926 for urban areas. The low sex ratio is owing to socio-cultural reasons in the sense that ours is largely a patriarchal society with persistent gender inequality. Sons are preferable to daughters, the latter being considered as a burden. It is believed that sons would add helping hands, take care in old age, and help the parents attain salvation after death. These are but few examples of socio-cultural factors such as patriarchal beliefs which lead to discrimination against a female child.

It must be noted that the sex ratio is greater in rural areas than in urban areas. However, it does not imply that there is no discrimination against daughters in rural areas. There is the phenomenon of unwanted girls because of the pressure of dowry. In urban areas, instances of sex-selective abortion are high due to the tendency to use new scientific techniques for sex determination and subsequent abortion if the foetus is female. This anti-female bias right from birth is one of the root causes of gender inequality. However, women's agency can play an important role in controlling fertility as

well as preventing child mortality. High birth rates have an adverse effect on women's freedom as their lives are constrained by continual engagement in bearing and rearing children (Dreze and Sen, 2013).

Following is a sex ratio map of India for the year 2011.

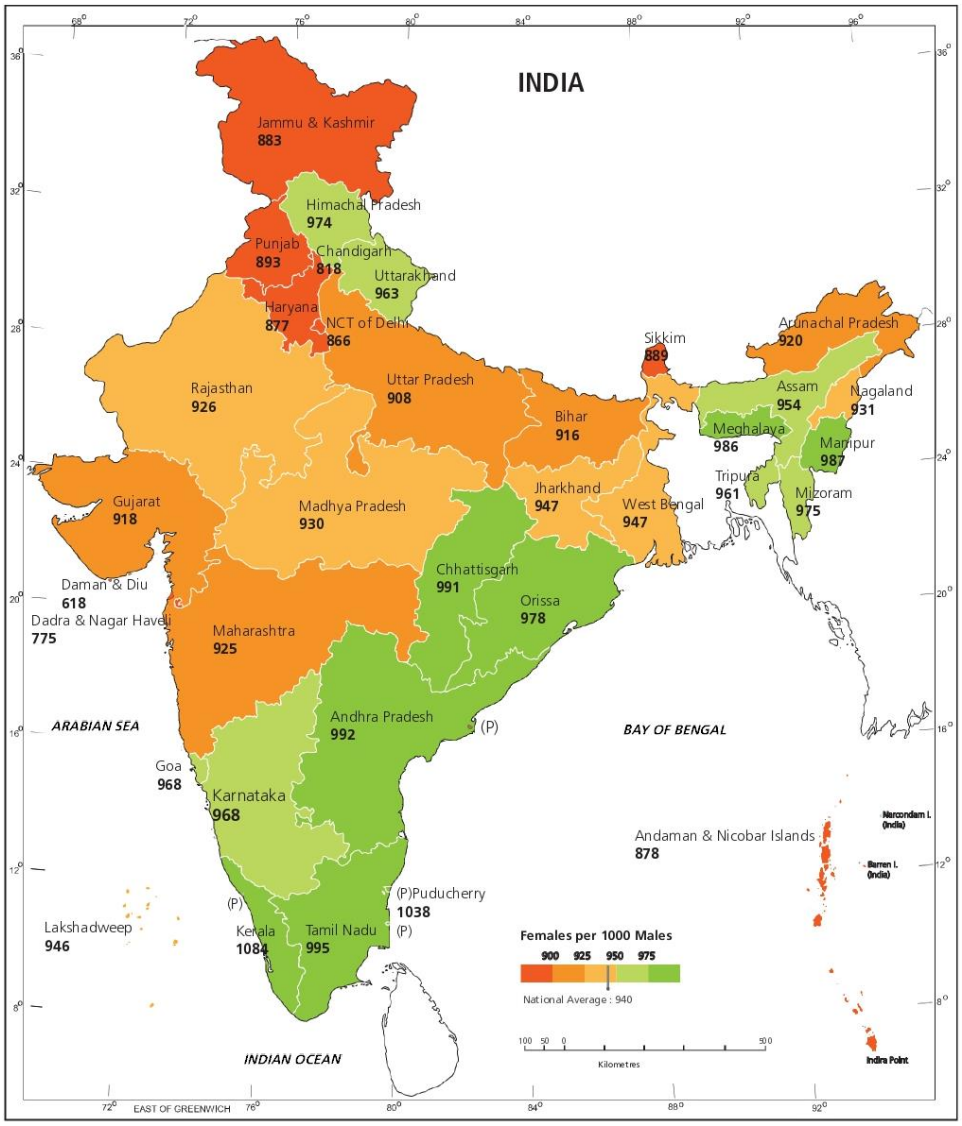

Figure 4.2 Sex Ratio Map of India, 2011

Source: Census Report 2011

It is evident that the trends are not uniform for the whole country. A sex ratio above unity has been achieved by the state of Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry. All southern and most north-eastern states have recorded a higher sex ratio of above 950. On the contrary, it is appallingly low in two Union Territories – 618 in Daman and Diu and 775 in Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The northern states of Haryana, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir fare below 900.

Dreze & Sen (2013) observe a sharp regional contrast between the southern and eastern states on the one hand and the northern and western states on the other. However, the prevalence of sex-

selective abortion is not limited to the latter states. The rising education levels of girls has not been able to end the discrimination suffered by the female foetus.

The female-male ratio in the age group 0 to 6 or the **child sex ratio** has shown a downward trend. It fell from 927 per 1,000 in 2001 to 914 per 1,000 in 2011. This can also be largely attributed to son preference and the resulting sex-selective abortion (Dreze and Sen, 2013).

The following table presents the child sex ratios and the estimates of sex ratio at birth in 2011.

Table 4.3 Child Sex Ratio and Sex Ratio at Birth, 2011

State	Female-male ratio, age 0-6 years (2001)	Female-male ratio, age 0-6 years (2011)	Indirect estimates of female-male ratio at birth (2011)
Haryana	819	830	842
Punjab	798	846	854
Jammu & Kashmir	941	859	870
Gujarat	883	886	891
Bihar	942	933	941
Uttar Pradesh	916	899	911
Tamil Nadu	942	946	946
Kerala	960	959	959
Andhra Pradesh	961	943	942
India	927	914	919

Adapted from Dreze and Sen (2013)

Although the child sex ratio has improved for several states in 2011, the overall child sex ratio for India has plummeted. The decline has been significant in states like Jammu & Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh. The southern states have consistently performed better. Despite low literacy rates, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have fared better than states like Gujarat, Punjab and Haryana.

Literacy rate refers to the total number of literate persons as a proportion of the total population in the same age group. As per census 2011, the overall literacy rate in India was 74.04% (82.14% for males, 65.46% for females). Thus, the gender gap in literacy is close to 16.7% points. Kerala, the state with the highest literacy (93.91%), is also the state with lowest birth rate, which establishes the inverse relationship between levels of education and fertility. Bihar ranks last in terms of literacy at 63.8%.

The top and bottom five states in terms of literacy and the rural and urban literacy rates therein have been tabulated as follows.

Table 4.4 Literacy Rate - Top and Bottom States/UTs, 2011

Source: Census of India 2011

Total		**Rural**		**Urban**	
India	**74.0**	**India**	**68.9**	**India**	**85.0**
Top states					
Total		**Rural**		**Urban**	
Kerala	93.9	Kerala	92.9	Mizoram	98.1
Lakshadweep	92.3	Lakshadweep	91.9	Kerala	95.0
Mizoram	91.6	Tripura	85.6	Tripura	93.6
Tripura	87.8	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	84.4	Lakshadweep	92.4
Goa	87.4	Mizoram	84.3	Himachal Pradesh	91.4
Bottom states					
Total		**Rural**		**Urban**	
Bihar	63.8	Andhra Pradesh	61.1	Uttar Pradesh	77.0
Arunachal Pradesh	67.0	Arunachal Pradesh	61.6	Jammu and Kashmir	78.2
Rajasthan	67.1	Bihar	61.8	Bihar	78.8
Jharkhand	67.6	Rajasthan	62.3	Andhra Pradesh	80.5
Andhra Pradesh	67.7	Jharkhand	62.4	Rajasthan	80.7

The literacy rate for rural areas is 68.9%, lower than that for urban areas (85%). The gap between overall urban and rural literacy rates is sizeable, being approximately 16.1% points. In case of rural literacy as well, Kerala tops the chart with 92.9% while Andhra Pradesh is at the bottom with 61.1%. Further, Mizoram has a high urban literacy rate close to 98%, while Uttar Pradesh has the least at

77%. The states of Kerala, Mizoram and Tripura, along with the Union Territory of Lakshadweep have high rural as well as urban literacy. On the other hand, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar have low rural as well as urban literacy.

Theories of Demography

The two most famous theories of demography are given by Malthus (1766-1834) and Warren Thompson (1887-1973), respectively. While Malthus' theory emphasized population control, Thompson conceptualized stages of transition which would eventually lead to a final stage with low birth rates as well as death rates.

1. Malthusian Theory of Population Growth

In his *Essay on Population* (1798), Malthus argued that while population grows geometrically, food production can progress only arithmetically. Since population growth always outstrips economic growth, prosperity can only be ensured by controlling population. This can be achieved by positive checks (famines, epidemics, and natural calamities) and preventive checks (delaying marriage or practicing celibacy).

However, Malthus' theory was widely challenged. In Europe, the food production as well as standard of living continued to rise despite population growth in the 19th and 20th centuries. Moreover, inequality in distribution of resources rather than population growth as argued by Malthus is a major cause of poverty.

2. Theory of Demographic Transition

Thompson's (1929) theory links population growth to overall levels of economic development. He discusses the following stages of transition.

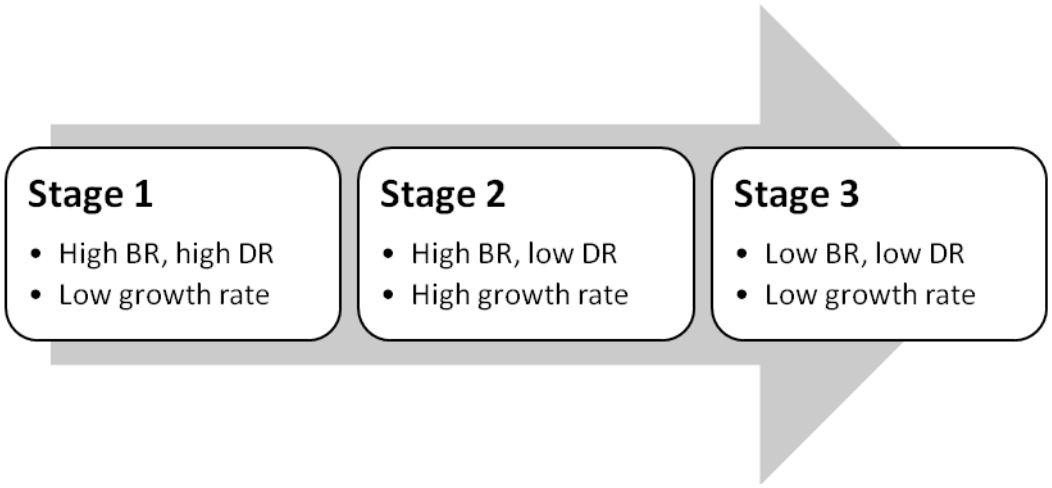

Figure 4.3 Basic Stages of Demographic Transition

The first stage is of low population growth in an underdeveloped and technologically backward society. Since the rates of birth and death are high, the rate of growth is low. The second entails transition to an advanced stage, where death rates fall faster than birth rates and the population growth rate is quite high. The third stage is of low and stabilized growth in a developed society

where the rates of birth as well as death have fallen and the difference between them (net growth rate) is small.

Population explosion in the second stage can be attributed to advancements in medicine, public healthcare and general levels of nutrition. The birth rates fall as and when the society adapts to greater prosperity and longer life spans. This was observed in 19th and 20th century Europe. Similar patterns are being observed in less developed countries that are struggling to reduce their birth rate while the death rates have already fallen. In case of India also, the process of demographic transition is yet to complete as the birth rates have not declined as much as death rates.

It must be noted that these theories and models are based on certain assumptions and are subject to criticisms and limitations. Nevertheless, as beginners, being familiar with these helps us understand the historical and theoretical evolution of the discipline.

Demographic Dividend

In many countries, concomitant with demographic transition is a long period of faster growth rate of labour force than that of the population. Two main reasons for rapid growth of labour force are favourable shifts in age structure and increased number of women in the labour force.

The early stage is marked by very high growth rate of population (*p*) as well as that of labour force (*n*). The gap between them (*p-n)* is too narrow and tends to zero. However, in the intermediary stages, as *n* increases rapidly, *p-n* becomes positive. In the concluding stages, the gap shrinks again and might become strongly negative. This is because the growth rate of the older population outdoes that of the younger age groups. This could convert the demographic dividend into a demographic burden.

The demographic dividend refers to a situation wherein changes in p-*n* lead to changes of equal magnitude in the rate of growth of per capita income. However, the precondition for this is that the output per worker should not be affected by demographic transition. These changes occur in the long run over a period of several decades. It refers to the growth potential that results from shifts in the age structure of a population – from a dependent population to a larger working-age population. A substantial portion of the worldeconomic growth can be explained by the demographic dividend.
India is currently among the youngest countries of the world in terms of the age structure of its population. Its working-age population (aged 15 to 64 years) has been outnumbering its dependent population (below 14 years and above 65 years) since 2018. It is estimated that India will be able to reap this demographic dividend until the year 2055. It is essential to tap into the potential of the rural youth who have a fundamental role to play in realizing the dividend.

Population

Size of Rural Settlements

In census 2011, villages have been divided into six categories according to their population size.

Table 4.5 Classes of Villages and their Population in 2001 and 2011

Source: Census of India 2011

Year	Less than 500		500-999		1000-1999		2000-4999		5000-9999		10000 and above	
	Vill.	Pop.	Vill.	Pop.	Vill.	Pop.	Vill.	Pop.	Vill.	Pop.	Vill.	Pop.
2001	36.9	7.16	24.5	14.18	21.9	24.69	13.54	32.21	2.49	13.21	0.67	8.55
2011	32.95	5.74	23.73	12.39	23.29	23.7	16.13	34.63	3.12	14.86	0.78	8.68

As of 2011, 32.95% villages have a population of less than 500. Nearly 58% of the rural population lives in villages with 1,000 to 4,999 inhabitants, up from 56.9% in 2001. This implies that more population is being concentrated in the relatively larger villages. Approximately 57% villages have a population of less than 499 in 2011, down from 61.4% in 2001. Since these villages are small, they are more likely to be deprived of the benefits of rural development schemes. It is one of the challenges of rural development to increase accessibility for the smaller settlements.

From Rural to Urban

The urban population is steadily increasing, although a majority of Indians still reside in villages. The rural population is 68.8% while the urban is 31.2%. The relative share of agriculture in GDP is declining. More rural people are engaging in non-farm activities. Rural to urban migration remains high as people migrate to cities in search of work. The city also provides them a sense of anonymity, which can rid them of the grip of caste which might not be possible in the village. Mass communication and transit are steadily bridging the rural-urban gap.

The below figure illustrates the trend of rural-urban distribution of population from 2001 to 2011.

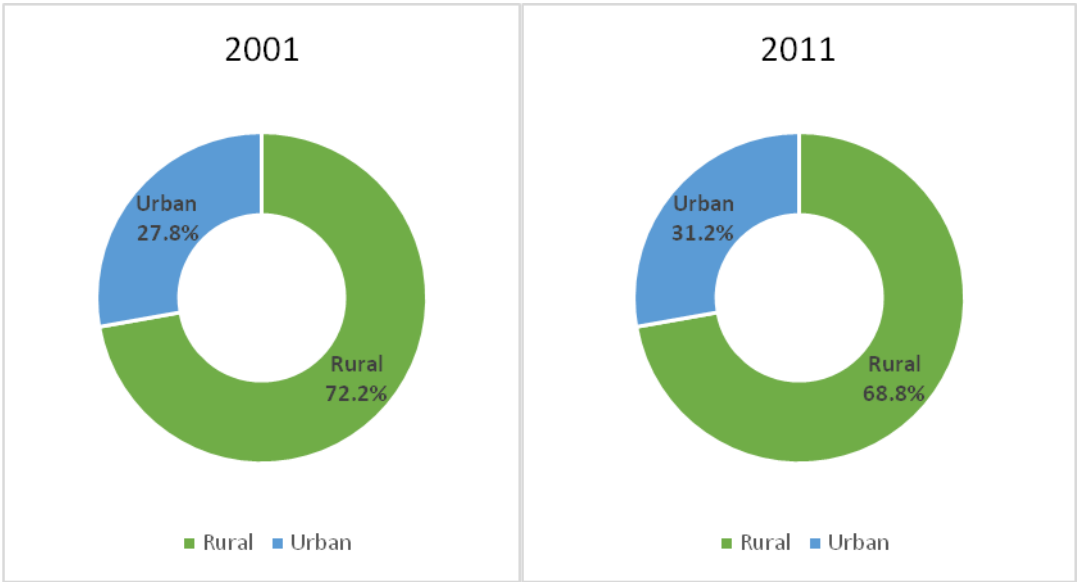

Figure 4.4 Trends in Distribution of Population by Region in 2001 and 2011

Adapted from Census of India, 2011

The proportion of rural population has recorded a decadal decrease of 3.4% points from 72.2% to 68.8% between 2001 to 2011. That has resulted in a proportional rise in the population residing in urban areas in 2011. This can be attributed to increasing urbanization and rural to urban migration in search of better education and employment opportunities, which shall be discussed later in the section on migration.

We shall now explore the rural economy and employment.

4.2 Rural Economy

The rural economy is of fundamental importance for sustaining economic growth and sustainable development. It holds significant potential for creating decent and productive jobs. According to International Labour Organization, decent work entails the creation of opportunities for secure productive work. It must provide a fair living income and social security. It also ensures equality of opportunity, irrespective of gender, caste, or religion.

We shall study the rural economic structure to get a sense of the relations of production among cultivators and workers. It is through these social relations of production that owners of land gain access to other factors of production such as labour and capital. The property less workers who own nothing but their labour power sell it in order to seek employment in return for wages.

Basic Concepts

Cultivation involves sowing, ploughing, harvesting and producing food grains as well as non-food grains such as cotton and jute. Food grains include cereals and millets such as wheat, paddy, ragi, jowar, and bajra. Sugarcane, groundnut, and pulses, are examples of other crops cultivated. A **cultivator** is a person engaged in cultivating or directing/supervising cultivation of land owned by oneself, government or private institutions. This is in return for a payment in cash, kind, or even a share of the total produce.

An **agricultural worker** is usually landless. She/he works on somebody else's land in return for wages. She/he does not own the land and hence enjoys no rights of lease or contract on it. All workers engaged in cultivation of plantation crops such as coffee, tea, rubber, betel nuts, and coconut, along with household industry workers are classified as **other workers.** A person engaged in any economic activity for a major part of the reference period (six months or more during the last one year) is categorized as **main worker.** Any person who worked for less than six months is a **marginal worker**.

Agriculture in Rural India

The rural economy of India is largely agrarian in nature. The major occupation is agriculture and allied activities, most people being engaged in agriculture and agricultural labour. Some allied activities closely linked to agricultural production include animal husbandry, poultry farming, milk production, and fishing. The contribution of agriculture to gross value added has been shrinking, but the share of people dependent on agriculture for livelihood remains substantial. Below is a table of the distribution of various categories of workers in India in 2001 and 2011.

Table 4.6 Proportion of Different Categories of Workers in 2001 and 2011 (in %)

Source: Census report 2011

Year	Number of workers	Cultivators (%)	Agricultural Workers (%)	Workers in Household Industry (%)	Other workers (%)
2001	402,234,724	31.7	26.5	4.2	37.6
2011	481,888,868	24.6	30.0	3.8	41.6

In 2001, cultivators and agricultural labourers together accounted for 58.2% of the total workforce. This reduced to 54.6% in 2011. The decade of 2010-11 saw a fall of 7.6% points in the proportion of cultivators, more than twice the rise in that of agricultural workers (3.5%). One of the reasons of the decline is a fall in the size of landholdings, which forces them to work in the fields of others.

Green Revolution and Trends in Agricultural Growth since 1960s

In the latter half of the 1960s, an unbelievable amount of investment in chemical fertilisers, hybrid seeds, high-yielding varieties of crops, and irrigation was undertaken with a view to self-sufficiency and food security, an experiment termed as Green Revolution. It triggered a technology-induced bumper yield which increased the per capita food supply by the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result, agricultural output and gross domestic product expanded by 26% and 9% in one single year, respectively. Wheat production increased substantially, albeit only in states such as Punjab, Haryana, and western UP which already had certain advantages in terms of irrigation. In 1970, food production touched 100 million tonnes.

The impact of this new agricultural experiment was manifold, mainly in terms of poverty alleviation. Availability of food led to a favourable decline in its relative prices, generation of employment (agricultural as well as non-agricultural), and a rise in wage level. The regions where Green Revolution spread experienced higher rural incomes and thus a decline in poverty. The proportion of population below poverty line fell sharply. By the 1980s, with food security reserves of over 30 million tonnes, India became self-reliant in food production and even began exporting to other countries.

However, the Green Revolution was not without its pitfalls. It was a challenge to sustain the favourable growth rates over the decades. The new varieties of wheat proved to be far more responsive than those of rice. Thus, the wheat-cultivating states prospered while the rice-cultivating states continued to lag far behind. This gave rise to inter-state conflicts and tensions. Social disparity widened as the rich peasants became richer without any improvement in the conditions of the poor. The worsening inequalities posed a bigger challenge to rural poverty. Nevertheless, it was a crucial step towards mitigating the shortage and forestalling future food crises, thereby reviving the ailing economy.

Non-agricultural Activities in the Rural Economy

Manufacturing, construction, services, and other non-farm activities are other components of the rural economy which contribute to the national output and employment. The rural non-agricultural sector has many forward and backward production linkages. An instance of backward linkages are

the implements and inputs for the agricultural sector provided by rural as well as urban non-agricultural activities. Further, the need for processing agricultural produce as well as the demand for non-agricultural products generated by increasing rural incomes gives rise to forward linkages.

Examples of forward linkages are sugarcane and oilseed processing industries. Given the disguised unemployment in agriculture, rural industries can be an effective source of employment for the rural labour force.

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)

Rural credit is directly related to rural development. Established in 1982, NABARD is a development financial institution aimed towards fostering rural prosperity through financial inclusion. It promotes sustainable and equitable agriculture and institutional development through participative and technological innovations, both financial and non-financial in nature. This is achieved through its loans and credit facilities, refinancing initiatives, and funds for rural infrastructural development, to name a few.

Find out more from https://www.nabard.org/

The following table shows the sector-wise disaggregation of activities in the rural economy and their contribution to NDP and employment.

Table 4.7 Share of Rural Areas in Total NDP and Employment across Different Sectors (in %)

Source: Chand, Srivastava & Singh (2017, p. 8)

Year	Agriculture		Manufacturing		Construction		Services		Non-agri.	
	NDP	Emp.	NDP	Emp.	NDP	Emp.	NDP	Emp.	NDP	Emp.
1970-71	96.2	96.8	25.8	51.5	43.2	64.6	32.8	42.1	32.4	47.3
1980-81	94.9	95.9	31.8	48.1	45.6	58.8	34.0	41.7	35.0	44.9
1993-94	93.9	95.8	29.8	51.3	45.1	57.2	33.6	42.3	34.8	46.6
1999-2000	93.2	96.6	41.6	51.5	43.3	57.6	27.1	40.7	31.8	45.8
2004-05	94.1	96.1	42.5	49.6	45.5	64.4	32.7	41.9	36.7	47.2
2011-12	95.1	95.9	51.3	47.4	48.7	74.6	25.9	39.6	35.3	48.7

Almost the entire national agricultural produce is derived from the rural areas, a trend that has remained constant since 1970-71. Rural areas also contribute more than half the manufacturing output and more than one-third of the total non-farm output. Their share in the manufacturing output has almost doubled since 1970-71. Rural areas contribute the highest towards employment in agriculture, followed by that in the construction sector. Thus, owing to its significant contribution, the rural workforce is an integral component of the national economy.

Rural Credit Markets

All productive enterprises need capital. Farmers require capital alongside land in order to be able to increase agricultural production. They need it for short term until the harvest season, as well as for long term investment in upkeep of the land and irrigation. Moreover, rural poor tend to have little or poor access to education and healthcare facilities, seasonal employment, and low wages. They frequently need credit even for fulfilling their basic consumption requirements. Rural credit support was traditionally provided by landlords, traders and money-lenders, who often coincided in the same person. Thus, the labour, credit, and product markets came to be interconnected in exploitative credit relations for the borrowers. Landlords forced small and marginal farmers borrowing from them to pay high rates of interest and work for them for a pittance or no remuneration at all. It was thus necessary to advance formal banking and credit channels in rural areas. The nationalization of 14 banks in the 1960s was a step in that direction. Many commercial banks expanded their outreach to rural areas through several branches. Banks were given priority sector lending targets, mainly to agriculture and small-scale industries. Non-availability or inadequacy of rural credit only resulted in exacerbating rural distress.

Micro-credit as Empowerment Strategy

Self-help groups (SHGs) became popular across the world as a strategy for empowering women and increasing their access to productive resources such as credit (Tambe, 2010). In India, micro-credit through SHGs was adopted with the objective of poverty alleviation and women's empowerment through implementation of development programmes. SHGs comprise small groups of women who save certain amount of money in their individual capacity. This makes them eligible to avail credit from the SHGs. In other words, saving through thrift helps women get loans for investing in income-generating activities. These loans could be for the purpose of meeting production as well as consumption expenditure. The access to economic resources and hence independence is said to enhance the socio-economic status of women who then assume a vital role in the financial affairs of the household.

SHGs are promoted under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission. This programme was aimed towards women because they are seen to contribute more from their earnings towards the household than what men do. Timely repayments and responsible spending are other advantages. Gender inequality was also recognized as a larger problem. Micro-credit was regarded as a magic bullet or panacea for solving the problems of rural poverty and inequality. Drawing upon the economic efficiency of women, it is said to increase their bargaining powers both inside and outside the household. Organizing and group formation also strengthened their political agency.

However, micro-credit interventions were criticized for several reasons. The onus of providing credit to the rural poor was transferred from the state to NGOs, leading to the NGOization of welfare. Owing to several links in the credit chain, it was observed that women were being benefited marginally whereas banks and NGOs were the real winners. Greater responsibility of earning for the household did not necessarily result in a parallel increase in authority within the household. Nevertheless, micro-credit and SHGs remain a celebrated intervention for ameliorating the conditions of the rural poor, especially women.

To-Do-Activity: Find out more about SHGs in your locality or village. Attend their meetings and try talking to the members to know more about their stories and daily struggles.

Impact of MGNREGS

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) is considered to be one of the world's largest welfare schemes for guaranteeing employment to rural households. It aimed to provide at least one hundred days of employment per year in the form of unskilled manual work. The projects were undertaken with a view to addressing chronic poverty as well as enabling sustainable development. In addition, decentralization was emphasized. The larger responsibility of planning and implementation was handed over to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The phase-wise implementation of the scheme began in February 2016 and eventually spread to every district which had a rural population.

MGNREGS has been successful in its implementation. One of its remarkable accomplishments was that it established a minimum wage floor for casual work in rural areas. During the periods 2004-05 to 2009-10 and 2009-10 to 2011-12, agricultural wages for females as well as males showed an upward movement along with the floor wage rates in rural areas. The implementation of this scheme also contributed to the better performance of the non-farm sector as compared to the farm sector. In terms of paying minimum wages, the northern states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu and Kashmir were the best performers. In Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, and West Bengal, more than 50% of the rural non-farm casual workers were not paid minimum wages. This points towards the need for eastern states to ensure better implementation.

The employment provided under the scheme is related to natural resource management such as land development, water conservation, flood control, and irrigation. The allocation for MGNREGS in budget 2019-20 was Rs. 60,000 crores, lower than that in 2017-18. The work generated in the past few fiscal years has been graphed as follows.

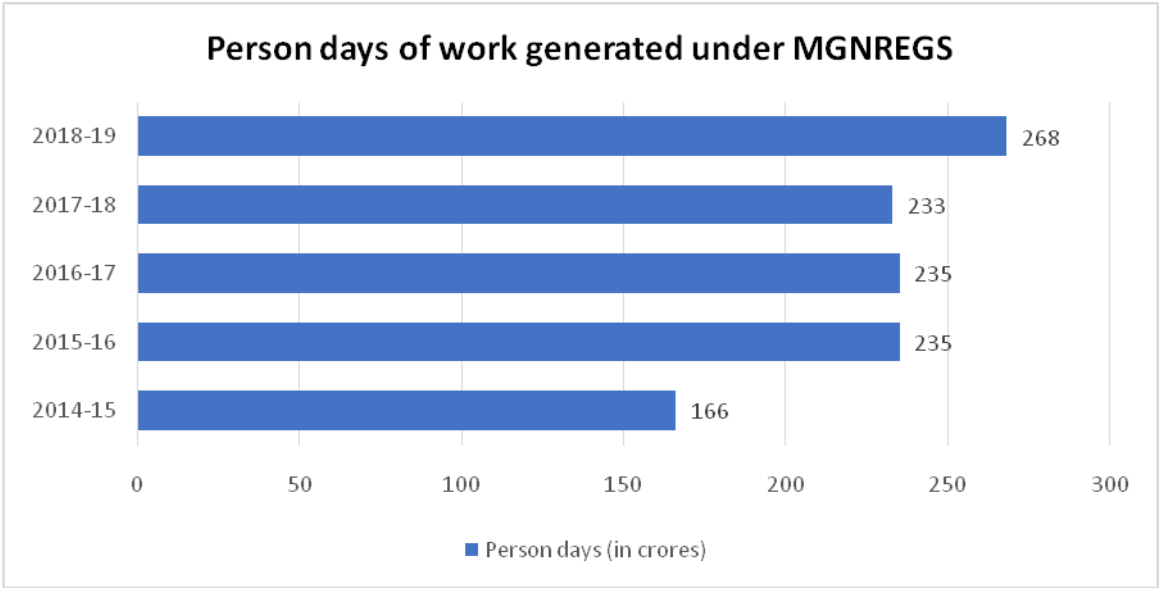

Figure 4.5 Person Days of Work Generated under MGNREGS

Partially adapted from MGNREGA official website,
http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/all_lvl_details_dashboard_new.aspx

As per the official website of MGNREGA, only around 166 crore person days of work was generated in 2014-15. This increased to 235 crore person days of work in 2015-16 and remained constant in the next fiscal year. As for 2018-19, the demand for work has increased by nearly 15% over the previous year and has been the highest since 2010-11. This is indicative of rural distress due to rising widespread unemployment. More incidents of floods and droughts in various districts have diminished rural incomes and spurred the demand for jobs under the scheme.

The below figure illustrates how women have benefited from the scheme.

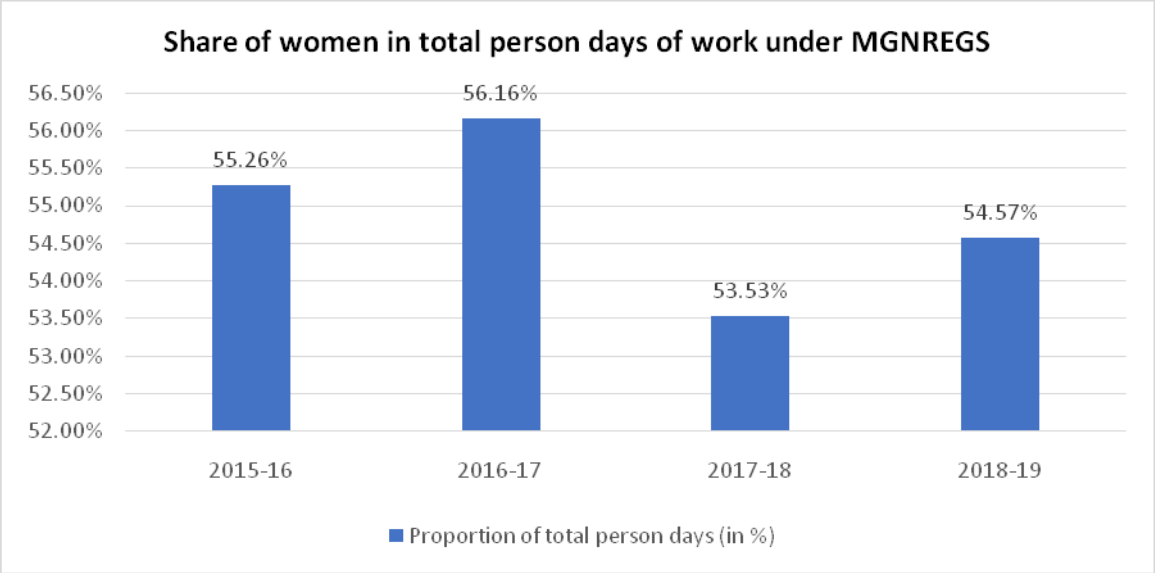

Figure 4.6 Share of Women in Total Person Days of Work under MGNREGS
Partially adapted from MGNREGA official website,
http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/all_lvl_details_dashboard_new.aspx

The above data make it evident that in spite of the fluctuations, the proportion of women has consistently been above 50% since 2015-16. In spite of the slight decline between 2016-17 to 2017-18, it picked up in 2018-19.

However, there have been various challenges in its implementation, such as continual shortage and delay in disbursement of funds and consequent late payment of dues. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the improvements on the employment front during 2004-05 to 2011-12 should be largely attributed to MGNREGS and not necessarily due to the expansion in the capacity to absorb additional labour force.

Impact of Demonetization

Farmers in rural areas were adversely hit by the demonetization of five hundred and one thousand rupee notes in November 2016. Owing to the cash crunch, harvested crops remained unsold. Traders began to purchase from farmers at 20-25% lower prices by paying in cheques which took several days to realize. Meanwhile, the farmers had to pay their workers as well as input dealers in cash. They could not purchase inputs such as high yield variety seeds. Those cultivating fruits, vegetables and cotton were badly hit. Despite prices soaring above 10% in consumer markets post-demonetization, they were not benefited.

It was the time for sowing rabi crops. Farmers dependent on bank credit for cash could not avail loans for sowing as they had not repaid earlier debts. The lack of working ATMs and banks in a majority of Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) markets in rural areas meant that farmers had to spend an entire day travelling far to find an ATM, yet return empty-handed if there was no cash. While demonetization was aimed at curbing black money, farmers were forced to borrow from moneylenders and black marketeers to take care of their immediate transactions. This ended up fuelling the black market. Credit transactions hurt farmers both ways. On the one hand, input dealers hiked their prices by 20-30%. On the other, large traders and commission agents gave them credit charging exorbitant interest rates. On the whole, demonetization proved to be a blow for the cash-dependent rural economy.

To-Do-Activity: Arrange a field trip to your nearest APMC market. Try talking to farmers, traders, and others present there in order to explore its functioning and operations.

Having looked at various aspects of the rural economy, we shall now try to analyze the concept and features of rural labour force as well as the role and participation of women in it.

4.3 Rural Labour Force and Female Labour Force Participation

Basic Concepts

The **labour force** comprises all persons who are legally eligible to work and are either working or actively looking for work. On the other hand, the term **workforce** refers to all those who are actively at work. The difference between the two gives us the number of unemployed persons, or those who are able and willing to work but do not hold a job. The **unemployment rate** is a ratio of the number of unemployed persons to the total labour force. We shall discuss more about unemployment in the next unit.

The unorganized or **informal sector** comprises all privately owned unregistered enterprises which employ less than ten workers. These workers do not receive any formal legal protection in the form of social insurance, which includes old-age pensions, death and disability insurance, and maternity benefits. It must be noted that the formal and the informal sectors are not mutually exclusive in terms of the category of employment. This implies that the unorganized sector has formal workers and the organized sector has informal workers, although the former are in a tiny proportion. Nearly 98% of the enterprises and around 90% of the workers are concentrated in the informal sector.

About 82% of the workforce in India is in insecure employment in the informal sector, working for low wages in precarious and vulnerable conditions. These comprise a section of working poor trapped in a vicious cycle of low productive activities and persistent poverty. Even within the formal sector, there is growing casualization and marginalization of workers. Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and women tend to be concentrated in precarious and low paid jobs in the unorganized sector. The following flowchart represents the components of informal employment.

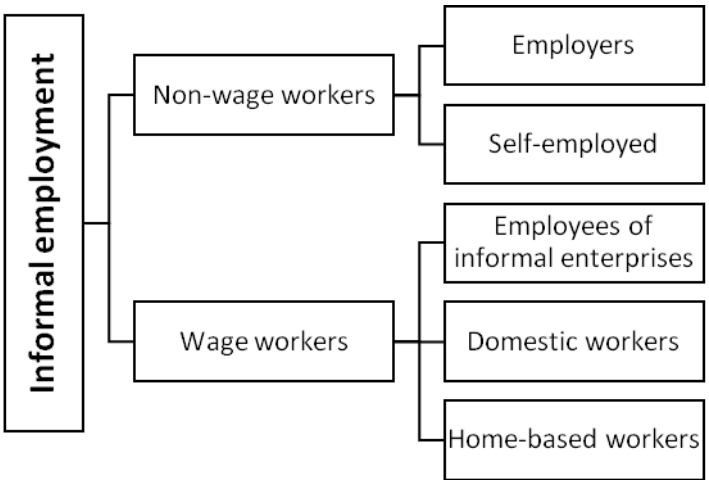

Figure 4.7 Employment Status Categories in Informal Employment

Informal employment consists of wage workers and non-wage workers. Employers among non-wage workers include owners or owner operators of informal enterprises. Heads of family businesses, own-account workers, and unpaid family workers comprise the self-employed. Besides, domestic workers, home-based workers, industrial out-workers, casual workers, temporary workers, employees of informal enterprises, and unregistered workers are all examples of wage workers.

Casual workers are employed temporarily, occasionally, or intermittently, usually for a specific short-term period (hours, days, or weeks) in return for a wage fixed according to the agreement. The substantial wage differentials among casual and regular workers have intensified casualization and contractualization even in the formal sector. More than fourth-fifths of all jobs newly created in the recent years were casual, the bulk of them in the construction sector. Casualization makes them not only informal but also vulnerable as they are deprived of formal legal protection or social insurance that their formal counterparts are entitled to.

Standard Measures of Employment

Two main secondary sources of data regarding the labour market are the census and National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) surveys. The standard measures of employment used by NSSO are briefly categorized as follows.

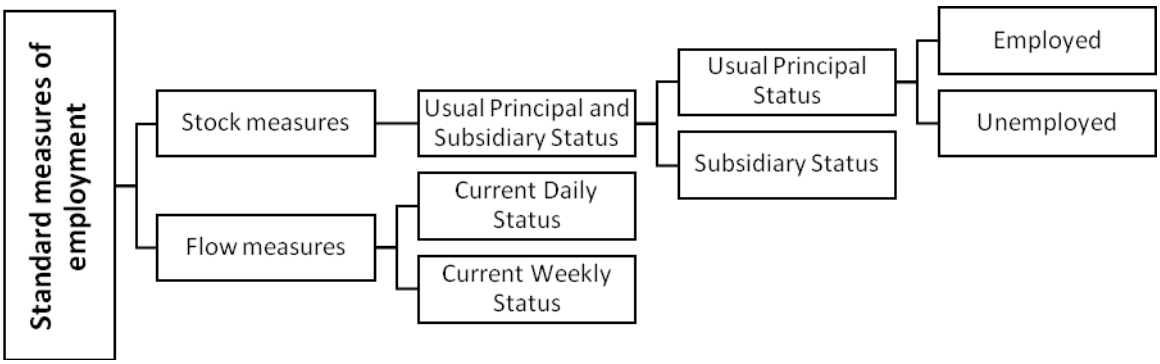

Figure 4.8 Standard Measures of Employment (NSSO)

All usual workers, or **usual principal and subsidiary status workers** (UPSS) are subdivided into two broad categories of workers. To be counted in the labour force as per **usual principal status,** a person should have been working or seeking/available for work throughout most of the reference period (preceding 365 days). Depending on whether a majority of the days were spent working or seeking work, the person is identified as employed or unemployed, respectively. Those involved in any economic activity in subsidiary capacity during the preceding 365 days are classified as **subsidiary status workers**.

UPSS being a stock measure, the flow dimension of employment and unemployment is captured by measures based on current daily and weekly status. **Current daily status** (CDS) is ascertained by recording time disposition in half day units on each day of the reference period. i.e. the preceding week. Moreover, **current weekly status** (CWS) depends on whether the worker was employed for at least one hour during the reference week. CDS is considered a better estimate of open unemployment than both UPSS and CWS.

Key Labour Market Indicators

Labour force participation rate (LFPR) is the share of the working-age population (ages 15 to 64) actively engaged in work or looking for work. It is nothing but the labour force expressed as a percentage of the total working-age population. Similarly, the **workforce participation rate** (WPR) is calculated by the proportion of the population that is in the age group 15 to 64 years and actively engaged in work.

NSSO surveys provide employment estimates over a five to six year period. The **Periodic Labour Force Survey** was devised to collect annual estimates, and even quarterly estimates for urban areas. The first annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18) provides annual estimates of both rural and urban areas on UPSS as well as CWS basis. Moreover, quarterly estimates of urban employment (CWS basis) have also been included. Its findings regarding labour market indicators are tabulated as follows.

Table 4.8 Key Labour Market Indicators in 2017-18 (in %)

Source: PLFS annual report 2017-18

Indicators	Rural	Urban	Total
Usual Status			
LFPR	37.0	36.8	36.9
WPR	35.0	33.9	34.7
UR	5.3	7.8	6.1
Current Weekly Status			
LFPR	35.7	36.4	35.9
WPR	32.6	32.9	32.7
UR	8.5	9.6	8.9

Note: Here WPR = worker-population ratio, UR = unemployment rate

As per Usual Principal and Secondary Status (UPSS), LFPR plunged from 39.5% in 2011-12 to 36.9% in 2017-18. The decline is sharper in rural areas (3.6% points) as compared to a negligible 0.1% in urban areas. Similarly, there has been a slump of 4.9% points in the rural worker-population ratio and 1.6% points in urban worker-population ratio during the same period. Further, the unemployment rate as per UPSS peaked at an unprecedented 6.1% in 2017-18. It was higher as per CWS estimates (8.9%). While rural figures stood at 5.3%, urban figures were 7.8%. These numbers were more startling at CWS level.

(De)feminization of Labour

Casual work remains a predominant form of employment among women. Feminization of labour is the phenomenon of the increase in women's employment with economic reforms, globalization, and trade liberalization after the 1980s. With a view to maximizing profit by exploiting their cheap labour and nimble fingers, and keeping workers unorganized, there was an increased demand for women in industries such as electronics, garments, leather, and the like. The term referred to the growing dependence on women in manufacturing industries particularly oriented towards export. However, it barely lasted for a decade. Women in the workforce began to wane by the late 1990s (Prasad, 2018).

This process of feminization had several limitations due to which it failed to enhance the status of women. It was an uneven process that remained restricted to certain industries, more so in the export-oriented industries dominated by trans-national corporations of the developed countries. Worse, it aggravated the informalization of workers in developing countries, resulting in their further marginalization, denial of basic rights and decent work. It can be said that feminization only implied an absolute growth of the number of women among informal workers.

In fact, what transpired in India is a process of defeminization, evident in the constant decline in female LFPR as discussed further. Besides, their working conditions also deteriorated. Increasing instances of sexual harassment and exploitation resulted in their greater subordination and disempowerment. Prasad (2018) outlines a set of factors responsible for feminization.

Some Causes of Feminization of Labour

1. Growth of export-oriented manufacturing industries: Being labour-intensive industries, these attracted women due to their huge demand for flexible home-based and sub-contracted work.

2. Cutting labour cost: Developing countries provided cheap labour at the least cost of production. Moreover, women and children are paid lower wages.

3. Market deregulation policies: The withdrawal of the state from public expenditure after the economic reforms of 1991 meant that it was difficult to fulfil basic welfare needs of the family. To be able to provide supplementary income, women had little choice but to enter the workforce no matter how exploitative the nature of work.

4. Employers' preference for home-based workers: It helps employers escape from providing basic facilities such as maternity leave and day care facilities to women employees.

5. Avoiding compliance to labour laws: Similarly, employing casual, informal, and home-based workers helps evade provisions of several labour laws and codes applicable to organized sector employees.

6. Women's double shifts: Often, women themselves have no choice but to work from home because they have no substitute who could perform household duties.

The following table shows the receding share of rural females in the workforce.

Table 4.9 Share of Rural Female Workforce by Sector and Activity Status (in %)

Source: Sanghi, Srija & Vijay (2015, p. 258)

NSSO round	Agriculture		Manufacturing		Non-manufacturing		Services	
	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
1993-94	76.6	60.9	12.7	32.0	6.4	3.1	4.3	4.0
1999-2000	84.5	91.8	7.2	5.6	1.6	0.2	6.7	2.4
2004-05	81.4	89.0	8.6	7.2	2.1	0.7	7.9	3.1
2009-10	78.9	80.7	7.5	7.1	4.6	9.0	9.0	3.2
2011-12	74.5	76.1	9.4	10.2	5.6	10.5	10.5	3.2

Various rounds of NSSO surveys suggest that rural female workforce (principal status) has been shrinking since 1993-94 in every sector except services. Agriculture remains the largest employer with nearly three out of every four working women engaged in it, a trend that has not changed much over time. As a result of feminization, the share of women in subsidiary status in manufacturing sector rose up to 32.0% in 1993-94. Once defeminization began, the share has only been shrinking and reduced to a third by 2011-12.

We shall now try to understand the trends in female labour force participation.

Female Labour Force Participation

Participation of women in the labour force stimulates economic growth. Unfortunately, Indian labour market is characterized by low female LFPR (around 23.3% in 2017-18), manifested in its poor labour sex ratio as well as low worker to population ratio. Male LFPR has been more or less constant from 1983-84 up to 2011-12. But for females, it has only been moving downwards; the decline being driven largely by rural females. Since 2011-12, it has declined by 8% points to 23.3% for females in 2017-18. In 2017-18, the overall LFPR was 49.8%, implying that more than 50% of the total workforce is excluded from the labour force and is unable to contribute to any economic activity.
The following table demonstrates the declining LFPR.

Table 4.10 India LFPR from 2011-12 to 2017-18

Adapted from PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey) annual report 2017-18

	Rural LFPR	Urban LFPR	Rural-urban gap
2011-12	67.7%	49.3%	18.4%
2017-18	58.7%	47.6%	11.1%
Decline	9.0%	1.7%	7.3%

Rural LFPR has fallen steeply by 9% points, more than five times the decline in urban LFPR during the same period. The gap between them has narrowed to 7.3% due to the shrinking active labour force in the villages. The following figure portrays the downward trend of female LFPR since 2004-05.

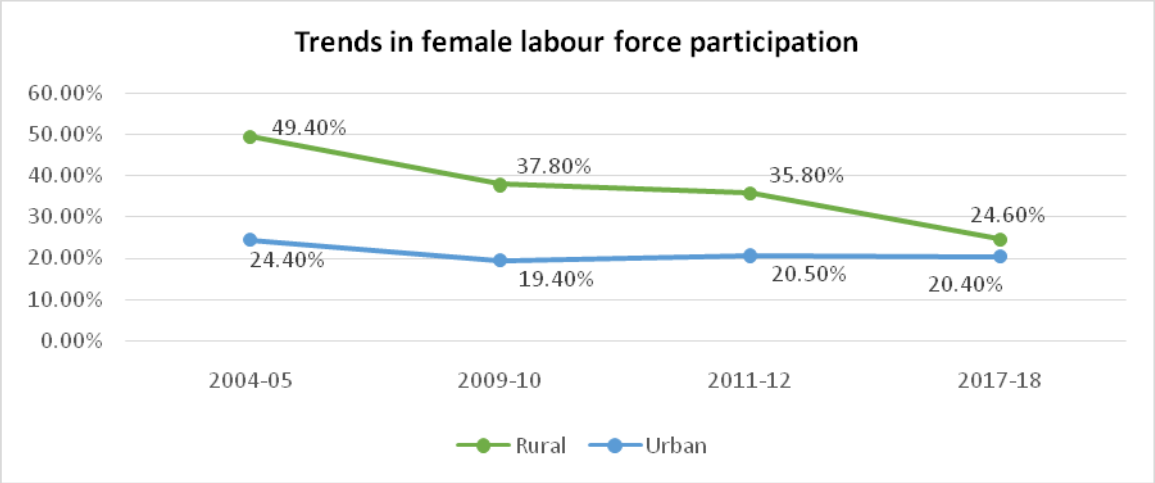

Figure 4.9 Trends in Female LFPR (2004-05 to 2017-18)

Adapted from PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey) annual report 2017-18

The decline in female LFPR has been rather sharp. It has almost halved during 2004-05 to 2017-18. Three out of four women neither working nor looking for work presents a worrying picture. While urban female LFPR has dropped only slightly between 2011-12 to 2017-18, the rural female LFPR has slipped by nearly 11.2% points. These are certainly grim statistics.

The increase in female LFPR during 1999-2000 and 2004-05 was mainly due to the need for substituting male workers who were looking for better opportunities outside agriculture. It could also reflect the greater need for supplementing household income in these particular years. This does not necessarily imply radical structural changes in the structure of labour market or greater availability of jobs during that period. The rates shrunk in 2009-10 and further in 2011-12. Excluding the opportunities created under MGNREGS, it is apparent that the rural economy has been unable to generate adequate work.

The period following 2004-05 has witnessed a sharp decline in workforce participation rate for both rural females and males in the age-group 15 to 29. The fall in female WPR has also been observed in the prime working age groups of 30 to 44 and 45 to 59. This is also owing to the diminishing

employment opportunities in rural areas. Women are losing out on employment because of the concentration of men in low-wage work.

Reasons for Low Female Labour Force Participation

Various socio-economic factors influence women's agency and willingness to work. Some of the decisive factors include levels of education, fertility rate, age of marriage, and extent of urbanization. Conditions of work, gender pay gap, security of work, and the double shifts of work at home as well as outside are various challenges facing women while entering the labour force. Rising enrolment ratio of females and scarcity of employment opportunities might lead to a reduction in female LFPR.

Women face many barriers to entry. Although educational attainment for females improved considerably even for rural females, adequate jobs were not created to accommodate the additional female entrants into the labour force. A rise in household incomes triggers change in preferences and discourages female participation, especially in subsidiary capacity. Another problem is under-reporting of women's work due to which a large part of it is not accounted for in official statistics.

A large number of women are unable to join the labour force due to the sexual division of labour inherent in family relations that relegates them to the private sphere or household. However, they are willing to work from home while also being able to fulfil their domestic duties. Thus, piece-rated home-based work is becoming a popular trend among women workers. There were 16.74 million such workers in 2011-12 (Jha, 2016). Of these, more than two-thirds were engaged in *beedi* and garment sectors. The following figure represents the high concentration of females in home-based work.

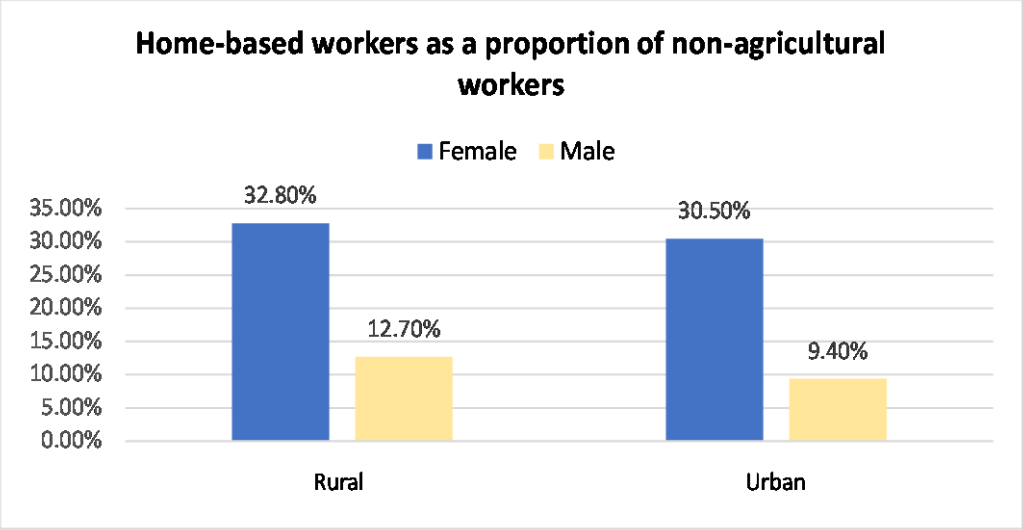

Figure 4.10 Home-based Workers as a Proportion of Non-agricultural Workers (2011-12)
Adapted from Raveendran, Sudarshan and Vanek (2013, p. 4)

The nature of home-based work is non-agricultural. In 2011-12, the proportion of females in home-based work was more than thrice as that of males in urban areas. The numbers were more than 2.5

times higher for rural women as compared to rural men. Women are thus more likely to be engaged in home-based work in both rural and urban areas.

As per World Bank estimates, India lies among the bottom ten countries in the world in terms of female LFPR. The LFPR for women in the age bracket 15-29 fell to 16.4% and that for every age bracket between 30 to 50 years was 33.5%. This implies that more than two-thirds of the women in that bracket are not a part of the labour force despite being in their prime working age. Most of them are engaged in performing domestic duties. Additionally, religion and caste too have a decisive role in determining women's participation. Muslim women have the lowest LFPR. Within Hindus, it is the upper caste women. On the one hand is religious conservatism while on the other is the burden of caste, wherein higher the caste in terms of social hierarchy, greater are the restrictions on women's mobility. Among all the states, southern and eastern states perform reasonably better but Bihar performs worst.

A majority of rural women are found in agriculture and allied occupations. They are less likely to be engaged in non-agricultural jobs. Following is a figure highlighting the nature of activities that rural women are engaged in.

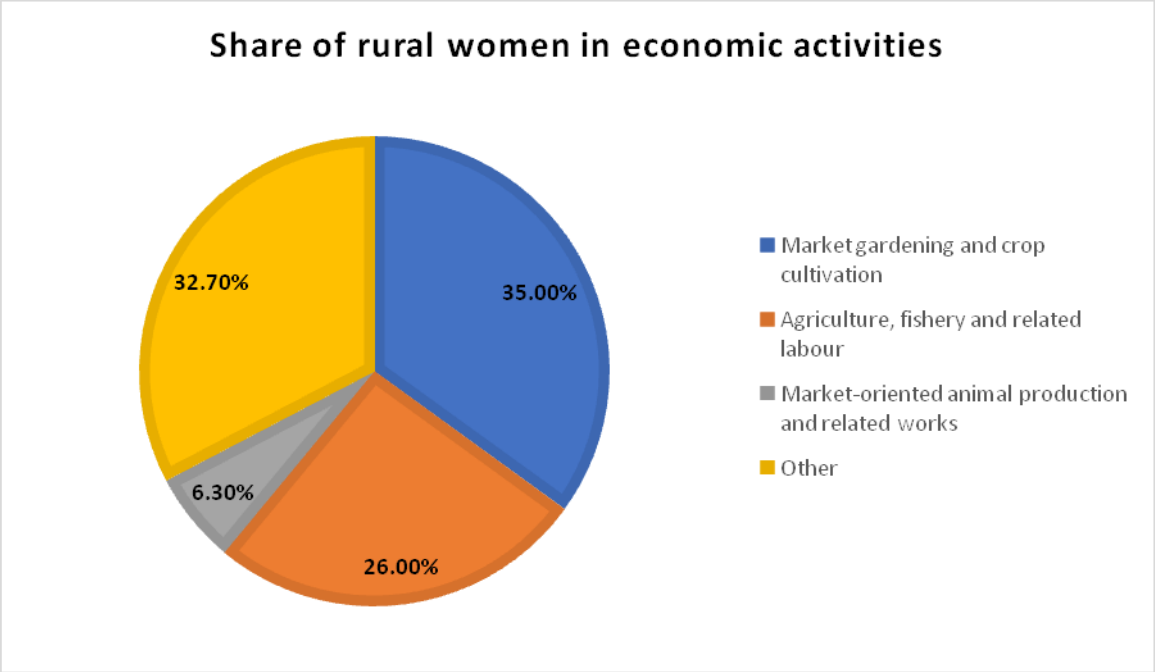

Figure 4.11 Share of Rural Women in Economic Activities

Adapted from Rukmini (2019)

Agriculture and allied activities employ more than a quarter of the women. A greater proportion is into gardening and cultivation. A significant share of the work performed by women is unpaid household and care work. Even among self-employed women who perform outsourced manufacturing activities, the earnings are low, hours of work very long, and formal social protection zero. The unadjusted gender wage gap (without accounting for the educational qualifications and duration of work) was also high in rural areas. Male salaried employees earn 1.4 to 1.7 times higher

than their female counterparts (Rukmini, 2019). This discrimination also deters women's labour force participation.

Need for Encouraging Female Labour Force Participation

Decent work and participation of women in the labour force are essential for rural development. Women face several social, cultural, and economic constraints towards labour force participation. Also deserving our attention are the numerous women in the informal economy who are at the greatest risk of exploitation and are entitled to the least social protection.

As much as it is necessary to reap the demographic dividend, it is also imperative to correct the gender dividend. In countries such as South Korea and China, the rising women's LFPR helped to lower son preference. Over the long run, it may help in improving the adverse sex ratio. It would require several structural and gender-responsive policy reforms to trigger women's participation. These include ease of access to education and skill development programmes, vocational training, and jobs; along with all forms of legal protection and social insurance. Opportunities for decent work and equal pay for equal work will not only enhance women's labour force participation but also contribute towards their socio-economic empowerment.

The next unit turns towards rural poverty and unemployment.

4.4 Rural Poverty

Rural poverty and unemployment go hand in hand. At least 76% and 73% of rural and urban households, respectively, could be characterized as poor in 2009-10. Moreover, 31.4% rural households were under debt in 2012, a majority of these being dependent on agriculture. Among farming and agricultural workers, more than half the households were indebted. In a labour-surplus economy, most people are forced to engage in low-income activities because they cannot afford to remain unemployed. A large number of them become self-employed and share whatever work is available. This phenomenon causes persistent widespread underemployment and poverty in rural areas.

Basic Concepts

Absolute poverty or subsistence poverty is based on the concept of minimum requirements for sustenance. It is measured by first estimating the prices of basic necessities, determining a poverty line on the basis of those prices, and defining all those whose income falls below that line as poor. Here basic needs include resources required for maintaining physical health and efficiency, shelter, and clothing for a healthy life. **Relative poverty** is relative to time and place. It is estimated on the basis of what the residents of a particular society consider an adequate standard of living.

How is a **poverty line** drawn? It is set as per certain normative standards of living which include adequate food and nutrition, housing, clothing, education, travel and conveyance, and a reasonable estimate of other essential expenditure. The Rangarajan Committee report (2014) fixed a monthly

family consumption expenditure of ₹ 4,860 at 2011-12 prices as the poverty line in rural areas. The same was ₹ 7,035 for urban areas. The daily nutritional requirement was estimated to be 2,155 and 2,090 kilocalories per person for rural and urban areas, respectively. **Poverty gap** is the distance between the income level of the poor and the poverty line.

Vulnerability is a multi-level concept that takes into account the possibility of a non-poor individual or household to become poor in the future. The marginal poor might be pushed to chronic poverty later. The challenge for the state is thus not only to mitigate existing poverty but also to protect those at the risk of falling into the trap of poverty.

Beyond Low Incomes

Poverty is not merely associated with low incomes and consumption. It leads to deprivation as poor nutrition and health status, low levels of literacy and education, social exclusion and vulnerability tend to adversely affect capabilities and overall well-being. Lack of equal access to opportunities also restricts their upward social mobility and condemns them to the bottom rungs of the social hierarchy. They are more prone to discrimination and exploitation. Economic disadvantages are accompanied by social as well as political disadvantages. Poverty thus entails several unfreedoms. Freedom of choices is essential for socio-economic development of any community.

Measures of Poverty

1. **Head count ratio (P_0):** It is calculated as the ratio of those who are below the poverty line to the total population. It is simply the absolute number of the poor.

$$\text{Head count ratio (HCR or } P_0) = \frac{Total\ number\ of\ individuals\ below\ the\ poverty\ line}{Total\ population} \times 100$$

Its main limitation is that it gives equal weightage to each unit irrespective of its distance to the poverty line. Since it does not take into account the differences in income and consumption levels among those who are below the poverty line, it fails to measure the depth and intensity of poverty.

2. **Poverty gap ratio (P_1):** Changes in the income and consumption levels of those who are below the poverty line can be accounted for by poverty gap ratio. It reflects the depth of poverty. Income gap ratio (IGR) is determined by the average distance of people below poverty line.

$$IGR = 1 - \frac{XP}{X*}$$, where XP = average income of the poor, X* = poverty line

Poverty gap ratio (P_1) = IGR x HCR

3. **Squared poverty gap (P_2):** The severity of poverty can be estimated by squared poverty gap. The average of the squares of the poverty gaps are calculated with respect to the poverty line. α is taken

as a parameter. A larger parameter implies that the position of the poorest would be assigned greater weight.

Squared poverty gap (P_2) is calculated as $P_\alpha = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\left(\frac{Gi}{z}\right)^\alpha$

Where α is a parameter, N = sample size, G_i=poverty gap, z = poverty line

Incidence of Poverty in India

Consumption expenditure data collected by NSSO surveys form the basis of estimation of incidence of poverty. The first step involves identifying the basket of goods and services that constitute the minimum consumption levels above poverty. Subsequently this food basket is costed at current market prices. These calculations are performed separately for rural and urban areas.

In India, the proportion of the poor in urban areas has been growing, largely due to migration from rural areas in search of work. Despite the marginal decline in rural poverty, its concentration in central and eastern regions of the country has increased. A fall in absolute numbers has been recorded but the inter-regional disparities remain sizeable. Certain districts have consistently been extremely poor and vulnerable. The following table provides national estimates of poverty during 1993-94 to 2011-12 (as per the methodology of Tendulkar Committee, 2009).

Table 4.11 National Poverty Estimates in % (1993-94 to 2011-12)

Year	Rural	Urban	Total
1993 – 94	50.1	31.8	45.3
2004 – 05	41.8	25.7	37.2
2009 – 10	33.8	20.9	29.8
2011 – 12	25.7	13.7	21.9

Source: Press note on poverty estimates 2011-12, Planning Commission

It can be observed that the rate of rural poverty has consistently been exceeding that of urban poverty. Poverty has declined in absolute terms to more than half in these two decades, from 45.3% in 1993-94 to 21.9% in 2011-12. In 1993-94, half the rural population was poor. This has decreased to a quarter by 2011-12. The rural-urban gap is also narrowing and has reduced to 12% in 2011-12.

Poverty and Social Inequality

The socio-economically marginalized and disadvantaged groups are more likely to be poor. In a hierarchical society such as ours, the nature of poverty varies across religious, caste, and class lines. The following table presents national urban and rural poverty rates as per social group from 1983 to 2009-10 (as per the methodology of Lakdawala Committee, 1993).

Table 4.12 Poverty by Social Groups (1983-84 to 2009-10)

Source: Panagariya and Mukim (2014, p. 14)

Social group	1983	1987-88	1993-94	2004-05	2009-10
Rural					
ST	64.9	57.8	51.6	47.0	30.5
SC	59.0	50.1	48.4	37.2	27.8
OBC	-	-	-	25.9	18.7
FC	-	-	-	17.5	11.6
NS	41.0	32.8	31.3	22.8	16.2
All groups	46.6	38.7	37.0	28.2	20.2
Urban					
ST	58.3	56.2	46.6	39.0	31.7
SC	56.2	54.6	51.2	41.1	31.5
OBC	-	-	-	31.3	25.1
FC	-	-	-	16.2	12.1
NS	40.1	36.6	29.6	22.8	18.2
All groups	42.5	39.4	33.1	26.1	20.7
Rural + Urban					
ST	64.4	57.6	51.2	46.3	30.7
SC	58.5	50.9	48.9	38.0	28.6
OBC	-	-	-	27.1	20.3
FC	-	-	-	17.0	11.8
NS	40.8	33.9	30.8	22.8	16.8
All groups	45.7	38.9	36.0	27.7	20.3

Data spanning three decades indicate that a greater proportion of STs followed by SCs tend to be poor in comparison to the forward castes. This holds true across rural and urban areas. Nearly 65% ST population in rural areas was poor in 1983. This reduced to more than half by 2009-10 as in the case of rural SCs. In spite of urban poverty rates being lower than that of rural poverty, the trends have been alike. Poverty rates among urban forward castes (12.1%) were marginally higher than rural forward castes (11.6%) in 2009-10. The poverty rates have remained higher for STs, SCs, and OBCs as compared to the rates for the forward castes.

The social inequalities among caste groups lead to further marginalization and exclusion of those at the lower rungs of social hierarchy. One of the ways in which the state intervenes for bridging this divide is through positive discrimination in the form of affirmative action. For instance, reservations for the marginalized for increasing their access to educational and employment are aimed at their socio-economic development through equality of opportunities.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes

According to multi-dimensional poverty index data released by UNDP in 2019, the number of poor in India is down to 365.55 million in 2016-17. A reduction of 271 million has been achieved in one decade. India's approach to poverty alleviation has been three-pronged. There has been an emphasis on economic growth alongside improving access to basic amenities for the poor. Third, the programmes have targeted not only transient but also chronic poverty.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was launched during the 1980s to enhance the standard of living of and empower those who are below the poverty line. The beneficiaries were provided subsidies, productive assets and other inputs. District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) were set up for its implementation. Find out more about IRDP.

Rural local governments were accorded constitutional status by the 73rd Amendment in 1992. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) were set up at various administrative levels to encourage the rural people's participation in development programmes and their implementation. All programmes launched by the Ministry of Rural Development are now implemented only through PRIs. Additionally, the SHG movement is also aimed at poverty alleviation.

Rural Unemployment

Unemployment and poverty are closely related. Rising unemployment tightens the grip of poverty. Regular employment has remained a challenge for not only rural but also urban areas. The proportion of males with regular employment was about 10% in 1987 and remained nearly the same more than two decades later, around 2011-12.

Two common types of unemployment are seen in rural areas. **Seasonal unemployment** refers to a situation wherein workers can obtain work only during periods of labour demand. They might not find work in other periods marked by absence of demand. India's rural sector being largely agrarian is characterized by seasonality of employment. Fisheries, tourism, and retail are other such sectors.

The form of employment that does not contribute to output is termed as **disguised unemployment**. The surplus labour that is employed is not profitably utilized for production of goods and services. This hidden unemployment could also be a form of underemployment entailing under-utilization of the skills of the labour force. In rural areas, it is not uncommon to find more people working on a field than are actually required. Agrarian economies generally being labour surplus economies, the marginal productivity of surplus labour is zero.

The huge rural labour force can be efficiently utilized for labour-intensive commodity production. The dearth of adequate cottage and small-scale industries in rural areas forces a majority of the rural labour force to remain confined to the primary sector consisting of agriculture and allied occupations. With the disintegration of families, the sizes of rural landholdings also diminish. A large number of rural poor are left with little choice but to migrate to the urban areas for employment opportunities. The urban poor also struggle to find work. Too many competitors for too few unskilled jobs only add to the pool of unemployment in urban areas.

The following graph depicts recent trends of unemployment in rural and urban areas.

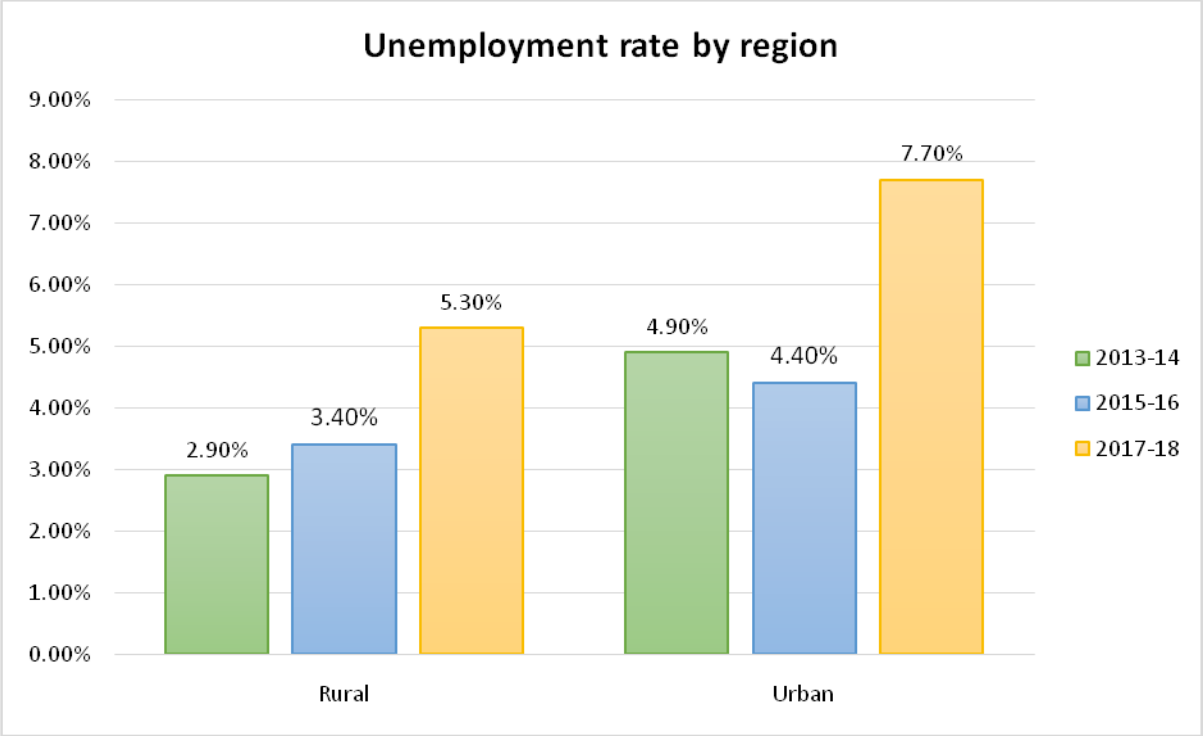

Figure 4.12 Unemployment Rate by Region (2013-14 to 2017-18)

Adapted from PLFS 2017-18 and annual employment-unemployment surveys by Labour Bureau

The above data reveal that unemployment has been steadily increasing 2013-14 onwards. The rates of urban employment are higher than that of rural. Rural employment soared from 2.9% in 2013-14 to 3.4% in 2015-16 and above 5% in 2017-18. Urban employment slightly dipped to 4.4% in 2015-16, only to rise above 7% in 2017-18. These indicators present a disquieting landscape.

The below figure illustrates unemployment trends by sex and region.

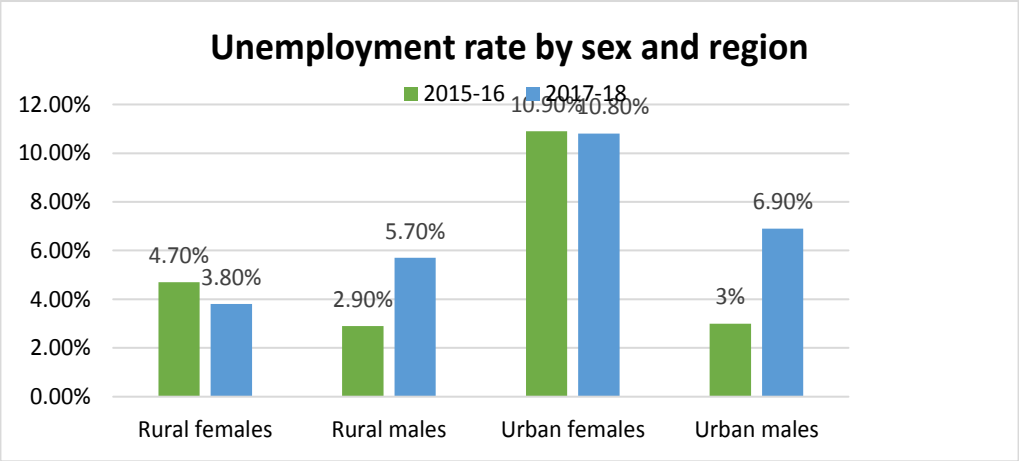

Figure 4.13 Unemployment Rate by Region and Sex, 2015-16 and 2017-18

Adapted from PLFS 2017-18 and annual employment-unemployment surveys by Labour Bureau

As per further data from the aforementioned surveys, the rate of unemployment for urban women is the highest, bordering near 11%. The same for urban males has more than doubled in this short period, while it has nearly doubled for rural males. The only improvement has been witnessed in case of rural females, where there is a marginal decline from 4.7% to 3.8%.

Jobless and Job Loss Growth

PLFS data revealed that the overall unemployment rate touched a 45-year high at 6.1% in 2017-18. The paradox of increasing unemployment in one of the biggest and most rapidly growing economies of the world unveils the dismal state of the Indian economy. Despite growing at a constantly high rate around 7-8% since 2003-04, the rate of growth of jobs has plummeted from nearly 2.87% to less than 1% over this period up to 2017-18 (EPW Engage, 2018). In other words, there is jobless growth since the rate of job creation has failed to keep pace with the rate of economic growth. This has also resulted in further informalization of labour. The below graph demonstrates the sharp decline in job creation between 1999-00 to 2014-15.

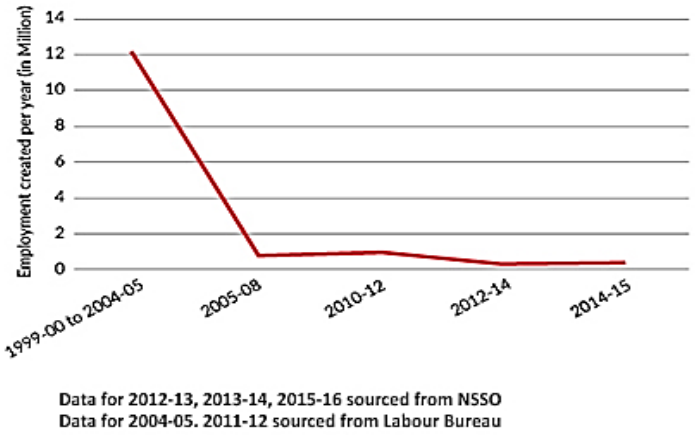

Figure 4.14 Jobs Created Between 1990-2000 and 2014-15

Source: EPW Engage (2018)

The job creation capacity of the economy has been nose diving. The enlarging tertiary sector characterized by heavy emphasis on technology cannot tackle the employment crisis. There is a need to revitalize the manufacturing sector through structural interventions in the nature of demand,

investment, and technology, and through engagement with global markets. Technology should be utilized for improving the conditions of labour and not displacing labour itself. The demand for labour-intensive commodities must be increased in order to absorb the additional labour force.

Moreover, an unprecedented trend of falling jobs has set in. Around nine million jobs have been lost between 2011-12 to 2017-18. There are fewer jobs in agriculture as well as in manufacturing, coupled with a slowdown in the construction sector. This along with a lack of quality non-farm jobs has given rise to mounting unemployment even among educated youth. In order to address this crisis, there is a need for a comprehensive employment policy for addressing agrarian distress, boosting real wages in rural areas, industrial development, and expanding the capacity of the economy for greater absorption of the labour force.

4.5 Migration

Migration studies have been a part and parcel of various social sciences. The study of demography is incomplete without that of migration because it is an important factor that strongly influences the structure and nature of population in a particular territory. It affects various historical, social, economic, and political processes across regions. In this unit, we shall focus on internal migration in India.

Basic Concepts

Migration refers to the movement of individuals/families from one territory to another with a view to settling in a new residence. In simple words, it is a change in residence which might be permanent or semi-permanent. It is usually distinguished into internal migration and international migration.

You might have come across two terms in the context of international migration. Departing from one country with the purpose of taking up residence in another country is called **emigration**. Thus, an emigrant is someone who has moved out of a country.

$$\text{Emigration rate} = \frac{\textit{Total number of emigrants departing from a place of origin}}{\textit{Total population in that area of origin}} \times 1000$$

Similarly, arriving into a new country with the objective of residence therein is called **immigration**. Thus, an immigrant is someone who has arrived at a new country.

$$\text{Immigration rate} = \frac{\textit{Total number of immigrants arriving at a destination}}{\textit{Total population at the destination}} \times 1000$$

An immigrant is not the same as a refugee who has been compelled to cross international borders in order to escape severe natural disasters, war, violence, genocide, ethnic cleansing, conflict, or persecution. Refugees are defined and protected by law. Find out more about the refugee crisis that forced Rohingyas of Rakhine state, Myanmar to flee to Bangladesh.

Types of Migration

There are various types of migration. It is not always voluntary. **Voluntary migration** is undertaken by an individual as a conscious decision out of personal choice. It could be to join family or friends,

or for better living conditions. For instance, a youth from a small town in Bihar might choose to move to Delhi where there are better and higher-paying jobs. **Forced migration** involves an element of force, external coercion, or compulsion rather than personal choice. Such migrants can include refugees, internally displaced persons (as a result of natural disasters or development projects), and in some instances, victims of trafficking.

Causes of Migration

A range of push and pull factors influence migration. **Push factors** compel individuals or groups to leave their place of origin. Examples of such factors are lack of education and employment opportunities, harsh climatic conditions, natural calamities, and political instability. **Pull factors** attract individuals or groups to move towards a new place away from their place of origin. These factors include availability of better opportunities, improved living conditions, peace and stability, security, pleasant climatic conditions and the like. For instance, better employment opportunities in bigger cities are a pull factor for people from villages or small towns.

Streams of Migration

Internal migration in India can be categorized under four streams. These are urban to urban (U-U), rural to urban (R-U), urban to rural (U-R), and rural to rural (R-R). Rural populations being largely agriculture-dependent, R-R migration is undertaken in response to scarcity of land, soil degradation, or availability of more fertile lands in other areas.

Rural-urban migration is usually poverty-induced. Capital cities are the centre of urban growth and in-migration because they are the hub of commerce and industry. This leads to the process of urbanization, or population concentration in cities and suburban areas in their proximity. The rapid growth of urban population in India can largely be attributed to R-U migration in search of work. It is the rural push factor rather than the urban pull factor that triggers urban-ward migration.

The following chart represents the proportion of various streams of migration to total migration as per census 2011.

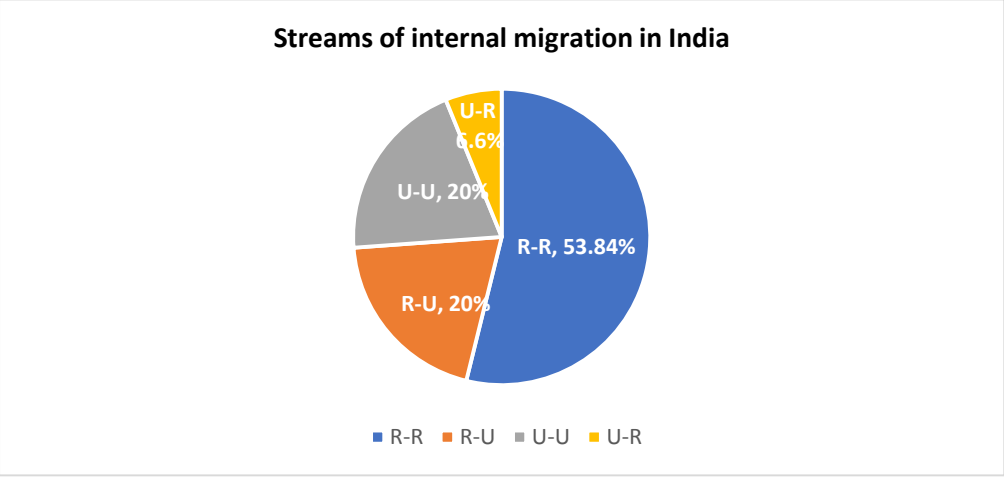

Figure 4.15 Proportion of Various Streams in Total Internal Migration, 2011
Adapted from Krishnan (2019)

It is usually assumed that most migration is R-U in nature. However, it can be observed that despite increasing urbanization, the most common stream of migration in India is among rural areas. More than 50% of the total migration is of this kind. It remains the most dominant form of migration especially among women, mainly due to reasons of marriage. The practice of village exogamy remains prevalent. Besides migration within urban areas or from rural to urban areas comprise 20% each. U-U migration is mostly confined to skilled labour. The least proportion of migrants (6.16%) relocated from urban to rural areas.

Internal Migration in India

In terms of census enumeration, an individual whose place of previous residence differs from the place where she/he was enumerated is classified as a migrant. The rate of internal migration is seen to be high in developing countries such as India which are characterized by great inter-regional variation and disparity.

The following table presents the rate of internal migration in India in 1993-94 and 2007-08.

Table 4.13 Rate of Internal Migration in India (1993-94 and 2007-08) Adapted from Jha (2016)

	Rural areas	**Urban areas**
1993-94	228 per thousand	307 per thousand
2007-08	261 per thousand	354 per thousand

The rate of internal migration has been on the rise in both urban as well as urban areas. It is growing faster in urban areas. In fact, it has been the highest among SCs and STs, and is only increasing with the pace of urbanization. Increase in female migration is not only due to marriage. One of the reasons why rural to urban migration among SCs and STs has escalated is because more and more women are entering the labour market for work.

Census 2011 reported the magnitude of internal migration (both inter-state and intra-state) at 139 million in the past decade. According to more recent estimates from the Economic Survey of 2017, India had nearly nine million people migrating from one state to another annually during 2011 to 2016. Following is a figure depicting the various reasons for migration in India and the corresponding proportion of population migrating for the same.

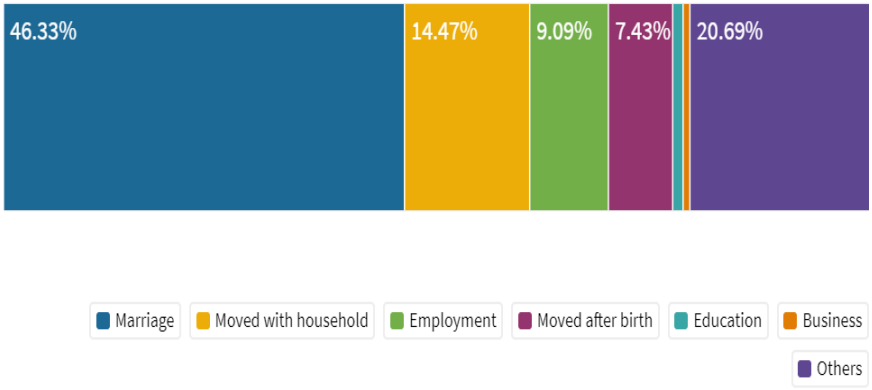

Figure 4.16 Reasons for Migration in India

Source: Krishnan (2019)

As per census 2011, a majority of the population migrates due to marriage. It accounted for over 46% of the total migration. Out of these migrants, 20.58 crore or 97% were women. This implies that out of the 29.3 crore total married women in India, nearly 70% had to relocate after marriage. Contrary to popular perception, employment and education account for a far lesser share.

Following are the top source and destination states in terms of migration.

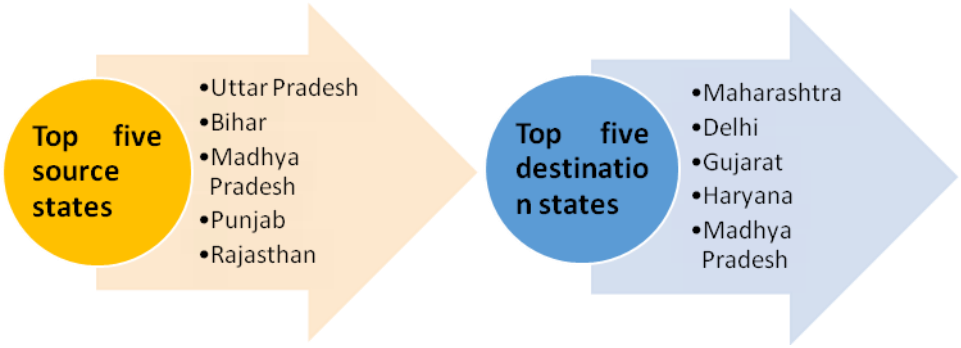

Figure 4.17 Top Five Source and Destination States in Terms of Internal Migration, 2011
Adapted from Krishnan (2019)

The states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar topped in out-migration. The city of Mumbai had the largest number of in-migrants at 90 lakh, followed by Delhi. Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh had the highest influx of migrants. The eight north-eastern states had the lowest total number of immigrants (2%). The most common path of migration was from Uttar Pradesh to Delhi, followed by the same source to Maharashtra, and from Karnataka to Maharashtra.

You now have an idea of migration patterns across states. We shall now read more on R-U migration, particularly in the form of distress migration.

Distress Migration

Urban-rural growth differential refers to the difference between the rate of expansion of rural and urban population in one decade. It helps in ascertaining the rate of rural-urban migration. In 2011, the urban-rural growth differential was 19.8, the highest in three decades (Sainath, 2011). The urban population grew faster than rural population for the first time since 1921. It expanded by 91 million against rural population that grew by 0.5 million less. Why so?

P. Sainath has devoted his life to the study of distress migration from rural areas. He argues that the rapidly increasing urban population has a lot to do with a massive agrarian collapse in rural areas. Rural to urban migration cannot be viewed in isolation. It is linked with the deep agrarian crisis. The loss of agriculture-dependent livelihoods and allied occupations has pushed millions of workers towards **footloose migration**. Poor people who are desperately in search of work are constantly on the move from one place to another, with no fixed final destination. These instances of short-term, multiple migrations cannot be captured by census which is a decennial affair.

Since the 1990s, there has been an upsurge in distress migration following the crumbling of rural employment. In fact, this distress migration also harms the political agency of migrant labour. They are often unable to cast their vote during elections if they are seeking work in some town or city. The rural poor have their vote as the only power to elect or change their representatives in the hope that the new government shall work for their welfare and development. Not only that, not having identity and residential proof updated as per recent place of residence excludes many migrant rural poor from access to education and healthcare, housing, and social security programmes and welfare schemes (Bhagat, 2018).

Seasonal Migration

The phenomenon of individuals or groups of individuals migrating for temporary period/s and returning after a specific duration is called **seasonal** or circular migration. They might move from one place to another or to a fixed destination. Most of these families are landless or possess very small pieces of land. Seasonal migrants usually belong to the marginalized sections of the society such as STs, SCs, and OBCs. Migration provides them livelihood opportunities and ensures their subsistence. But their experiences are often harsh due to poor living and working conditions as well as exploitation at work.

The children of seasonal distress migrants are also at loss. If they are too young to take care of themselves and their parents also lack support back home, the children need to migrate with their parents from place to place. This adversely affects their schooling and primary education. Even if the migrant parents enrol their children at the new location, they cannot go to pick and drop them to school while also performing daily wage labour.

Agricultural workers from rural areas remain one of the most poor and vulnerable sections of the society. Lack of education, large family size, diminishing landholdings, and low agricultural incomes are certain reasons that push them to distress migration to urban areas. Policy interventions at various levels are essential to check seasonal distress migration and ameliorate their socio-economic conditions. There need to be state-level mechanisms for ensuring continuity of education of migrant children. This demands measures such as proper documentation, tracking and statistical accounting of the number of migrant children. Further, serious attention needs to be paid on ease of enrolment and addressing learning outcomes as well as gaps. The onus especially lies on the destination states.

To-Do-Activity: People's Archive of Rural India (PARI) is an online archive of stories from rural India which are never covered by mainstream media. Visit their website at https://ruralindiaonline.org/ to read extraordinary accounts about rural life and its challenges.

Is migration a burden?

More often than not, there are anti-migrants sentiment in people who inhabit a particular territory. However, the idea that migrants are a burden needs to be questioned and reconsidered. For most migrants, it is less a matter of choice and more a survival strategy against poverty or indebtedness. In fact, migration can have many advantages as follows.

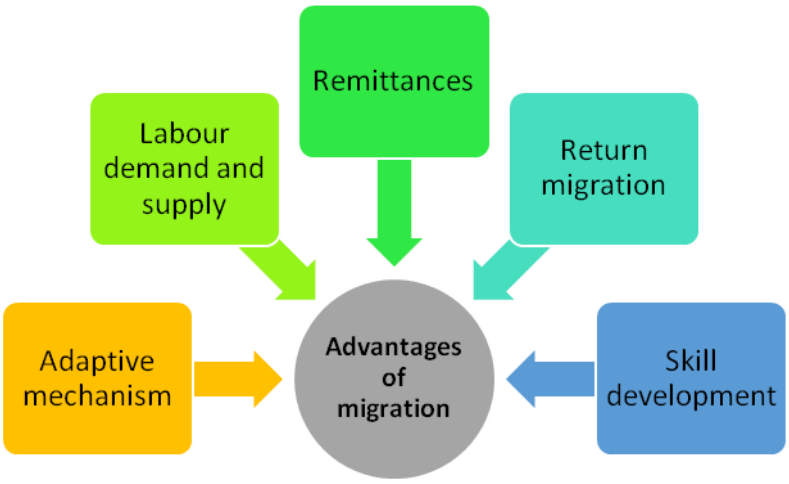

Figure 4.18 Advantages of Migration

Bhagat (2018) mentions several benefits of migration. It can be an adaptive mechanism against climate change or natural catastrophes such as drought, flood, or earthquake. Besides, it can help to achieve equilibrium between demand and supply of labour. Rural surplus labour can fulfil the high demand for labour in urban areas. It can facilitate the efficient allocation of skilled and unskilled labour. Moreover, migrants are a source of various remittances for their place of origin. Increased income has a positive effect on consumer spending and investment in education, healthcare, and formation of assets. Further, return migration brings along social remittances in the form of skills, knowledge, and innovation. It can also be an effective mode of skill development as it enhances the skills and knowledge of the migrants through new experiences and exposure. Thus, migration is beneficial for the overall development of the economy and society.

Summary of the Chapter

We began the chapter with some basic concepts and theories of demography. Census, Civil Registration Survey, Sample Registration Survey, and Sample Surveys are the various sources of demographic data. Concepts such as fertility, mortality, birth rate, death rate, sex ratio, and literacy rate are important for comparing the demographic features of rural areas with those of urban areas. We briefly discussed two essential theories of Malthusian population growth and demographic transition, respectively.

In the second unit, we explored the rural economy and the importance of agriculture and allied activities within it. We also looked at rural credit and micro-finance through the SHG movement. We learnt about the success of MGNREGS in generating rural employment. A focus on the rural labour force and the role of women in it formed the basis of our discussion in the following unit. Key indicators of the labour market were also explained.

The fourth unit on rural poverty, inequality and unemployment tried to explain their interrelationship. We learnt about various concepts and measures of poverty and compared rural poverty with urban poverty. Moreover, the relationship between jobless growth and unemployment was analyzed.

The chapter concludes with a unit on migration. We learnt its meaning, concept, and some of its types. We explored various streams of internal migration in India. There was an emphasis on the phenomenon of distress migration from rural to urban areas.

This chapter briefly described various aspects of rural India such as its demography and population, economy, employment, labour force, poverty, and migration.

Model Questions

1. Compare and contrast Malthusian population growth theory with the theory of demographic transition. Do you think Malthus' theory is applicable in case of populous nations like India and China?

2. What are the features of the rural economy in India? Explain how agriculture forms its backbone.

3. "Micro-finance is a magic bullet for women empowerment." Do you agree? Critically analyse this statement.

3. How did MGNREGS impact generation of employment in rural areas? Discuss the challenges in its implementation.

4. Discuss what you understand by 'feminization of labour'. How can you explain the declining female labour force participation rate despite feminization?

5. Analyse how rural poverty and unemployment are inter-related.

6. How does poverty induce migration? Do you agree with the argument that distress migration is a major cause for a faster increase in urban population as compared to rural population? Justify.

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Chapter 5 Rural Social Transformation in Contemporary Times

Introduction

The impact of modernity that was brought in through the colonial rule had set a trend of change towards transformation of the traditional social order and ways of living in India. After independence from the British rule, there was a thrust to build a new nation by bringing in change in the rural sector through the Nehruvian model of development. Under various five-year plans modernization of agricultural practices, revival of village artisan works, provision of schools and health care institutions in rural areas were initiated. 'Green Revolution' and 'White Revolution' were successful in making India food and milk sufficient.

The least we can say about the model of development that was followed is that it was not sufficient enough to transform the rural society radically. The efforts to change economic backwardness, local political governance, cultural problems such as casteism/untouchability, alienation of the Adivasis, gender disparity and oppression, and education and health problems were far from satisfactory. Subsequently, in 1990s, neoliberalism policies that was adopted by the Indian state does not seem to have served the rural society towards better. The result that has come in last three decades shows that rural India is under severe distress.

Agriculture which was once the backbone of Indian economy, have been reduced to a marginal contributor to economy, the farmers/peasants who were feeding the nation, are struggling to feed themselves. The cost of agricultural inputs has increased and the market rates are crashing. There is inadequate government support to give a fair price to the products, and no cooperatives to market the products profitably. The credit facilities from the formal banks are for rich farmers, while the poor fall into the trap of the private money-lenders. All this has led to severe crisis in the agriculture sector, and thousands of farmers committing suicide in the countryside is a strong indicator of the crisis in the countryside.

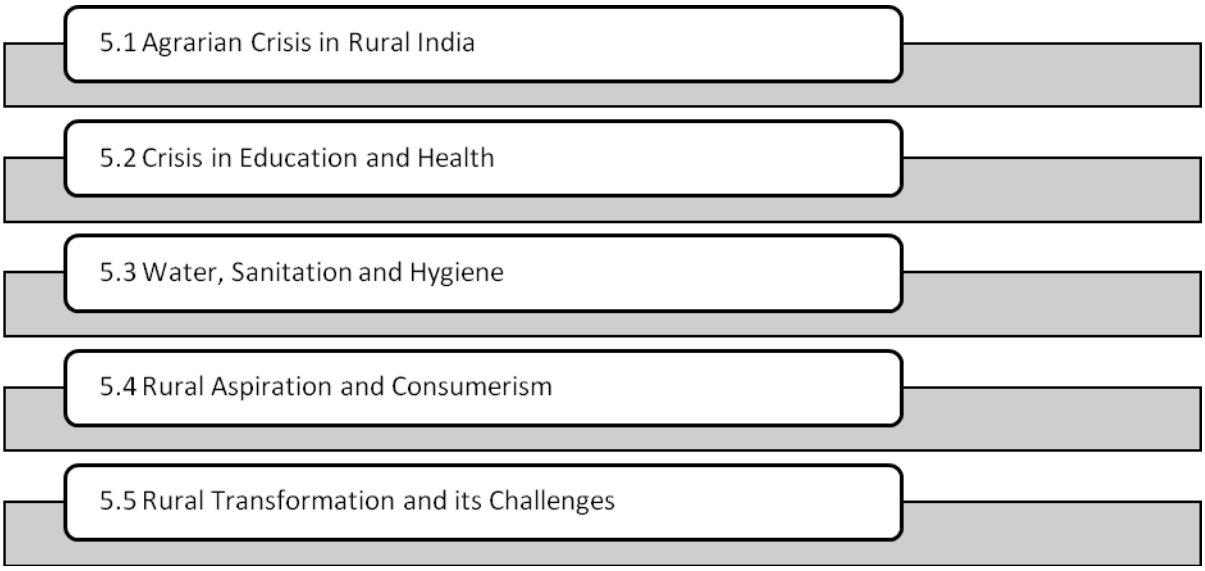
The picture of health care services and education facilities are really disappointing. Though education has become a fundamental right under the Constitution, the quality of the school far from desirable. With privatization of education, there seems to be class-wise segregation of educational facilities; poor quality schooling for the poor and good quality schooling for the rich. Similarly, government health care facilities have hardly improved in rural areas. For the large majority of rural masses, government services are unavailable and private services are unaffordable. Another major concern for the rural society is the lack of proper sanitation facility. Historically, this is a neglected issue in our society, and now only it has become a major focus of the government. Yet, a lot is desired to be done in this field to make rural sanitation, hygiene and drinking water problems.

At the same time people in rural areas are trying to emulate a more urban middle-class consumeristic life style. *Kutcha* houses are giving way to concrete buildings, electronic gadgets and motor bikes are found in more rural households. People are migrating to urban areas and trying to go up the class hierarchy. Yet, some of the traditional values around caste, community and gender remains unchanged. For a modern democratic society, rural society also need to be democratic at the grassroots. Unless caste hierarchies, community divisions and gender disparities are addressed, true political equality and a prosperous rural society cannot be visualized.

Objectives

1.To analyze various problems in contemporary rural society
2.To highlight rural aspirations and impact of neoliberalism on the rural society
3.To diagnose the challenges to transform a rural society that is deeply embedded in traditional hierarchical values

Structure



5.1. Agrarian Crisis in Rural India

During our discussion on class structure in India (Chapter 2), we had elaborated the nature of land distribution in rural India. In this section we will look at the nature of the agriculture sector, the economic condition of most of the farmers and landless farm labourers, globalization and its impact on the market condition.

We know that at the time of independence, India's economy was in shatters, poverty was rampant, food grain production was not sufficient for all. For first few decades, our food security was dependent on import of food-grains from other countries. The need of the hour was immediate agrarian reform and various policy measures to boost rural economy including agriculture. Agriculture was contributing more than 50% of the GDP at the time of independence, and it was also the largest employment sector. Thus, it was natural to expect that the state would take adequate steps to boost the rural agrarian economy. The Indian state, under the stewardship of the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, did try to take a slew of measures such as land reform, efforts for irrigation facility and modernisation of agricultural methods etc. However, none of these was sufficient to make agrarian economy grow at desired rate and enable the nation to become food-secure.

Land-reform was done half-heartedly. Zamindari was abolished, but landlessness problem was not addressed adequately. Irrigation facility was developed by constructing big dams, but its impact was far less than that was required. Agricultural productivity, and its market linkage was not properly controlled by the state, therefore the farmers always ended up being exploited by the middle men.

By late 1960s, The second Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri tried to focus on the agriculture. His slogan "*jai jawan!jai kisan!*" (hail the soldier! hail the farmer!) is still popular in India, but that hardly helped the agrarian economy. Food crisis in India intensified by 1970s, and the idea of Green Revolution took shape. We have discussed this in Chapter-1 that Green revolution made India food-sufficient, but the main beneficiaries were the big-farmers. Moreover, there were also other environmental problems associated with the 'success' of the Green Revolution.

The agrarian crises became acute after India opened its economy in 1990s. The big-corporate sectors from Western countries started controlling the agrarian market, and the farmers were at their mercy for buying farm inputs and selling the products. This lead to the beginning of large-scale farmers suicide in India across major states. Recently we have witnessed farmers agitation in large numbers that indicate the level of dissatisfaction among the farmers. Let's discuss five main reasons of farmer's distress in rural India in contemporary times:

1. **Commercialization of Agriculture**: The productivity of farm sector was very low till modern technology was introduced by mid 1960s through 'green revolution'. Introduction of high yielding variety (HYV) of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, surface-water and underground-water for irrigation, insecticides and pesticides led to increased wheat and rice production in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The purpose of this kind of agriculture was to produce more food grains for feeding the hungry masses within the country. Thus the big famers became richer by trading the extra grains in the market. This kind of agricultural practice is called "commercialization" as the primary purpose of cultivation is not to grow food grain for self-sustenance, but to sell the products in the market and make profit.

You must have heard about the controversy around **Genetically Modified crops** (GM crops). GM crops are genetically modified in agricultural laboratories to insert characteristics that is generally not found in the genes of that plant naturally. Certain genes can be introduced that will help plants to yield more, resist diseases, improve shelf-life, increase nutrition content and so on. However, there is often controversy related to its impact on human health, environment and sustainable agriculture.

Bacillus thuringiensis cotton (*Bt*-cotton) is an example of GM crop. This plant has the ability to produce various *Bt* toxins in the plant that acts as an insecticide to kill various insects and their larvae. Introduced in Indian market by seed giants Mahyco and Monsanto in 2002, more than 90% of the cotton produced in India is this genetically engineered plan variety. As a result, India became the second most producer and the largest exporter of cotton. However, this crop consumed more water, more fertilizer, and even more insecticide for other non-target pests. There is high rate of suicide among farmers in the cotton cultivation areas within India and the state of Maharashtra banned *Bt* cotton in 2012 (though lifted the ban in 2013). Most importantly, these GM crops makes the farmers dependent on the market and increases the input cost of cultivation.

Soon after, in addition to food grain, other non-food grain "cash crops" were cultivated for profit generation. Cash crops is generally expected to give more cash (profit) in return, even though the input cost is higher. After 1990s, cultivation of more and more cash crops such as sugarcane, cotton, soybean etc. becomes widespread in certain regions. These crops, in addition to higher input cost, also needs more water compared to other traditional crops. In

many places, where farmers cultivate cash crops, there is not enough surface water for the cultivation. As a result they dig deep bore-wells and extract precious ground water. All these adds to their cost of production. The idea of cash crop is that the market return would more than compensate the high input cost. But the process of globalization and neo-liberalisation has made market conditions very volatile and unpredictable.

2. **Globalization**: In short, globalization is the process of integration of various parts of the globe-economically, politically and socially. Unfortunately the integration of various nations is not on equal terms. Globalization also reflects powerplay between different strong and weak nations. India or other 'Third-World' countries are controlled by the Western powers for their political and economic gains. As the latter have more economic, military and political power, they dictate terms and conditions of trade and commerce. In addition to the powerful nations, there are the transnational institutions such as World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO) who exercise control over the weaker nations. Also known as the "Bretton Woods Institutions", they are often accused of protecting the interests of the 'developed' countries of the West at the cost of the rest of the World.

These institutions are known to have pressurised the third-world governments to open up their economies and adopt neoliberal policies. They have also pressurised them to adopt certain type of fiscal policies to re-structure their national economies. Accordingly, the 'third-world' countries have adopted Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) to reduce expenditure or subsidies on education, health and agriculture; and to privatise various sectors as much as possible. In India, the government has reduced its subsidies on agriculture sector thus increasing the price of fertiliser and seeds etc. As a result, the cost of production goes up and farmers get less profit. At the same time, it should be noted that the agriculture sector in the Western countries keep on getting huge subsidies from their respective governments. It makes their products cheaper compared to the third-world countries and they get an advantage in the market. Ultimately, it is the farmers in the third-world countries who suffer as markets are controlled by the western corporate giants, not by the state.

3. **Market Vulnerability**: As a result of adoption of neo-liberal policies, the prices are often controlled not by the state, but by the big international corporations. Agricultural products are similarly controlled by Western agro-corporations in the Western countries. Monsanto, Dupont, Bayer, Dow Chemical etc are some of the big Western Corporate agro-companies who deal with seed, pesticide and chemical fertilizers. Monsanto and Dupont, for example, control about 40% of the seed market; top ten seed companies control about two-third of seed transaction that is worth billions of dollars. The growing commercialization of Indian agriculture is also now linked to the network of these corporate sector who now supply high-yielding hybrid seeds, pesticides etc. and make farmers dependent on them for all types of farm inputs. The farmer is no longer using her/his own seed or own organic fertilizer, but becoming more and more dependent on the market controlled by global forces.

   As the market is controlled by major global corporate players, they exploit the farmers. In order to make more and more profit, they deliberately keep the farm input price high and the harvested product price very low. The private sector do not guarantee any fixed the price of

the harvest. During the time of harvesting, the market prices generally fall, and the farmers are in a hurry to see their products due to lack of storage facilities and/or they need money for repaying loans taken mostly from (private) money lenders. The states in India or other 'third-world' countries are not powerful enough for a good bargain from the western corporate sectors to protect the interest of their own farmers.

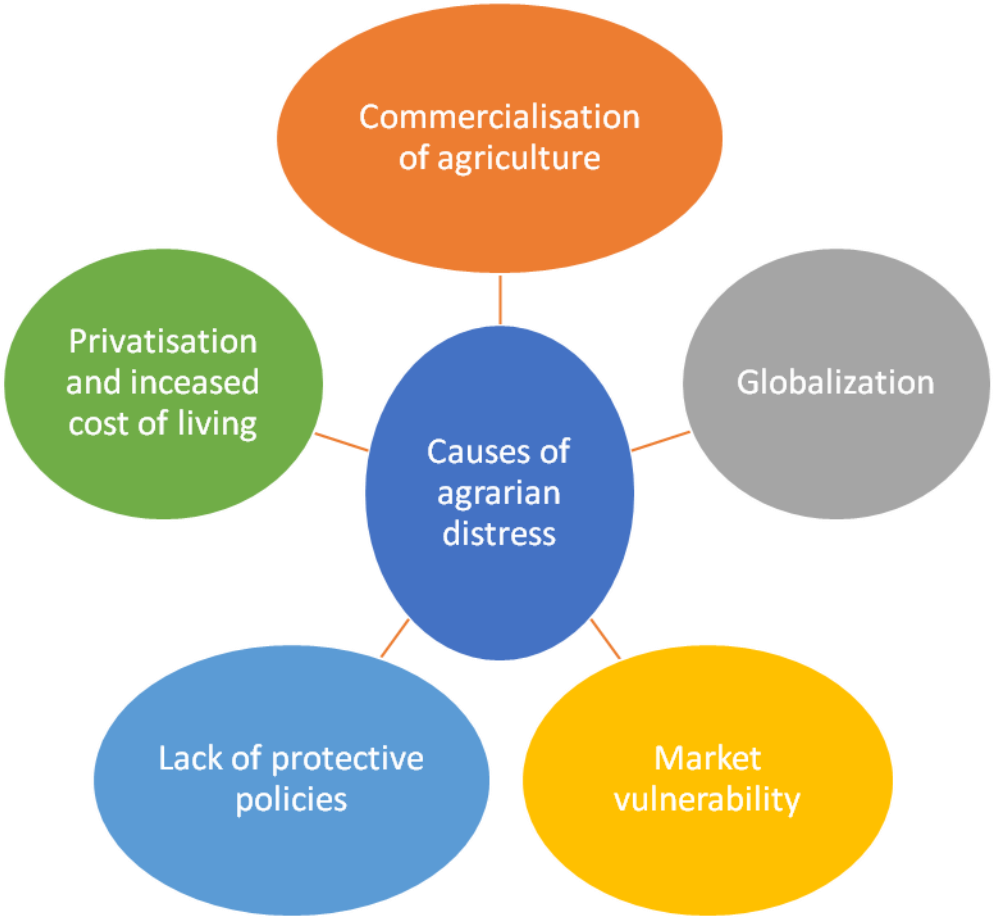


Figure 5.1 Causes of Agrarian Distress

4. **Lack of Protective Policies**: Neoliberalism has restricted the government's ability to frame policies to protect farmers from the assault of the market. However, it is not to say that earlier, the government had done enough to protect the interest of the farmers. Since independence, successive governments did not take enough proactive policies for in this direction. One of the policies that is very crucial is availability of credit facility to the farmers from banks at a reasonable rate. As is the situation till today, most of the farmers, especially those who are small/marginal farmers, do not get loans from the mainstream banks. There are some cooperative banks for targeting farmers' needs, but they are too few. The farmers therefore depend on the money lenders for getting a loan in time to invest in crop production. The interest rate in case of the private money lenders is very high, sometime even as high as 100% per month. When the farmers fail to pay back due to crop-failure or low-price in the market, they are harassed in many ways by the money-lenders and sometimes this drives them to commit suicide.

The state so far does not have any efficient policy to protect the farmers from loss of crop or market fluctuations. The recently introduced Fasal Bima Yojana (Crop Insurance Policy) is again linked to private insurance companies who make more profit out of it, than helping the farmers. (There is not enough scope to discuss that here). But what can be done is to protect the interest of the farmers at different levels- providing financial support in time, providing safety net if there is a crop loss due to natural calamity, and then protecting them from the fluctuations of market. Cooperative farming for small farmers can be initiated for more effective management of farm activities. Cooperative storage facilities should also be initiated to preserve the products if there is low market price at the time of harvest.

Another important policy decision that is in practice to some extent is the minimum support price (MSP) for various agricultural products. However, the way MSP is decided and implemented, it often fails to protect the interest of the small farmers.

5. **Privatization and Increased Cost of Living**: Most of the farmers in India are small and medium farmers and they are often at the mercy of nature or the market. Many of them struggle to survive while supplying food to the rest of the population. With neoliberalism in practice, there is increased privatisation, especially in the education and the health sector. This adds to the cost of living of the already impoverished rural households. People in rural areas also prefer to send their children to private English-medium schools as governments schools are deemed to be of poor quality. Similarly, poor quality facility and services in government hospitals forces people to opt for the private medical facilities. Many studies have pointed out that in rural areas taking loans (from private money-lenders) for health care is one of the major reasons of rural indebtedness.

Consequences

It is pertinent to ask- what is the consequence of failure of government policies to protect the interest of the farmers who are the backbone of the food security of the country? Two important phenomenon may be observed in this regard as mentioned below:

1. **Farmer's Suicide:** Most of the farmers in India have been poor, yet not many committed suicide before 1990s. The incidents of farmers' suicide kept on increasing every year after the market was subjected to corporate control. The National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB) started keeping record of farmer suicide cases from 1995. Between 1997-2012, within a period of 16 years, as many as 2,64,388 farmers took their own lives. It is estimated that more than 15000 farmers commit suicide every year, that is about 45 farmers per day.

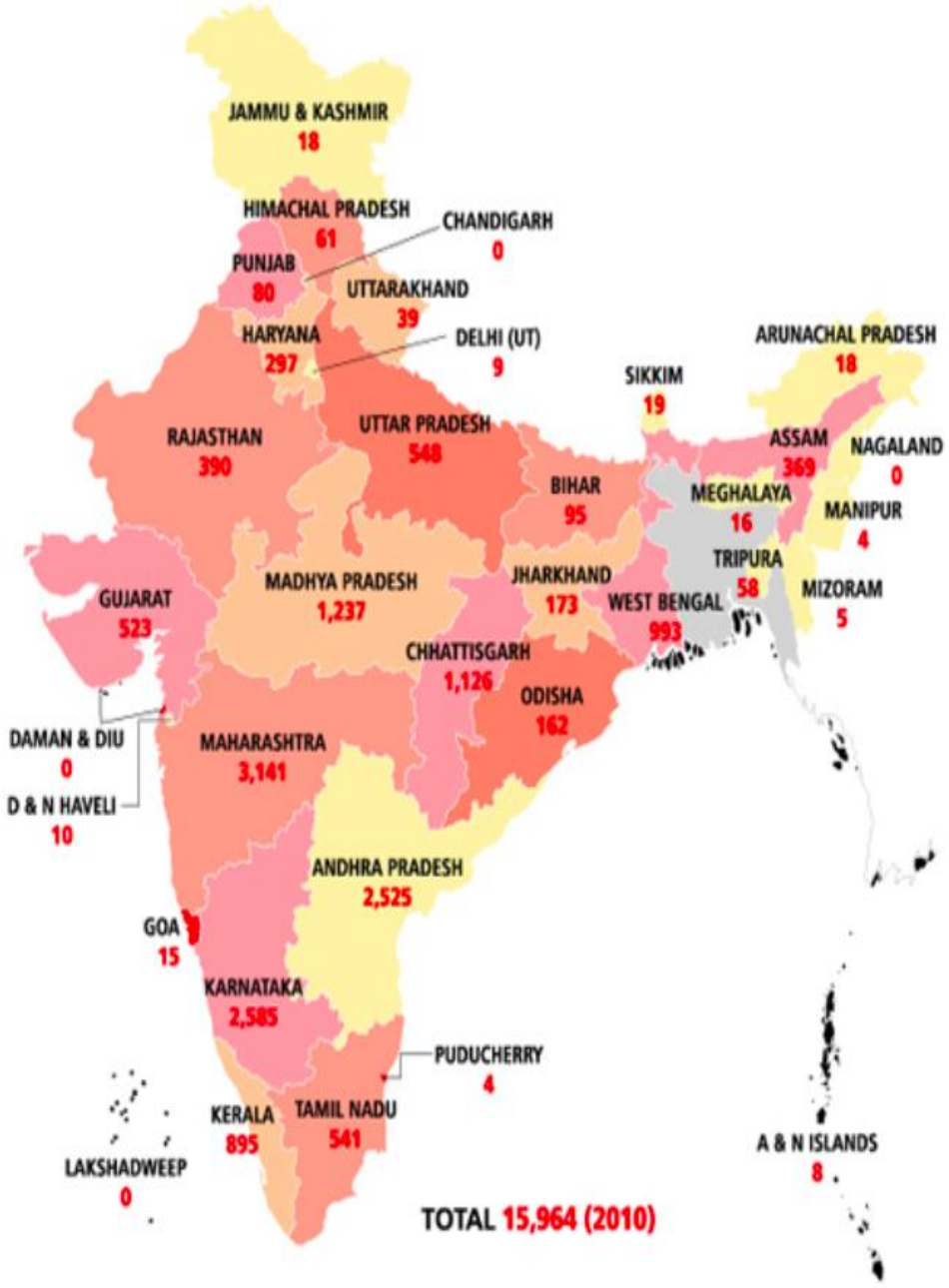


Figure 5.2 Map of Farmer Suicide in India (2010)

Source: *Down to Earth* (4th July 2015)

The worst affected states are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh etc. The table mentioned below shows the intensity of the problem.

Table 5.1 Rate of Suicides among the Farmers and a Comparison with the General Population in Various Groups of States, 2001 and 2011

Source: National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), *Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India*, various issues. Census of India, *Population Census Reports*, 2001 and 2011

Groups of States		Suicide rate (per 100,000 members)					
		2001			2011		
		In general population	Among farmers		In general population	Among farmers	
			With all cultivators considered	With only main cultivators considered		With all cultivators considered	With only main cultivator considered
1	Group I (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Chattishgarh, Madhya Pradesh)	15.6	24.8	28.7	17.2	26.7	30.2
2	Group II (Kerala, Tamilnadu, Goa, Puducherry, West Bengal, Tripura)	20.1	28.8	33.6	20.9	22.5	26.3
3	Group III (Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Odisha)	10.0	6.9	8.9	11.1	8.8	10.8
4	Group IV (Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand)	2.4	2.6	3.3	2.9	2.5	3.4
	All India	**10.6**	**12.9**	**15.8**	**11.3**	**13.2**	**16.3**

Figures in brackets give indices with 1997 as the base.

For details see Nagaraj et al (2014) Review of Agrarian Studies, Vol.4 (2): 53-83.

Look at the table below and see the number of farmers who have committed suicide in Maharashtra, as well in other states in Group-I. In 15 years (1997-2012), after neoliberal policies

were adopted, Maharashtra had lost about 55 thousand farmers; and the other states in that group has a cumulative suicide number of more than one lakh. This reflects the magnitude of the problem.

Table 5.2 Farmers Suicide: Maharashtra and Other States in Group-I

Source: National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), *Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India*, various issues. Census of India, *Population Census Reports*, 2001 and 2011

Year	Maharashtra						Other States in Group I			
		Number of farmers' suicides in the State	Farmers' suicides as a per cent of all suicides in the State	Farmers' suicides as a per cent of farmers' suicides in the country	Number of male farmers' suicides		Number of farmers' suicides in the States	Farmers' suicides as a percent of all suicides in the state	Farmers' suicides as a percent of all suicides in the country	Number of male farmers' suicides
1	1997	1917 (100)	15.2	14.1	1600 (100)		5319 (100)	20.2	39.0	4156
2	1998	2409 (126)	17.6	15.0	1938 (121)		5974 (112)	20.1	37.3	4746
3	1999	2423 (126)	17.8	15.1	2050 (128)		7007 (132)	21.5	43.6	5661
4	2000	3022 (158)	21.6	18.2	2492 (156)		6815 (128)	20.6	41.0	5377
5	2001	3536 (184)	24.2	21.5	2945 (184)		6838 (129)	20.5	41.7	5760
6	2002	3695 (193)	25.4	20.6	3155 (197)		6814 (128)	19.6	37.9	5732
7	2003	3836 (200)	26	22.3	3381 (211)		6989 (131)	20.3	40.7	5730
8	2004	4147 (216)	28.2	22.7	3799 (237)		7662 (144)	20.8	42.0	6484
9	2005	3926 (205)	27.2	22.9	3638 (227)		7033 (132)	19.9	41.1	5935
10	2006	4453 (232)	28.7	26.1	4111 (457)		7185 (135)	19.7	42.1	5840
11	2007	4238 (221)	27.9	25.5	3968 (248)		6788 (128)	17.7	40.8	5609
12	2008	3802 (198)	26.5	23.5	3573 (223)		6994 (131)	17.9	43.2	5849
13	2009	2872 (150)	20.1	16.5	2692 (168)		7893 (148)	18.9	45.4	6468
14	2010	3141 (164)	19.7	19.7	2947 (184)		7473 (140)	17.0	46.8	6009
15	2011	3337 (174)	20.9	21.3	3093 (193)		7199 (135)	15.9	46.0	5877
16	2012	3786 (197)	23.5	23.3	3483 (218)		7117 (134)	16.2	43.7	5795
Total for 1997-2012		54540	23.2	20.5	48865		111100	19.2	42.0	91028
ACGR (%) 1997-2012		4.3			5.0		1.8			2.1

Figures in brackets give indices with 1997 as the base.

For details see Nagaraj et al (2014) *Review of Agrarian Studies*, *Vol.4* (2): 53-83.

As the farmers are cultivating cash crops, and when the return is not enough, there is not enough food at home to feed the family. In addition to this, the cost of health, education and other needs have to be met. As private money lenders provide loans at a very high rate, the repaymet of loan becomes very difficult when market fails. Thus, extreme desperation drives them towards suicide.

2. **Dispossession and Depeasantisation:** Farming is no more an attractive option for the traditional farming communities as it hardly gives them an income to live a decent life. On the contrary, the nature of farming has become such that there is more risk of even losing one's life. In Maharashtra for example, it is difficult to get a bride for a young male farmer. At the same time, there are other non-farm sector jobs that is opening up. People in rural areas prefer to migrate and find alternative works in the cities. This process can be called *depeasantisation*.

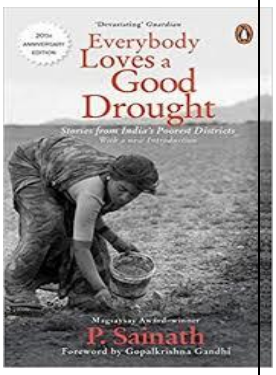
Depeasantisation is more seen in case of small farmers and farmers from marginalised communities such as OBCs, Dalits and Adivasis. Because of small size of land holding and with increased cost of production, small farmers can no more derive livelihood from agricultural activities. Many of them lose their land due to indebtedness, or because of dowry payment for their daughters marriage. After that they migrate in search of wage labour in cities. Punjab, which was one of the main areas of successful experiment on Green revolution, is facing this crisis as many small farmers are leaving agriculture, and moving out to cities for wage-labourers job, or other petty jobs.

Depeasantisation is also related to *dispossession* from land related to 'development' activities such as dams, mining, industrialization, urbanization, and even Special Economic Zones (SEZs) created by government for business activities. For construction of a dam or a mining site, the rural community living there are displaced from their land and forced to move out. In India, it is mostly the Adivasis who suffer as the 'development' projects are meant to give material benefit to the urban middle class people. The poor Adivasis people are not even compensated properly. Similarly for the expansion of urban areas, the peasants living on the fringe areas of the city are forced to give up land. Sometimes there are SEZs that the government establishes to promote industrial and/or commercial activities. For that it needs a lot of land, and the farm lands are easy targets. The farmers are often forced to sell these lands and become dispossessed. The compensation that they get might be sufficient in the short run, but is not adequate to give them an alternative livelihood option in the long run.

Agrarian Crisis and Media

The crisis in agriculture sector in rural areas is severe. The problem is both for the land owning farmers- big or small, and also for the landless agricultural wage labourers. Profits are declining, market is ruthless, water scarcity becoming severe every passing decade, farmers committing suicide, rural people migrating to city in search of alternative livelihood *en masse*, and large-scale displacement occurring for industrialization etc. However, the mainstream electronic or print media does not focus enough on these issues. This reflects the elitist nature of the media who are controlled by big corporates. They ignore the stories of distress in India's country side, and the harmful impact of globalization. Rather, they keep busy in show-biz and promoting consumerism in various forms. However, there are some exceptions such as P. Sainath. He was the Editor of the rural affairs in *The Hindu* newspaper and had worked extensively on rural distress including studying drought in central India. It may be noted that not many other newspapers or TV channels have full

time news reporters or journalists covering the rural issues. As Sainath points out the media has failed to do its duty to speak on behalf of the voiceless.

 P. Sainath (1957-) (Winner of the prestigious **Ramon Magsaysay Award** in 2007)	P. Sainath's book *Everybody Loves a Good Drought: Stories from India's Poorest Districts* (2000) is a landmark contribution towards understanding rural problems- health, education, migration, indebtedness and the struggles of the poor. He also describes crisis in agriculture due to commercialisation and corporatisation of agriculture and global politics that has spelt the doom for Indian farmers driving them towards committing suicide in thousand every year. At the same time, it is the elites- the politicians, contractors, government offices who stand to gain out of the crisis as lot of money flows in apparently to mitigate the situation. However, as corruption and apathy is rampant, a long term solution to the problem is never found.	

Community and Gender Dimension

Crisis in rural areas does not affect everybody equally. As expected, those who are poor and powerless in the rural society- the Adivasis, OBCs and Dalits suffer more. As discussed, the small farmers who are mostly from non-Dalit 'lower-caste' communities also face the problem. Because of indebtedness, they lose the land and food-security; and become wage-labourers.

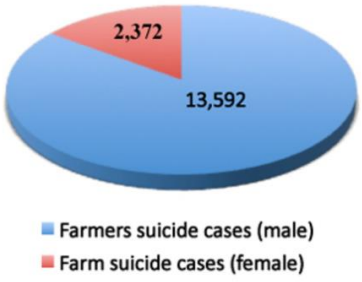


Figure 5.3: Gender and Farmer Suicide (2010)

Source: *Down to Earth* (4th July 2015)

The popular image of a farmer is a man, even though women play equally significant role in agriculture. Except ploughing, women perform all other farming activities. Therefore, women also face the brunt of the crisis. In fact, for women it becomes harder as the responsibility of managing the house with falling economic condition is with the women. When the male-head commits suicide, the widow had to struggle even more to make ends meet. When a woman farmer commits suicide it is sometimes not recognised as a farmer's death as the land-record is usually not in the name of the women. Therefore, when a woman-farmer commit suicide, police usually would not like to record it as farmer's suicide.

Women are also exploited as farm labourers. We have already discussed that in Chapter 4. When farm income is reduced, or when the husband commits suicide, the woman is left with very little option but to move out of the house and as wage labourers in the field of others or as domestic

help. This also happens when men migrate to cities or to other areas in search of wage-labour. Women alone find it difficult to manage the house. In addition to economic exploitation, there is also the danger of sexual exploitation in the village. When a women migrates along with husband to work as wage labourers, similar exploitative system waits for them there as well. Being poor and powerless, they suffer in silence.

To-Do-Activity: Watch Deepa Bhatia's *Nero's Guests* (2009) and discuss the links between globalization, neoliberalism and farmers' suicide in India.

5.2 Crisis in Education and Healthcare

Education in Rural India

In colonial times, education was a privilege of elite, upper caste, and middle class men. Moreover, modern education was limited only to the urban centres. Rural areas were deprived of such facilities. Even when it was made available, it was again mainly for the so-called upper-caste and men. The regressive practices of caste discrimination and untouchability coupled with patriarchal ways of thinking resulted in the majority of the population being excluded from formal education. Even after independence, schooling was not available to all, especially in rural areas. Though schools were opened steadily in rural areas, not all were going to school. Schooling was not free and poor people could not afford to go to school. Out of those who went to school, many were 'pushed out' (dropped out) for various reasons. Attempts to provide free and compulsory education to all could not be realised for a long time. Sixty-three years after independence, in 2010, education became a fundamental right for all Indians.

Savitribai Phule (1831-97)
Jotiba Phule (1827-90)

Savitribai Phule and Jotiba Phule were the pioneers in India to impart education to the masses. Jotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule believed that lack of education is the root of various social inequalities. When there were only a few schools during the mid-nineteenth century, this revolutionary couple from Pune opened the first school for girls in 1848. Savitribai would go to teach the girls who had enrolled despite rotten eggs, tomatoes, cow dung, and stones being hurled at her alongside abuses on her way to the school. The couple, along with some of their friends such as Ms. Fatima Sheikh, went on to establish many more schools and work for the emancipation of Shudras, Dalits and women.

Education and Development

"Let us pick up our books and our pens… [t]hey are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.", wrote Malala Yousafzai in her autobiographical book. The significance of education in the development of an individual as well as the society cannot be overstated. In *Development as Freedom,* Sen (1999) put forth the idea that freedom is both the means and ends of development. In simple words, development implies enhanced freedom for individuals. Various freedoms contribute not only to each other but also to individual and societal development.

Let us take the following example to try and understand how different kinds of freedoms strengthen and reinforce one another. Acquiring education helps one attain freedom from illiteracy. This opens up employment opportunities for an individual, which would also enable her/him to combat poverty, hunger and starvation. Increased food entitlements can protect from unnecessary morbidity and mortality. This is but one example of how one kind of freedom can initiate a chain reaction and enhance the quality of life in many ways. This can be illustrated by the following diagram.

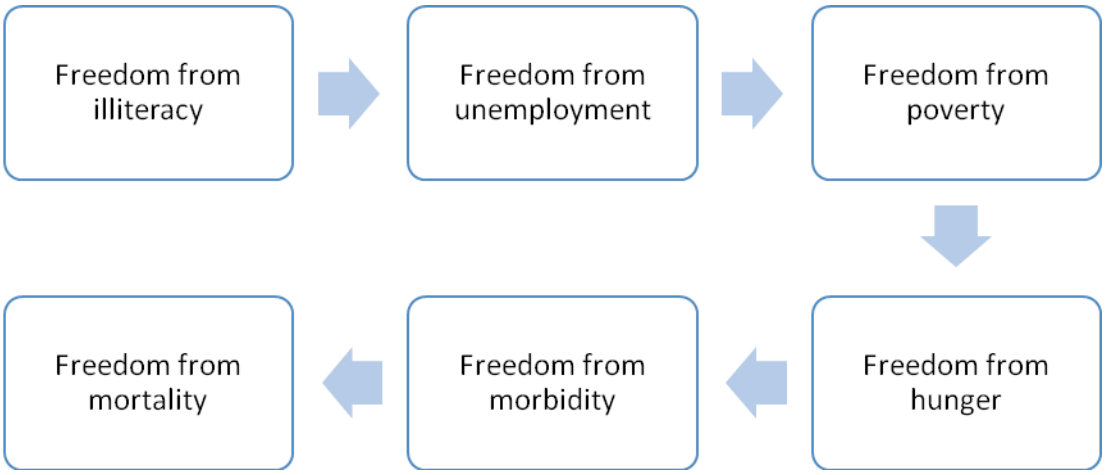


Figure 5.4 Freedoms and their Inter-connections

Lack of education is an unfreedom. In rural India, there are problems of access as well as quality. While the state of elementary education is dismal, opportunities of higher education are scarcely available. Given the gender inequality prevalent in our society, girls are less likely to be allowed to undertake higher education if it requires travelling to another city. This deprives girls and young women from expanding their capabilities to their full potential. Affordable and quality education is a right. Nobody must be excluded on the basis of gender, religion, caste, class, race, sexual orientation, or disability.

For instance, children from tribal communities face a number of difficulties even after they begin formal schooling, language barrier being only one of them. Annual dropout rates are seen to be

When Taliban took over her town situated in Swat Valley of Pakistan, several young girls like Malala could no longer go to school. **Malala Yousafzai**was shot in the head in October 2012 for asserting the right of girls to learn. In 2014, she became the world's youngest Nobel laureate at the age of 17. She continues to fight for universal and safe access to quality education for every girl.

higher than the national average for indigenous children and children of migrant labour. The challenge is to retain them in school and make schooling a constructive and life-changing experience for them so that they can go on to live a life without social and economic unfreedoms. The biggest task is to make the system accessible, inclusive, and affordable, especially for the disadvantaged sections of the society.

Startling Statistics

We shall refer to data from ASER 2019 to have a closer look at primary education in rural India. The early years ASER 2019 collected data on pre-schooling and schooling status of rural children in the age group 4 to 8. In addition, it explored four competencies: cognitive abilities, early language acquisition, early numeracy skills, social and emotional learning. The overall enrolment in the age group 4 to 8 was over 90% and increases with age. However, the findings with respect to age-appropriate skills were not encouraging. The following chart presents the gloomy picture.

What is ASER?

Established in 2008, Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Centre is an autonomous unit within Pratham, one of India's leading NGOs in the education sector. It releases a report on the state of schooling and learning in rural India every year. Go through the latest report to know more.

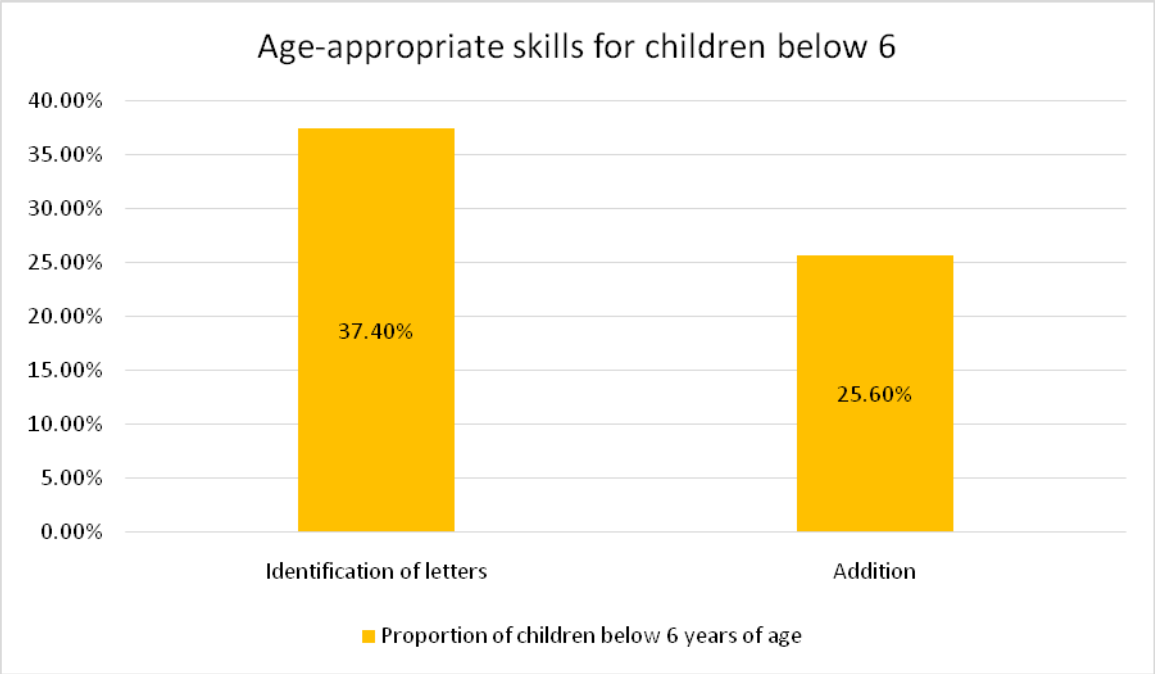


Figure 5.5 Age-appropriate Skills under 6 Years of Age

Source: ASER 2019

Barely 37.4% children below the age of six could identify letters, while a little above a quarter could perform basic addition.[1] Less than 35% children in class II could read a text meant for their juniors

[1] Nanda, P.K. (2020, January 15). Education system is failing kids in 4-8 age group: ASER. *LiveMint.* Retrieved from https://www.livemint.com/news/india/startling-learning-deficit-gender-gap-among-early-school-children-finds-study-11578999902575.html

one level below. Only half the students in class III could read a text meant for two levels lower. The wake-up call is loud and clear – a lot needs to be done for the middle and last benchers as well as absentees.

Why children used to drop out?

The Many Gaps

The survey discovered a correlation between higher education levels of mothers and the learning outcomes of children. Competencies of those children whose mothers have studied till class XI or above were better as compared to those children whose mothers were not literate. Educated mothers can pay more attention towards their children's academics, which has a positive impact on the latter. On the contrary, mothers who have to work on the field all day and are not educated themselves cannot do so.

Gender bias is apparent in terms of enrolment. It was also observed that more boys are enrolled in private institutions, while the enrolment of girls is higher in government institutions. The following figure portrays the higher enrolment of girls in government institutions.

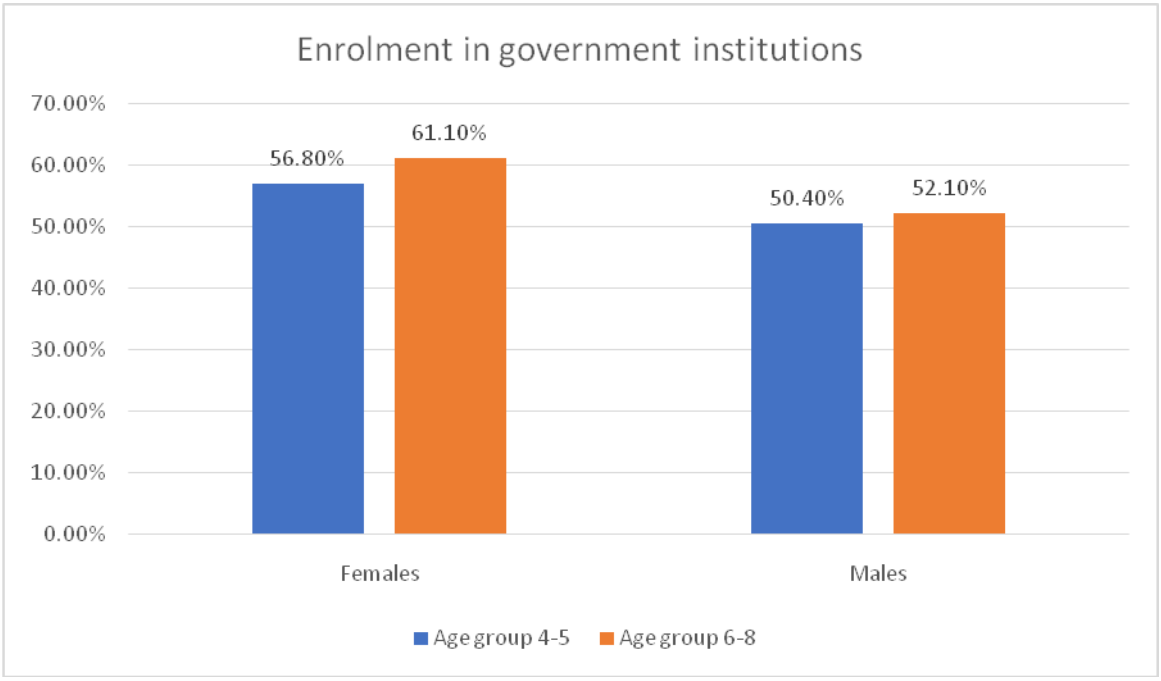


Figure 5.6 Enrolment in Government Institutions

Source: ASER 2019

The bias in enrolment is evident as in the age groups 4 to 5 as well as 6 to 8. In the former category, 56.8% girls as compared to 50.4% boys were enrolled in government schools/pre-schools. The gap was wider at about 9% in the latter category. The female enrolment in private schools or pre-schools stood at 43.2% as compared to 49.6% for males, indicating that nearly half of all the boys were studying in private institutions. This emerges from gender discrimination within the family. Boys are usually sent to private schools which are not only more expensive but also assumed to provide better quality of education. It is hoped that providing good education will help them secure a well-

paying job for supporting the family. On the contrary, girls are enrolled at government schools which charge little or no fees. The quality of education does not matter because they have to be married off at an early age. As we have also observed in chapter 4, such patriarchal attitudes lead to discrimination against girls and women in every sphere of life.

The Trap of Privatization

Education is a fundamental right for every child, which makes it a public good. However, the privatization of education converts it into a commodity such that only the highest bidder can access the cream of it. In urban areas, private schools have become an all-pervasive phenomenon. Only the poorest send their children to government schools - out of misery and not choice. Private schools have also made inroads in rural areas. Aspirations for English medium, lack of infrastructure, and low-quality teaching have triggered the shift to private schools for the middle and upper classes. These are being preferred over government schools despite causing financial burden for the family, as discussed in the earlier section on discrimination in enrolment. In addition, the issue of quality also keeps resurfacing. The ASER surveys also observed that five-year-olds from private schools performed better than their government school or anganwadi counterparts at basic language, math, and cognitive tasks. This raises serious questions about the quality of teaching in the latter.

The market-minded solution to the deteriorating state of government schools was to allow a free reign to private schools. With more and more of private schools coming up, lesser attention is paid towards improving the state of government schools, and the vicious circle perpetuates. The gap between the two keeps widening, with the former eating almost the entire share of the pie and leaving only crumbs for the latter.

Government Schemes

Samagra Shiksha and Midday Meal Scheme (MDMS) are large-scale government interventions. However, would the Midday Meal Scheme serve its purpose if Dalit students are made to eat separately, or if parents refuse to allow their children to eat food prepared by a Dalit woman? Social norms and practices often act as barriers for inclusive education and need to be tackled more carefully. Budget allocation towards education still falls short of the 6% mark that has been recommended by several experts and policymakers. Policy-making must be followed by effective implementation. Continuous teacher training, disbursement of salaries on time, and better infrastructure are other issues to be addressed.

The Case for a Common School System

The privatization of school education has also exacerbated social segregation. Elite schools have no place for the poor whereas children from elite families would never be sent to government schools. A common neighbourhood schooling system where children from various social classes and communities study together helps is fostering a democratic and egalitarian society. Students from privileged backgrounds are introduced to various other realities of life, while those from underprivileged backgrounds get equal access and opportunities for quality education. It can improve existing teaching and infrastructural facilities in schools on the one hand, and encourage greater interaction between various sections of the society on the other.

Until now, the focus has been only on the universalization of education, mainly on increasing enrolment. However, little attention has been paid towards improving the quality of primary education and making it inclusive, equitable and affordable. The draft National Education Policy (NEP) released in June 2019 mentioned that nearly five crore children in primary school lacked foundational reading and arithmetic skills.[2] There is a pressing need to redraft the school curriculum such that it brings all peers at par. New pedagogies must be invented so that the classroom becomes an equalizing rather than a hierarchizing space. This also calls for special emphasis on the learning outcomes of poor children, who are disadvantaged in terms of not only cultural capital but also food and nutrition.

We shall now turn towards the crisis in healthcare.

Ailing State of Healthcare

India has one of the lowest immunization rates and the highest infant mortality rates in the world. On an average, over 1,000 infants have been dying in a single Kota hospital since 2014; the same number of children died at a Gorakhpur hospital in 2017. The reasons have ranged from lack of proper infrastructure to low weight at birth, suffocation at birth, and infections. According to The State of the World's Children Report 2019, 8,82,000 children under the age of five die every year in India – the highest number in the world. Such tragic statistics are not surprising given that our public expenditure on health is lesser than that on education, hovering around a meagre 1% of GDP.

To-Do-Activity: Divide yourself into groups. Each group should take up a case study of the infant and child deaths in Gorakhpur, Kota, and Muzaffarpur. Also find out if there have been more such cases elsewhere. What were the causes? What was the response of the hospital administration and the government? What can be done to avert such tragedies? Present your findings in front of the class.

Malnutrition is one of the leading causes of infant and child mortality. We shall now look at the worrying indicators concerning malnutrition in India.

Table 5.3 Malnutrition among Children aged 0-4 in India (2013-18)

Source: The State of the World's Children Report 2019

	Stunted			Wasted		Overweight
	All	**Poorest 20%**	**Richest 20%**	**Severe**	**Moderate**	**Moderate and severe**
Proportion of children (0-4 years)	38%	51%	22%	8%	21%	2%

Clearly, all is not well. Nearly 38% of all children under the age of four years are found to be stunted. The class divide is apparent as more than half of the poorest 20% children are stunted, while the number is significantly lesser for the richest 20%. Even in terms of wasting, 8% of all children are

[2]Banerji, R. (2020, January 15). ASER 2019 report: A reworking of curriculum is urgently needed for the age band from four to eight. *The Indian Express.* Retrieved from https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/education-policy-india-schooling-6216711/

severely wasted whereas one in every five is moderately wasted. These result from inadequate nutritional intake. The proportion of overweight children is far lesser at 2%. The indicators would be more worrying for girls than boys for reasons you should be able to guess by now.

Government Schemes

Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)

ICDS is a nationwide programme launched in 1975 with the objective of providing health, nutrition, and education through local centres known as anganwadi. The target age group is 0 to 6. The services provided include supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-ups, and pre-school education. However, there have been major shortcomings in its implementation. Concerns range from low awareness and poor quality of services to irregularities in functioning. Paltry remunerations paid to anganwadi workers act as a disincentive. Rural areas face further constraints in terms of infrastructure and resources. These issues direct our attention towards a languishing public health system which needs an immediate check-up and treatment.

To-Do-Activity: Arrange a field trip to a local anganwadi. Spend a day there and pay a couple of more visits to understand how it functions. Talk to the anganwadi workers and helpers, auxiliary nurse-midwife, medical officer and any other staff members. You could also help them with their work. Write about your experiences in your diary and share what you learnt with the class.

National Rural Health Mission

Launched in 2005-06, the outlay during the first five years was under 0.2% of GDP (Dreze and Sen, 2013). Under the programme, every village was to be provided a trained female Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA). Its achievements include a decrease of 3% points in IMR during its initial five year period. Although it is now subsumed under National Health Mission (NHM), it continues to be under-funded with successive budgetary allocations.

Gender and Health

The health question cannot be divorced from the gender question. Health has never been accorded top priority in the agenda for development in India. This is reflected in the poor performance on health indicators, wherein India is at par with and often worse off than the poorest countries of the world, including those in sub-Saharan Africa. Indian women and children fare worse than their South Asian counterparts such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on many indicators such as immunization, infant mortality, undernourishment, and life expectancy.

The table below highlights the incidence of malnutrition among women in India.

Table 5.4 Malnutrition among Women in India (2016)

	Underweight (18+ years)	**Anaemic (15-49 years)**
Proportion of women	24%	51%

Source: The State of the World's Children Report 2019

Nearly one in every four adult women is underweight, while more than half the women in the age group of 15 to 49 suffer from anaemia. In rural areas, higher instances of women fasting for religious reasons also aggravate their nutritional deficiencies. Children of under-nourished mothers are more likely to contract similar deficiencies during childhood and their lifetime. Does such a large proportion of our women and children being malnourished not give a call for a public health emergency?

Menstrual Health

India is a country where the menstrual taboo continues to be practiced, all the more in rural areas. Mothers, grandmothers, and aunts do not allow menstruating girls and women to enter kitchens, temples and other sacred spaces because they are considered to be 'impure' during those days. This is also a product of a patriarchal mindset which tends to be perpetuated by women themselves.

Menstrual hygiene continues to be a problem in rural areas. Since sanitary napkins are usually not affordable, rural women might tend to use cotton rags or other cheaper and reusable alternatives. There are numerous instances of adolescent young girls being unable to attend school while menstruating because of lack of access to women's toilets in the school premises. Besides, there is little awareness about PCOD and other such disorders which are estimated to affect one in every ten women. The following figures reveal the crisis in menstrual health in India.

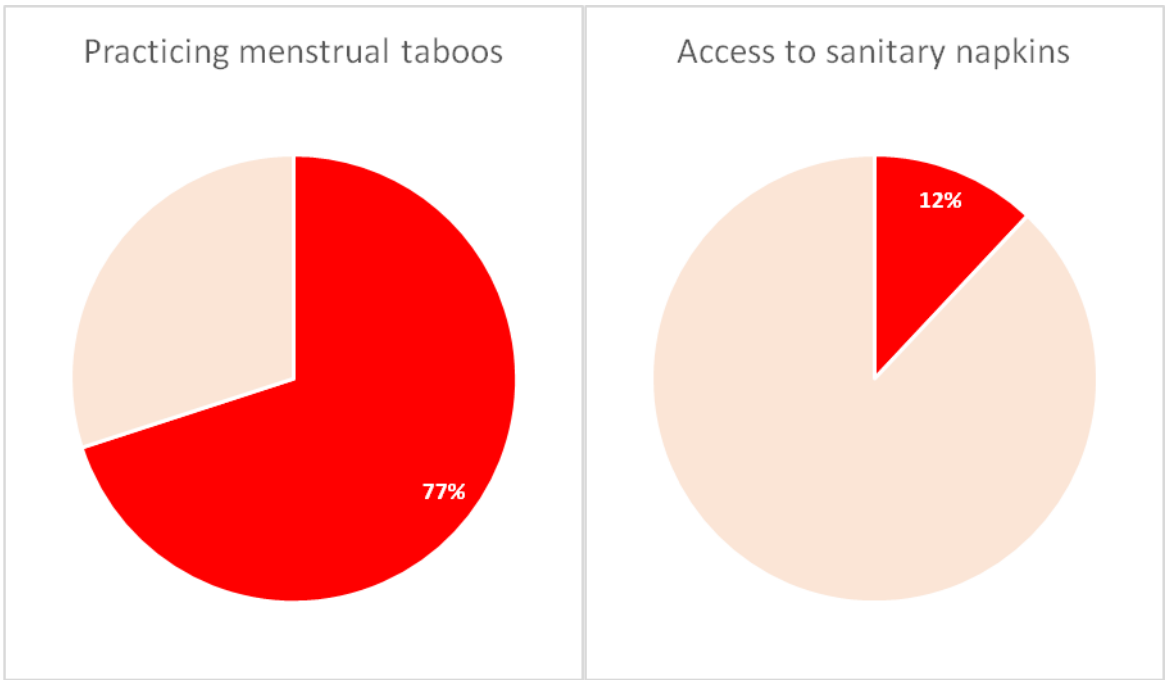


Figure 5.7 Menstrual Health in India (2016)

According to a study by Van Eijk et al. (2016), 77% adolescent girls are subjected to isolation or restrictions in entering kitchens or religious areas while menstruating. Out of the 355 million menstruating girls and women, only 12% have access to sanitary napkins. The rest rely on alternatives which might not necessarily be hygienic. In addition, more than half the adolescent girls in India are not aware of menstruation before their first menstrual cycle begins.

An earlier report by Dasra released in 2015 found that 23% girls drop out of school once they reach puberty. It is essential that rural schools have separate toilet facilities for women, as well as functioning sanitary napkin dispensers for young girls. There must be regular visits by gynaecologists in schools. Sex education along with menstrual awareness must be made an indispensable part of the school curriculum so that males as well as females can better understand and be sensitized about their biological differences. This awareness right from adolescence goes a long way in being able to reduce instances of sexual violence in society.

Equally important is awareness about **sexual and reproductive rights and health.** Reproductive health involves but is not limited to the ability to take informed decisions regarding fertility, and to be secured against sexually transmitted infections. In that sense, it is not only a women's issue. However, women's reproductive health is central to issues such as family planning and the use of contraceptives, right to abortion, safe sexual intercourse, and motherhood by choice. Thus, it is essential that we recognize the broad ambit of reproductive health including sexual rights of women as a larger human rights issue.

Figure 5.8 Components of Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Health (SRHR)
Adapted from Starrs et al (2018)

It must be recognized that the domain of gender and health is wide. It encompasses the broad and diverse needs of various groups such as adolescents (aged 10-19), adults aged above 50, sexual minorities, sex workers, people with disabilities, indigenous people and other marginalized communities as well as the socio-economically disadvantaged. In our country where child marriages still occur, homosexuality is decriminalized but not yet destigmatized, sex and sexuality education is

far from mainstream, much has to be done for improving the state of sexual and reproductive health.

PMJAY – Is insurance the panacea?

While we reiterate the problems of awareness, access, and quality of public healthcare, the onus of improving its infrastructure lies upon the welfare state. However, there are many pitfalls of shifting the burden on the private sector mainly through insurance schemes. Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (PMJAY) under Ayushman Bharat (National Health Protection Mission) is largely a step in that direction. Expected to reach out to 10 crore families or half a billion beneficiaries, PMJAY aims to provide an annual health insurance cover of five lakh rupees to each family.

An insurance-oriented approach tends to be more beneficial for the corporate sector rather than for individuals. Private health insurance industry as well as private hospitals are big gainers. The aim of universalizing healthcare and providing quality services cannot be left to the whims and fancies of private players because there is a clear conflict of interests. Corporate interests lie in what is most lucrative and profitable instead of catering to the needs of the poorest of the poor. There is an urgent need for the state to return to the driver's seat to steer human development through an urgent and renewed focus on education and healthcare. Higher public expenditure on these essential services and a thorough overhaul of the existing infrastructure, along with sound policymaking and implementation are immediate steps required for redressal.

5.3 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Unlike Education and health issues, the problem of safe and clean drinking water does not receive that much attention. Still lesser importance is given to the issues of sanitation and hygiene. In rural India, unlike in cities, the problem of drinking water is considered as an individual problem to solved in personal capacities. Tube-wells, bore-wells, ponds, rivers etc were seen as the sources of water for drinking and sanitation activities. So far as farm agriculture is concerned, except for building dams and canals in some areas, vast majority of the country's agricultural fields were left to be rain-fed, or farmers had to take personal efforts for irrigation.

The fact that availability of water for irrigation or for personal drinking and sanitation had deep connection with economic development, health and even education was not realised, or hardly ever emphasised. Even decades after independence, the agricultural policy was inadequate to take care of the irrigation aspect; drinking water was hardly provided by the state, lack of sanitation facility was seen as an old tradition and a personal choice. In this chapter, therefore, we shall focus on these neglected issues, and try to understand various aspects of the problem.

Safe drinking water is something that is too basic for human health and well-being. Yet, majority of the people have not been able to have easy access to that. This leads to ill-health is only part of the problem. Ill-health leads to many other disadvantages- loss of opportunities and even loss of life. The problem is also quite gendered in nature. Drinking water remains an issue to be dealt with mostly by women. They bring water from wells, or other common sources. In water-scarce areas, women spend several hours in a day to collect drinking water; sometimes they have to walk up to a few miles to collect water and carry home on their heads. This is too strenuous and time consuming, and leaves very less time for doing other household chores. In some instances, men might help in

getting drinking water, but for that they use bicycles or bikes to carry water. Carrying water on the head or in the hand is seen as a feminine work.

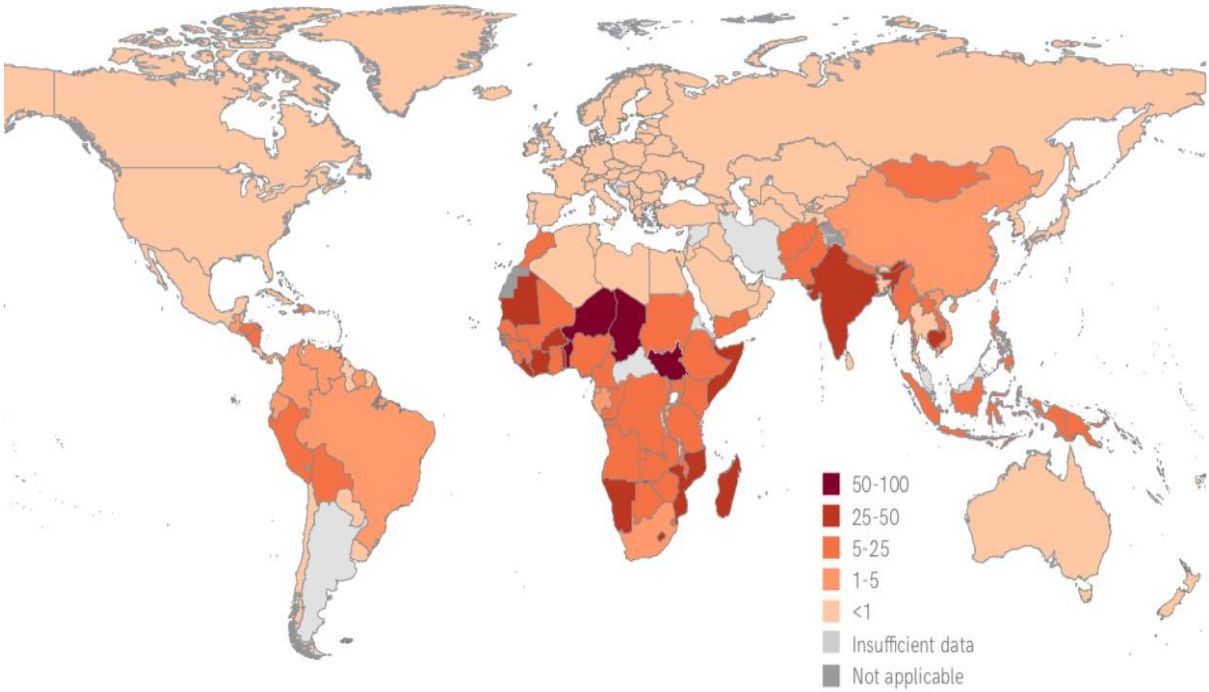


Figure 5.9 Rate of Open Defecation in the World
Source: World Health Organization (2019)

Hygiene is a common problem in India in general; and rural India is no exception. As one enters into many villages in different parts of India, one can see so much of filth lying all around. The approach road itself would not be clean, and various kinds of discarded objects would be found lying all along the roads inside the villages, and also around the house. That makes the surrounding look ugly, smelly and it is one of the main reasons for spread of various types of diseases. Apart from community hygiene, personal hygiene is also neglected, but is hardly a matter of policy concern.

Sanitation issue is important as a highly significant number of people in rural India do not use toilet. They go for open defecation. In some areas, shortage of water may be the reason, but dry latrines may be an option. In other areas, open defecation is practiced even if water is available. Then what explains peoples' resistance to use of toilets (or preference for going for open defecation)? Moreover, people who use toilets, do they clean them regularly. This makes the toilet a source of infection of various diseases. And to talk about public toilets- why are they invariably unclean? All these point towards a larger cultural problem, and failure/absence of policies related to sanitation facilities and behaviour.

Why WASH is important for rural India?

Health is closely related to availability of good quality and quantity of water for drinking, and for maintaining personal hygiene. Unfortunately, with increasing population, industrialization and urbanization, water is becoming scarcer for the rural areas. More and more water is being diverted for industrial purposes, and to urban areas. In rural areas, agriculture has also become

commercialised as more farmers are cultivating water-intensive cash-crops. This leaves less water for personal use or for other daily activities. Underground water table is also reducing and making water not only scarce but also costly.

Poor sanitation and hygiene is linked to our community health. Our habit of spitting everywhere, defecating in open, throwing garbage indiscriminately that emits foul smell as it degenerates and becomes the breeding ground for mosquitoes and bacteria etc are responsible for spread of communicable diseases of various kinds. Stay dogs and pigs roaming around is a common scene in the countryside. Not washing hands properly before taking food is also another behavioural aspect that leads to spread of diseases. Thus from malaria, diarrhoea/dysentery, typhoid, many types of skin diseases, intestine infections and more serious diseases such as plague are related to poor hygienic conditions. Plague, for example, had killed millions in the rural country side as well as in cities during colonial times primarily because of poor sanitary conditions.

Figure 5.10 Impact of Poor Sanitation Facility

The poor hygiene and sanitation practices not only affects health, but also are indications of our poor state of mind and bad social learning. It is not only about poverty, it is also about a poor community culture. We throw garbage everywhere and do not take the responsibility of cleaning them up. We expect that someone else will clean it. Often we keep our house clean and throw garbage just outside the home in public places. In the aspect of cleanliness, our rural society lags far behind other countries, especially the Western and East Asian nations.

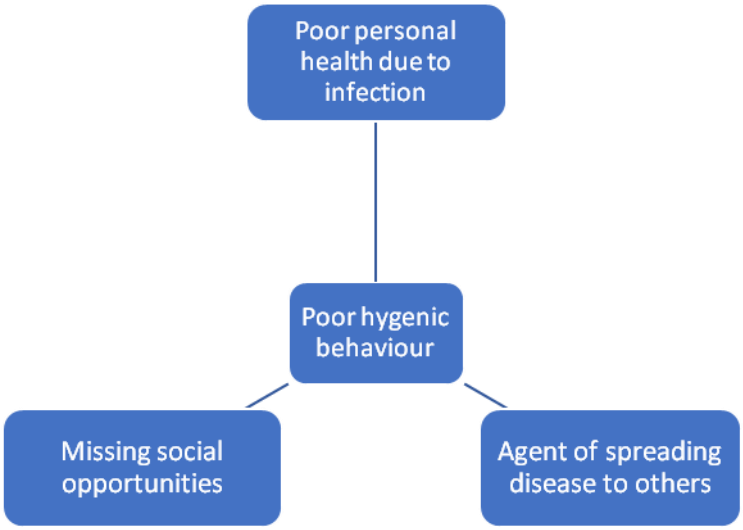


Figure 5.11 Impact of Poor Sanitation Behaviour

Mahatma Gandhi was very much concerned about this lack of civilised behaviour among the Indians. We may quote from one of his writings:

> "If we approach any village, the first thing that we encounter is the dunghill . . . On entering the village, we find little difference between the approach and what is within the village. Here too there is dirt on the roads. . . If a traveller who is unfamiliar with these parts comes across this state of affairs, he will not be able to differentiate between dunghill and the residential parts. As a matter of fact, there is not much of a difference between the two" (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 1970; p. 445).

Gandhi detested people's habit of making the surrounding unclean and unhealthy. Wherever he went, he not only advised people to keep the environment clean, but himself would pick up a broom and a basket and start cleaning the habitation areas. In another context, he mentions:

> "There is no gainsaying the fact that our villager betrays a woeful ignorance of even the rudiments of village sanitation. One could deplore the race prejudice amongst the South African Europeans, but their attempts to keep their town healthy and sanitary were heroic and worthy of imitation" (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 1969, p. 76).

M.K. Gandhi

(1869-1948)

A few quotations from M.K. Gandhi about rural sanitation:

1. Sanitation is more important than independence
2. A lavatory must be as clean as a drawing room
3. An ideal village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation…The very first problem the village worker will solve is its sanitation
4. Thoughtless ignorant men and women for natural functions use the sacred banks of the river where they are supposed to sit in quiet contemplation and find God. They violate religion, science and the laws of sanitation

Therefore, it is extremely important that we change our practice and culture regarding water, sanitation and hygiene. Let us examine these issues in some more details in rural areas.

Water Issues in Rural Areas

Population of India has been increasing steadily, and correspondingly there is strain on natural resources available for sustenance of life and livelihood. Water is one such resource that is facing acute crisis in many parts of the country, especially the countryside. The problem of water crisis in rural areas does not get enough attention of media or the elite policy makers, even though it is persisting since decades.

Of the various usage of water, the most important is the availability of safe or potable drinking water. The sources of such water is usually the traditional wells, ponds and rivers. Tube-wells or bore-wells are also common in may villages where underground water is easily available. However, not all these sources provide safe drinking water. Water from river, pond or even wells need to be boiled to consume. Water from tube-wells and borewells generally is safe, but contamination of underground water due to various industrial activities in some areas make that unsafe for drinking.
There are many water scarce areas in our country. For example, the people in Ladakh, many parts of Punjab and the desert areas of Rajasthan, Kutch area in Gujarat, most part of the Deccan plateau in central India, and some part of Tamilnadu are known to face drinking water shortage in most part of the year, especially during the summer months. People travel a few hundred meters to a few kilometres to collect drinking water. In some areas the state supplies drinking water through water-tankers which are usually not available daily. It may be once or twice in a week. In some other parts, private water tankers supply water to the village households. Supplying potable water through water-pipes has been implemented only in a very limited number of villages.

Apart from drinking, water is also crucial for other household consumption such as cooking, bathing, cleaning utensils, washing clothes etc. Moreover, the need of cattle also puts enormous pressure on the rural households. In water scarce areas, people struggle a lot to maintain their own lives as well as those of the live-stocks that are essential for agricultural purposes. Using toilets is again linked to water availability; else open defecation becomes the norm. During prolonged drought or droughts in successive years people suffer extreme difficulties that leads to loss of economic activity, loss of livestock and large-scale rural outward (distressed) migration.

Sanitation and Hygiene in Rural India

People in rural areas would throw kitchen wastes just outside the house, on another side there would be cow-dung. The smell of decomposing biodegradable waste would be filling the air.

Sanitation and hygienic practices of rural India may be understood in two aspects- personal hygiene and environmental hygiene. The problems of personal hygiene may be underscored as follows:

1. People have a habit of spitting anywhere and everywhere. When they chew betel-nut or tobacco leaves, they spit even more. Corners of the houses, office rooms, hospitals rooms are full of brown-red stains due to this spitting.
2. Sneezing and coughing without covering face with hand, elbow or a piece of cloth.

3.Clearing the runny nose anywhere with bare hands and smearing it on the walls or on their own clothes.
4.Open defecation near the house and around the habitation.
5.Eating without washing hands properly.
6.Walking bare-feet through infected areas and not washing properly before entering the house.

The problems with environmental (domestic and community level) hygiene may be mentioned as follows:

1.Improper storage of food- cooked or uncooked, in unhygienic conditions.
2.Improper disposal of waste materials- solid and liquid, around the dwelling unit.
3.Construction of house without much ventilation facility, and cooking inside those houses leads to constant exposure to smoke.
4.Kitchen often infested with rodents, flies and arthropods.
5.Ponds are used for bathing, washing clothes, and also for other household usage. In many cases same ponds are also used to bathe the domestic animals.
6.Improper sewerage and drainage system within/around the house and in the whole village.
7.Living together with cattle or goats etc.

All these unhygienic condition leads to various kinds of gastrointestinal, respiratory and skin diseases. It is estimated that more than two million people suffer from or die of diarrhoea, gastroenteritis, hook-worm or ring-worm infestation, leprosy, scabies or ring worm, lice in the body and so on. Now that the whole world is scared of COVID-19, we are being taught how to sneeze and cough in public or in private to minimise its transmission to others- by covering the face with both palms or raising the elbow and then wiping or washing the palms. Handwash is also another lesson that is still being taught to the general public in rural areas- through schools or other voluntary organizations working in rural health sector.

Sant Gadge Baba (also called Sant Gadge Maharaj) (1876-1956) was a mendicant-saint and social reformer of Maharashtra who always emphasised on cleanliness. He would always carry a broom and go to villages. Upon reaching the village, he would start cleaning the streets, gutters, and then only would receive greetings from the people. Through *bhajan* and *kirtan* and religious sermons, he would tell people the importance of cleanliness, and to give up other social evils such as alcoholism etc. He had close association with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and they appreciated each other for the respective contributions towards reforming the society. Government of Maharashtra has initiated Sant Gadge Baba Gram Swachhata Abhiyan (SGB Village Cleanliness Campaign) Award since the year 2001 that gives cash incentives to those villages which maintain good public hygiene and sanitation.

One may like to believe that all these are due to poverty in rural areas. However, that is not true. More than poverty, it is the cultural practice that may be held responsible. Not all poor people behave the same way across the world. It is the cultural habits that shapes what we perceive as clean and hygienic. People who are not poor in rural areas do not necessarily maintain good sanitation personally or around their houses. Many people do not build latrines even if they are financially capable as they think toilet is 'polluting'. They will need to change clothes to go to toilet

and change again after using it. Cleaning toilet is neglected and it is done irregularly, that too only by women/girls of the household or by a 'lower-caste' person. In a large part of India, cleaning filth and dirt is seen as a lowly job to be performed by 'low-caste' people. Toilets in public places such as bus-stands, railways or in city localities are very filthy and stinky. These are not necessarily used by poor or uneducated people.

Many of the religious places are very dirty even though these places are considered as sacred. Most of our traditional religious towns/cities are very unclean. The example of river Ganga may be brought to our attention. So many people consider it as a sacred river and take bath daily, but it has become filthy and unfit for bathing etc. due to various kinds of polluting agents entering it waterbody. People dump all sorts of garbage into the river including the bio-degradable *puja* items, dead-body not burnt properly are thrown into the river-water, and city-sewerage and industrial effluents are opened directly into its body. So many rivers in the cities in India have become dirty sewerage pools because of this practice.

Thankfully, not all the places in rural India is same culturally or otherwise. There are some areas where cleanliness is maintained properly. Many rural areas in South India are considered to be better in terms of the sanitation behaviour than the North Indian counter-parts. The villages in the North Eastern parts are also supposed to be better in terms of hygiene and sanitation habits. One can hope to learn best practices from different parts of the country. There are also other villages which have changed their cleanliness status through local community initiatives. One can always hope to see more and more cleaner and healthier villages in India soon.

Mawlynnong in a small village in the East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya, about one hundred kilometres from the capital Shillong. Inhabited by the Khasi people, it is known for its cleanliness. In 2003, it was voted as the "Cleanest village in Asia" by the travel magazine- *Discover India*; and again in 2005 as "Cleanest village of India". Here, there are waste baskets everywhere; the waste is collected and segregated daily and converted into manure. The villagers are required to participate in community cleaning activities. Use of plastics is banned, and rainwater harvesting is encouraged. Smoking is also banned in this village.

Gender and Caste dimension of WASH

Water crisis may be distressing for everybody in general, but a closer examination would reveal that it has different kinds of impact on different set(s) of people. A gender analysis would reveal that, women are worst sufferers if there is water crisis. This is because it is women who are primarily responsible for managing water when it comes to the household use. Collecting drinking water is generally women's responsibility. Therefore women carrying pitchers etc. and going to or coming back from collecting water, is a common sight in the rural areas. Sometimes they spend a significant amount to time in a day to go and collect water when the source is too far, or when they have to wait in long queues to collect it. Other household related responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning etc also needs water, and women again take that burden. In case of sanitation needs, it is also women's responsibility to store water in bathroom or in toilet so that other household members would be able to use it. At the same time, it is not women, but men who take major decisions regarding water and its distribution. It is also men who are trained in the technical know-how, for example maintaining/repairing tube-wells etc, and that makes women dependent on men for water availability.

Water availability is linked to girls' attending schools regularly in rural areas. Many girls during their school going age take part in taking care of many household responsibility including collecting water from various sources. If water is available through a tap or just outside the house from a tube-well, then it is far easy for them to collect water for the family and then attend school regularly.

Next to household work, menstruation is the biggest impediment for girls in attending school. As per the report of WaterAid, girls in India miss about 20% of school in a year. In rural areas, menstruation is mostly treated as a social taboo during which girls/women face various kinds of household restrictions and inconveniences. First of all, girls hardly know about the biological process of menstruation and how to handle it as nobody talks to them during their pre-pubertal age. What they come to know about it from mother or other female relatives is mostly traditional cultural ideas and mostly unscientific. For example they are restricted not to move around, not to eat certain type of foods and so on. Sometimes the menstruating girls are made to stay in a separate room, which sometimes may be part of the cattle shed. The way menstrual flow is managed is also problematic from sanitation point of view. Clean clothes or sanitary napkins are usually not available, and since it is a taboo, all the menstruation related activities are supposed to be done secretively away from the sight of men.

Availability of water and toilet, and sanitary facility are essential for women's health, dignity and mobility. Some state governments make free sanitary napkins available for girls so that they can attend schools during that period. Earlier, more number of girls used to drop-out of school after onset of puberty for these reasons.

Now let's consider cooking as a household activity. Most of the women cook at home under unhealthy conditions. When clean cooking fuel is not available, they cook by using cow-dung cake, firewood, coal, or kerosene stove etc. Especially during rainy season, when dry fuel is not easily available, or it is not possible to cook outside, women cook food inside the house that has hardly any smoke-exhaust option. With small or no window at all, they cook under extremely unhealthy condition and suffer from various respiratory problems caused by exposure to excessive smoke.

Similar to gender, caste also plays a role in maintaining an unequal distribution of water across caste. In a multi-caste village, usually the best water bodies are controlled and used by so-called upper-castes. The so-called lower-castes used to be denied access to ponds or wells. There would be different ponds and wells for lower-castes. We know that in a caste ridden society, the so-called untouchables were denied direct access to wells. Someone from the 'touchable' caste would draw water for them from the well and pour into the pots from a height. When there are more than one wells, the well that give better water are reserved for the dominant section, and the wells with less water or with bad quality water will be for the 'lower-castes'. Same is true about ponds. The better ones are for the 'upper-castes'. In case the water is distributed through water pipes from an overhead community tank, then the location of the water-tank is usually where the upper-caste households are concentrated. This gives the powerful section more water than the lower-castes who are located at the end of the village or at a distance from the 'main' settlement.

When it comes to sanitation practices, it is the lower castes who used to clean the toilets of the upper-caste households. When there was no safety latrine or flush toilets, only certain Dalit castes

performed the “manual scavenging”. They would collect the excreta in baskets and then carry it over the head to throw it somewhere else. Even today, such practices exist in some urban localities. The sanitation workers in municipalities almost all are from the Dalit communities. It is a common occurence that the sanitation workers are dying while cleaning the sewers or gutter in cities as they are working under extremely dangerous condition without using any protecting gear. Similarly, in rural areas, the cleaning activities are forced upon the ‘lower-castes’ as part of the traditional duty. Cleaning the streets, cleaning toilets of upper-castes or community toilets, and removing dead animals etc. are all done by the ‘lower-castes’. These castes also are duty bound to clean the ‘upper-caste’ houses in case of ritually polluting events such as death or child-birth etc.

Bezwada Wilson (1966-) is relentlessly working for the abolition of manual scavenging. Even though manual scavenging has been declared illegal since 1993, most of the places the practice continues including in formal organizations such as the railways or various municipality authorities. His organization Safai Kamgar Andolan (SKA, or Sanitation Workers’ Movement) has been demanding rights and dignity for the sanitation workers who work under extremely filthy and dangerous working condition. His work has been recognised the world over, and he was awarded the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2016.

Government Initiatives regarding WASH

Needless to say, the governments after 1947 did not focus enough on the WASH sector for rural areas. Gandhi’s emphasis on rural sanitation was not priority for any government after 1947. By 1986, some major schemes were brought in to deal with that. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) was given the charge of rural sanitation. Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP 1986) was launched to facilitate constructing individual household level toilets, community toilets, and toilets in schools and anganwadis. More than four million toilets were built under this programme in 11 years, but that was obviously not enough for a huge population in India.

The next major intervention in this sector was the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) (also known as Total Sanitation Campaign) that was initiated in 1999 by the central government. Under this scheme, emphasis was laid to accelerate the sanitation campaign to build individual and community toilets, and an emphasis was laid to make villages open defecation free (ODF). In 2005, under NBA, Nirmal Gram Puraskar (clean village award) was announced to reward those villages which had achieved total sanitation and hygiene. The target of NBA was to make India ODF by 2022. However till 2014 only about 38% of the households had toilets.

On 2nd October, 2014, on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday, the Central Government of India announced Swacch Bharat Mission (SBM) to achieve total sanitation for India by 2020. As per this scheme, special emphasis was laid on the rural areas; so the campaign was called SBM- Gramin [Clean India Mission- Village]. Within five years, that is by 2nd October, 2019, again by the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, SBM-G was able to meet its target. The Government website claims that during this period, 102.8 million toilets were constructed making 6,03,175 villages open defecation free. It shows a great success, but the whether it has met the objectives need to be critically evaluated carefully.

The critiques point out that the claims are misleading as the definition of ODF is a bit tricky. If a village has 70% or more individual household latrines (IHHL), then it may be *self*-declared by the Panchayat as ODF. That means that the number of toilets are more than 70% in that village, though practically the village may not be open defecation free. Moreover, the number of toilets that was to be built was based on a database on the basis of a survey conducted in 2012. By that time toilet subsidy was given for the below-poverty-line (BPL) families who were now excluded from the new scheme as it is assumed that they have toilets. Thus the new toilets were built for those BPL households who did not avail the scheme earlier. The above-poverty-line (APL) households are supposed to build their own toilets. We know that BPL-APL list are full of exclusions, and not all APL households have sufficient means for constructing toilets on their own. That means on paper all household have toilets, but in reality, there still many household who have to build toilets.

For a substantive discussion on this you may see the analysis by Prof Santosh Mehrotra at https://thewire.in/government/is-india-really-96-open-defecation-free.

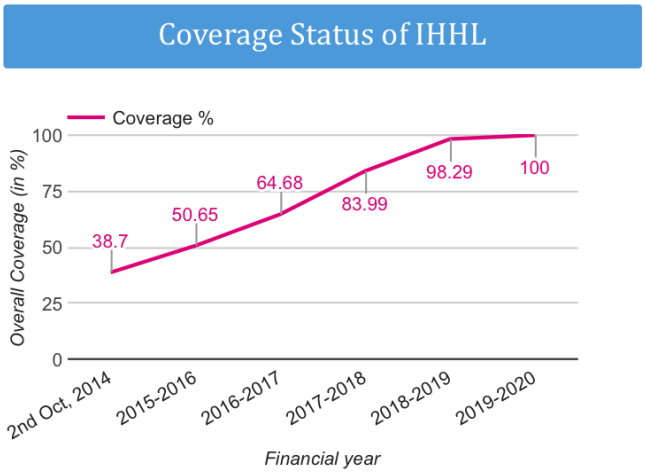


Figure 5.12 Toilets Built during SBM (2014-2019)

Source**:** Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of India, (http://sbm.gov.in/sbmreport/Home.aspx; Retrieved 22nd March, 2020)

The next big target to achieved is to ensure that people who have toilets are actually using them. Even if toilets are built, people in rural areas do not use them for various reasons. Whether BPL or APL, the attitude remains more or less the same. SBM-Gramin hardly placed any emphasis on behavioural change among the rural masses. This behaviour may be due to lack of water, design/location of the toilet, or hesitation to clean the toilets etc. Among the Hindus, toilet is also a site that causes ritual pollution. One gets impure if s/he goes to toilet or touches anything inside the toilet. Then s/he has to take bath to purify herself/himself. So this is another reason for which people would hesitate to use it, and then clean it. Unless that belief and behaviour changes, rural India would be far away from becoming clean and healthy.

Non-Governmental Initiative for WASH

There are many non-government organizations (NGOs) working in the WASH sector in India, but we will restrict our discussion to a few large transnational non-governmental organizations. United Nations (UN-Water), UNICEF, WHO and WaterAid etc. are a few of the big organizations that have

contributed heavily towards making the world a better place to live by dealing with drinking water crisis and health related problems due to poor sanitation and hygiene.

The concern of these organizations is coming out of the fact that water scarcity and poor sanitation is seriously affecting peoples' health, livelihood opportunities and even educational achievement. As we move ahead in time, by 2050, water shortage and hunger would be even more widespread if the natural resources are not preserved and used sustainably.

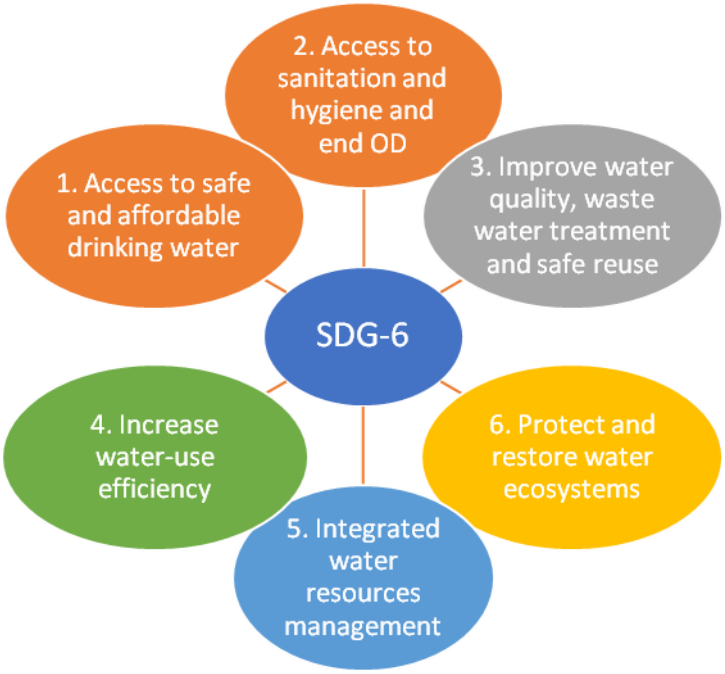


Figure 5.13 Sustainable Development Goal 6

Source: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation

In September 2015, all the 193 members of the United Nations agreed to bring a significant change in the life of people by accepting the resolution *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The Agenda 2030 is also known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2030) that would ensure development of all in various aspects- economic, social and environmental. Out of the 17 SDGs, the 6th goal is on "Clean Water and Sanitation". The focus is not only on providing safe drinking water and sanitation facility to *all*, but also to preserve waste water treatment, reuse of water and preserve the water-ecosystem.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Some Facts and Figures related to WASH

1. 3 in 10 people lack access to safely managed drinking water services and 6 in 10 people lack access to safely managed sanitation facilities.
2. Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80 per cent of households without access to water on premises.
3. Water scarcity affects more than 40 per cent of the global population and is projected to rise. Over 1.7 billion people are currently living in river basins where water use exceeds recharge.
4. 2.4 billion people lack access to basic sanitation services, such as toilets or latrines
5. At least 892 million people continue to practice open defecation.

6. Each day, nearly 1,000 children die due to preventable water and sanitation-related diarrheal diseases
7. More than 80 per cent of wastewater resulting from human activities is discharged into rivers or sea without any pollution removal

The Un has fixed the following targets related to WASH (SDG-6) to be met by 2030. Some of them are mentioned below:

1. By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
2. By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
3. By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally
4. By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity
5. By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate
6. By 2030, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes

(Source: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/)

These non-governmental organizations are also closely associated with the governments of various countries including India. According to their strategy, to make potable water available to all, a sustainable plan needs to be chalked out. For sanitation and hygiene, emphasis should be laid not only on building toilets but also on peoples' socio-cultural life. Unfortunately, the SBM initiated by the Government of India focussed only on making the toilet infrastructure, but very little on the Social and Behavioural Communication and Change(SBCC). That is a major difference between India and Bangladesh if we would like to compare. In Bangladesh, very less people are going for open defecation than in India, as peoples' ideas and behaviour regarding defecation has been changed through sustained campaign and community participation. India needs to learn that too.

UNICEF India had issued a series of videos "Take Poo to the Loo" to sensitise the public about the importance of using the loo (toilet). More efforts in this regard will help in changing the perception of people about importance of using toilets and maintaining personal and community hygiene for greater good of all.

One can read further on this from loo2poo.com.

Figure 5.14 UNICEF Campaign for Open Defecation Free India
(Source: Youtube)

To-Do-Activity: Watch the film Q2P (2006), a movie on sanitation in India by Paromita Vohra. Though it is based on the condition of toilets in the city, it will help you to understand sanitation issue from a sociological perspective. It reflects the caste and gender dimension very well. Discuss how different and/or similar are the situation in rural areas.

5.4 Rural Aspiration

Rural India is not static. With time, it has also changed. With the coming of the British to India, the ideas of modernity started to influence Indian society. The rural part was initially late to respond to modern ideas and institutions, but gathered momentum soon after independence. The systems of governance that united India, and the projects of "development" initiated by the state led to integration of rural into the urban, and sharing of common values about the idea of 'progress' around a new nation.

After independence from colonial rule, urbanization process gathered momentum. Towns and cities started to expand and grow in intensity. New government offices, and residential areas were constructed; schools, colleges and universities were established. Doctors, engineers, bureaucrats and other technocrats started shaping India's destiny. The influence of the urban life also influenced the rural society. The villages started getting transformed, slowly but steadily. Modern schools came into existence in villages, and people started to migrate to cities for getting higher education and jobs. Modern health care facilities were introduced along with universal vaccination programme. Newspaper, radio and television started making its presence felt in rural areas in subsequent decades.

Westernization: In 1950s, sociologist M.N. Srinivas introduced the concept "westernization" to describe a process of social change in Indian society that was adopting to new Western values and life-styles. People started thinking differently the way they think about their tradition values, as well as in adopting new types of clothing, food, and other material products related to Western society. Adoption of science and technology for various purposes in life also is part of this process of social change. At the level of ideas or values, people started to become more secular, and adopted new systems of governance and administration.

As M.N. Srinivas pointed out westernization was a major social process that gave birth to middle class, and it changed the mode of consumption. People valued western and urban way of life and by 1980s, many people has started migrating to cities for a better life. The privileged upper sections of the village were the first to take modern education, move to cities, take up modern jobs and enjoy a

new materially rich life. Modern clothing, vehicles, concrete houses, electrical and electronic gadgets became part of life. They became part of the middle class in towns and cities.

With the neoliberal turn, aspiration of the urban middle class increased, so also the consumption of material objects and non-material ideas. With better paying jobs, came housing in high rising buildings, designer clothes, new cars, electronic gadgets and foreign holiday trips etc.

It is a common cultural perception that the rural people are simple and they are content with whatever little they have. In movies they are typically portrayed as simpletons, and clueless idea about use of technology. In popular understanding, they do not have much aspiration, and are averse to change. However, this assumption is not necessarily true. First of all, people in rural areas are not totally cut off from the urban. Through various means, they are interconnected. Thus, whatever change happens in urban areas, also affects the rural social world. Many people in urban India still have their connections intact with the rural society from which they have migrated. Their old parents live, or they still have land that they cultivate as absentee land-owners through share-croppers. “I am going to my village” is still heard from many urban dwellers; they frequently visit the villages, especially during important rituals and meet relatives and friends. Relationships are renewed and maintained.

The village people are not only connected to the urban world, they also often desire to adapt certain aspects of that life. They do want better roads, better houses (concrete houses), motor vehicles, electronic gadgets and so on. In not so recent past many of them had radios, cycles and watches as consumables. Now many of them have motor bikes, most of them have mobiles and smartphones. Cars are also easily spotted in many villages, indicating there are a certain section of the population who are able to maintain a middle class life style in those villages. People across caste and community want a more middle class life style, although not everybody have the means to attain that. Income inequality is clearly visible in rural areas as one can also see in urban areas.

All the transformation in rural India mentioned above may be understood in terms of changes in various social and economic aspects. Some of these are discussed below:

Change in Class Composition

Education and migration to cities are the two main reasons of upward social mobility. Most of the upper-caste or traditional upper-class people in the village got the early opportunity to get education and went to cities for higher education. They got jobs modern jobs and maintained a middle-class life. Many of them visited their villages frequently; and brought modern amenities with them. Post 1990s, the lower-class people also started to migrate to cities in large numbers and worked in various industrial and service sectors. Even though not educated enough, they could earn better in comparison to what they could have done in the village. With scope of agricultural sector shrinking, these school-drop outs, semi-skilled or unskilled young people could experience city life and wanted to replicate that in rural areas when they came back.

It is not just upper castes/class people who migrate to cities. The lower castes/class also migrate. Earlier decades the poor migrated in lesser numbers and found some odd jobs in cities, industrial sectors, or plantation activities. After 1990s, with economic growth and expansion communication

facilities, opening up of jobs in various service sectors, the rural poor are migrating more in number and getting engaged in more diverse occupations that are now available. Now the millennials are migrating more in number. The rural millennials from lower class backgrounds do not want to live a life in rural areas. They may be school drop outs or school pass out but are unable to move further higher up in educational pursuits. The traditional village economy, mostly agriculture does not hold much promise for them. The influence of media drives them towards making an urban-oriented journey. The attraction of city where they can be part of the collective dream of being part of a consumer society is too much to resist.

Some of these millennial rural migrants do earn much more than they could think of in a rural setting, but not all have the same opportunity or skill to make it relatively big. Some enter into lower-middle class or even middle-class income brackets where as others remain within the lower-class income. Nevertheless, most of them prefer to live in the city and aspire to consume what the upper/middle class consumes. The availability of cheaper alternatives makes it possible for them to think of belonging to a common consumer culture.

The rural class structure therefore is no more the same. It has not changed drastically, but many of the traditionally poor, and not-so-poor are experiencing higher socio-economic mobility. Now that every village has a school to complete matriculation, many so-called lower-caste children participate in the race of upward mobility. Thanks to reservation policy and related support from the state, many children belonging to SC, ST and OBC communities are able to go for higher education and get middle-class jobs. Other semi-skilled and even unskilled jobs are also available to those who cannot make it good through the route of formal education degrees. Both these factors- migration and education has changed the caste composition of the rural class structure. The upper class in rural setting therefore are not just limited to the upper caste anymore.

Change in Physical Infrastructure

The village has changed in many ways. The old image of a village consisting of tiny thatched huts or a few bigger mud-houses has changed. With the expansion of middle class, the house structures have also changed. There are many pucca buildings in many rural areas, some of them are big and shiny bungalows. The people settled in city, and yet having land and relatives in the village, like to invest in constructing such big bungalows as retirement, or week-end destinations. The lower-classes on the other have also given up the *kutcha* houses, thanks to the highly subsidized housing scheme that the government provides. It started with *Indira Awas Yojana* in 1985, and later many other state governments and central government schemes are launched for providing pucca houses to the poor for protection against rain, cyclone etc.

Roads used to be muddy and often non-existent in rural areas. During rainy seasons some villages used to get cut off. When the British left India, most of the villages did not have proper roads. By late 1960s, only 11% of the villages had all weather roads. The contemporary situation, however, is much better. Not only did the states have taken initiatives to connects all villages with all-weather roads to the nearest town or cities, but also the internal village roads have been made concrete. The *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* (Prime Minister's Village Road Scheme) that was initiated in 2000, has made tremendous contribution towardsmaking all weather roads. It had a target to build 3.71 lakh km to unconnected villages, and 3.68 lakh km to upgrade the existing roads, and the targets are met.

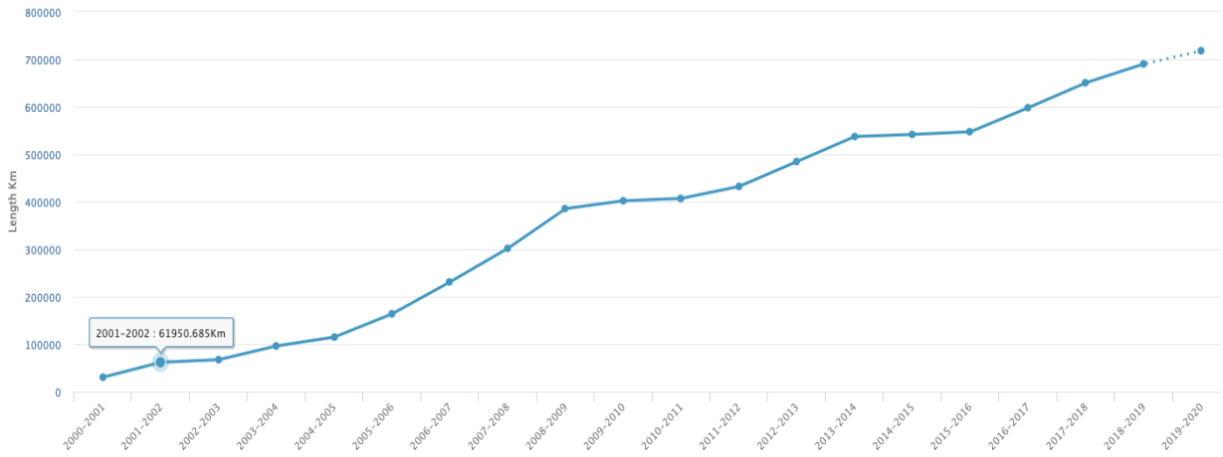


Figure 5.15 Progress of Rural Road Connectivity Since Year 2000

Source: Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) website- http://omms.nic.in, Accessed 15th March 2020.

Similar progress has been made in terms of electrification of the villages. In April 2018, the Central Government declared that all Indian villages have been electrified. However, by definition if 10% households in a village gets electricity connection, then the village is considered as electrified. In that sense, electricity has reached all villages, but not all households. According to a survey, so far 69% of the rural households have been electrified. Now the government is focusing on rural individual household electrification under the "Saubhagya" scheme.

In addition to that, the other caveats associated with rural electrification is the duration of electricity available in a day. Daily power-cut is still a regular affair in rural areas. Some villages may get as low as 5-6 hours of electricity per day. With all these limitations, the rural society tries to manage its energy needs.

The other major energy need is the availability of cooking gas. The village people struggle to get firewood, cow-dung cake, or alternatives such as kerosene, coal or cooking gas. With reducing common forest areas and cattle population, people are not getting enough firewood from forests or cow-dung cake for everyday cooking. Other fuel such as kerosene for burning the stove has become costlier. Nevertheless, more and more rural household is now using cooking gas. The latest good initiatives by the Central Government- *Ujjwala Yojana* was meant to provide free cooking gas connections to the rural poor. About 5 crore free LPG gas connections were distributed to the poor families across India.

Potable water still remains a matter of grave concern for rural India. In the previous section we have discussed about it, and it may be reiterated that safe and easily available drinking water supply to all the households in the villages, especially in water-scarce areas is a tall order task. Appropriate overnment initiatives in this regard is being awaited.

Rural Consumption: Material Aspect

Socio-economic change and availability of certain infrastructure have resulted in change in the way people consume in rural India. Gone are those days where people had limited wants. The idyllic

image of rural India being materially frugal yet happy cannot be held true today. With the advancement of communication technology, the rural population is exposed to all sorts of media-radio, newspaper, television, internet, smartphone and so on. As relationship with city intensified after 1990s, the rural population in general, and the youth in particular, seem to have accepted the ideology of consumerism with open arm. Various business institutions understand this changed rural need very well, and design their products accordingly.

In addition to bigger and better houses, there is growing consumption of electrical and electronic goods. TV, refrigerator, washing machines are now common for the upper crust of the village society. One can see satellite TV antennas on the roof top of many rural households. AC is also increasingly making its presence felt. Other small, big electrical gadgets such as grinder for kitchen, electric motor for irrigation, water-filters etc. are being used. Riding cycles are declining as the youth prefer motor-bikes. The craze for motor cycle is such that people from low-income layer take private bank loans to get the bike. Often the banks use harsh tactics to get back EMI payments, or confiscate the bikes in case of failures to pay the loan back. Similarly having a smartphone and using social media is common among the rural youth.

Other material consumption includes the clothing pattern that is available in the cities. Through advertisement, films and TV serials, people get to know the latest trend in dressing-style, and the cheaper versions soon becomes available in the rural-market or in the nearby town. Latest music and films also get circulated through mass-media and social media. Girls and boys wear all western clothes as everyday form of clothing. Jeans, T-shirts etc. are no more a taboo for girls.

Food consumption pattern has not changed much as it depends on the availability in the market. The main staple food remains the same, though liking for fast food has increased among the youth. Among the junk-food category, soft-drinks had already become popular. When guests come home, instead of traditional *nimboo-paani* (lemon drink) or *chai* (tea) etc. people now get the soft-drink bottle from the village shop. Among children, packets of potato chips etc. are popular. These are available from local brands which are cheaper. In the absence of bigger international brands, pizza, burger and ice-cream cones are available in nearby small towns with local brand-names. The rural youth generally prefers the taste of these western fast-food or junk-food over the traditional varieties.

Celebration of birthdays have also percolated down to the level of the village. Decorating the house with “happy birthday” decorative pieces and balloons, the celebration is completed with lighting the candle and cake cutting. Celebrations for marriage anniversaries are yet to become a trend in rural areas.

Rural Aspirations: Constructing New Identity

Rural aspiration is not just about consuming material objects or entertainment through various electronic media. Aspiration is also about making a significant change in self-perception and identity. The availability of education is one of the key changes that have enabled individuals to gain new self-confidence of doing something differently in life. The rural masses in general find new avenues

through schooling. The impact may be sometimes profound and 'magical' for those who are historically marginalized in the society.

We all are aware of the role of education in emancipating women in our society. The opportunities to do many things in life were denied to them. With universal modern education accompanied by demand for right to education for women, they would achieve what only men were doing earlier. The story is also the same for rural women. Many of them have changed their personal lives as well as have contributed immensely towards making of the nation, or towards the development of humanity. Ask any girl-child in a rural school and she would share the same dream of becoming a doctor, police officer, collector or a pilot etc. as a boy would do.

Women in Dalit families are doubly deprived- being a Dalit and then being a woman. They were the last to get education in our society. Their desire to break the shackles of patriarchy and caste is never the less intense, and all of them would hope that education will prove to be that tool that can help them break the jinx. Mentioned below is the story of a woman who was born in a Dalit family in rural Haryana. Yet, with sheer determination and support of her parents, she could become a professor of Sanskrit in University of Delhi. She gained national attention when she was chosen for one of the shows (Session 1, Episode 10 on "untouchability") of *Satyameba Jayate*- a TV-series hosted by actor Amir Khan.

 Kaushal Panwar	Kaushal Panwar is from Rajound village of Kaithal district of Haryana. She was born in a family that engaged in scavenging and manual labour for a living. As she continued her study, she also worked along with her parents for earning a livelihood. She faced untouchability and other forms of caste discrimination since childhood. Her determination to get education was so strong that she overcame various discriminations to complete Ph.D. in Sanskrit. Now she teaches Sanskrit in Delhi University.

For rural girls, coming out of the house and going to school to learn how to read and write is one step towards emancipation. However, schooling is not just about excelling in academics. It also opens up other opportunities. Sports is another example that has been able to bring transformation in the lives of many girls from rural areas. Through engagement in sports, the girls overcome shyness, bodily inhibitions, gain confidence, and get see and face the wider world around them. In the box mentioned below we have highlighted the achievements of star athletes such as Mary Kom and Hima Das. Both come from low-class rural backgrounds. There are numerous other examples of girls from Manipur, Jharkhand, Haryana and Kerala etc. who have made themselves and the country proud by excelling in sports- sprint, hockey, boxing, wrestling, weight lifting and so on. Apart from sports and academics, there are many other opening for them- technology, nursing, service industries and so on. With appropriate community and state support, many more rural aspirations can take shape.

 Mary Kom	Mary Kom is a popular name in Indian sports field. She is six time World boxing champion, and 2012 Olympic bronze medalist. She was born in Kongathei village in Churachandpur district of Manipur. Her parents are tenant farmers the village. Hima Das is a new sensation in Indian sports as she was the first Indian to win a gold in an international event in 2018. Subsequently she has won 5 golds in 2019 in the U20 category. She was born in Kandhulimari village of Assam. Her parents are farmers.	 Hima Das

To-Do-Activity: In this section we have discussed the aspiration of rural girls or women. We have deliberately left the aspiration of rural boys or men. Your task is to figure out what are their aspiration. Please keep in mind that aspirations would vary as per their class, caste and other life situations. For completing this task, you may talk to boys/men from rural areas in the village itself, or who have migrated to the cities.

5.5 Rural Transformation and its Challenges

The rural society in India has evolved rapidly after independence, thanks to the variegated forces that history brought in. This was also the time when the global discourse was produced around "progress" and "development". Development, in short, was meant to use science and technology to control and exploit nature and its resources, and to acquire more material wealth for human consumption. The mindless action of human beings led to wide-spread environmental degradation, pollution of air, water and soil, loss of scores of animal and plant species, and all these now threatening the very existence of the species.

We need to assess what kind of "development" path we should think of when the rural society is transforming. This is because, change is inevitable, but choosing the right path is the need of the hour. We should not repeat the mistake of choosing the path of destructive development again. The right questions to be asked may be as follows:

1. Is the development going to be democratic and equitable?
2. Is the development going to be environment-friendly and sustainable?

The first question regarding democracy and equity is about distributing the resources among the population in a democratic manner, without discrimination. It also has to be distributed not just equally but equitably, so that the historically

Vandana Shiva (1952) is an environmental thinker and an ecofeminist who advocates for sustainable agricultural practices by denouncing commercial and capitalist agriculture, and fights to maintain food and seed sovereignty. She is a strong opponent of domination of Western corporates who take control of the livelihood of farmers. She has fought and won cases against 'biopiracy'.

disadvantaged population can get a level playing field to compete and achieve success individually. The second question is more obvious. The transformation has to be in such a way that it will not adversely affect the environment.

Keeping these in mind, we can think of three aspects of rural transformation in rural India. The first is the economic aspect; the second is the basic entitlement aspect that includes health and education, and the third is the cultural aspect. Of course, there are many challenges that need to be overcome for ensuring a democratic, equitable and environmentally sustainable. Let is discuss that in brief.

Economic Transformation and its Challenges

Amartya Sen (2000) points out that unlike many East-Asian countries, India has not been able to create a level playing field and equal opportunity for all its citizens. For example, there was failure of agrarian reform; India could not distribute land equitably among the cultivators to eliminate one of the primary bases of economic inequality among the rural population. Therefore, land inequality which is linked to caste inequality remained as it is. The landlessness as an economic problem was not addressed seriously.

Whatever focus was given to the agrarian sector, it was not enough. The government has to be politically strong enough to resist the pressure of the corporate lobby to devise policies that would give priority to the interest of the farmers. To successfully compete in the market, the small farmers need to for farmers cooperatives to organize farming activities including dealing with the market. Success of milk co-operatives is a story of success of collective strength. The cooperatives or the state can initiate proper storage facility to avoid distress-selling after harvesting is done, or to start food processing units wherever possible to make value addition to the existing products.

While this addresses the problem of the farming sector, the environmental and sustainability issues is to be integrated to it. Without that it will not solve the problem. If we continue to cultivate with 'modern' techniques by using chemical fertilizer and pesticides, and mono-crops or water-intensive crops, then we will further aggravate the situation. Already the environment is posing serious threats to human existence. Re-orienting the thinking about agricultural practices around sustainability would ensure that we not only get good crop, but also sustain the environment for generations to come. Organic farming should be the way out that would respect environment, preserve bio-diversity and would also provide healthy and tasty food. The chemicals that we use is too dangerous for our bodies as well as for other creatures.

Similarly, agricultural policies should also rethink about mono cultures and cash crops. Cultivating rice in less rainfall areas in Punjab, or cultivating sugarcane in drought-prone areas in Maharashtra is nothing short of criminal wastage of precious underground water resources. There should be an agriculture policy in place that would control choice of crops in certain agro-climatic condition. Instead of deep-borewell or building new big dams for irrigation, alternative small check dams and rainwater harvesting could be used to conserve local water and put to use effectively. There are new technologies such as drip-irrigation methods that can be promoted to cultivate crops without wastage of water.

Deccan Development Society (DDS): Since last three and a half decades the Deccan Development Society, an NGO, has been working tirelessly in Telengana to promote biodiversity through reviving traditional agriculture. By rejecting genetically modified crops and monoculture, DDS promotes organic farming, and farmers control of natural resources, see-autonomy, food sovereignty, control over market and autonomy in media production. They have created a local gene-bank that preserves various seeds to meet the food and nutritional requirement of people. Recently they have won the prestigious Equador Prize (2019) for their remarkable work in the field of bio-conservation and food security.

While agrarian sector is still the mainstay of rural economy, it would be prudent to give emphasis to other sectors of economic activities. The rural handicraft, and village small-scale industrial activities need to be promoted further.

Health Services and Educational Facilities

One of the most neglected aspect of modern India is lack of proper medical facilities at the primary, secondary and tertiary sector. After 1990s, the private medical hospitals have sprung up in cities that caters mainly to the middle and upper classes. The people in rural areas do not have access to good government hospitals, neither can they afford to go to private hospitals. The small town near the hospitals do have doctors who operate their own private clinics, but the cost of treatment is not always affordable. It often leads to indebtedness. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the solution to the crisis of health care delivery does not lie in providing insurance to all. That is because not all diseases are covered under insurance, and there are many ifs and buts that makes people non-eligible for getting refund for many types of medical expenditure. Solution lies in providing full scale unconditional medical support by the state by building a strong network of three-tiered hospitals. Higher budgetary allocation and a proper plan for this is long overdue in this sector. Rural people, with their meagre amount of income, cannot afford to worry about falling sick and then falling into misery and debt traps.

In his essay, Sen (2000) again points at the basic responsibility that the state must not abdicate in order to make progress in all fields. Human health is a basic need, and a healthy body is an asset to the nation. When a large section of population is not healthy, the nations is bound to remain backward. And that is the secret of success of the East Asian nations, and the failure of the South Asian nations. Singapore, South Korea, China and Japan have done excellent in the field of medical care. A small country like Cuba has also achieved wonders in medical field. Their doctors are in news for their courageous and selfless service to tackle Ebola virus problem in Africa or the ongoing Corona virus problem in Italy and other countries.

Similarly, education for all is basic and once again India woefully falls short of meeting the need. Even though education is a fundamental right in the Constitution, the quality is the problem. There is a clear elite bias in providing low-quality education to the children of the rural poor through government schools, and high-quality education to the children belonging to the middle and upper class through private schools. In all the studies that are done, it exposes so many loopholes in the government provided education system, yet no one bothers to provide equitable quality of education to the majority of the population. In a democratic nation-state one should not expect different class of people to get different quality of education. Moreover, in rural areas, there are multiple types of deprivation among its population. Not only they don't get many types of urban

facilities, but within the population also there are gender, caste/community, and (dis)ability wise deprivations. The education policies should try not only to provide the best quality education to all in rural areas, but also see that various categories of people are adequately supported to use the opportunity to overcome traditional limitations. The East-Asian nations have shown that with a free and compulsory good quality education, the nation is bound to prosper.

Cultural Challenges

The rural India have changed a lot since independence, but there are a lot to be transformed in the cultural domain. The people still practice casteism, though there are many villages where the caste related discriminatory practices have become much relaxed. Untouchability is still practiced in many villages. 'Lower-caste' people are denied entry into temple, water from certain wells are refused, and common food-sharing is avoided. Certain privileges are still exclusively reserved for upper-caste people.

Discrimination and violence against women are very much an everyday reality. Across caste categories, men exploit women in various forms. Domestic violence and sexual violence against them are common criminal activity in rural India. Female foeticide is a shameful act that rural people do practice in most of the states. There is an urgent need of establishing gender parity for a violence free society. When half the population (women) are not believed to be equal and not given equal rights, it is anyone's guess that the society cannot progress.

Witch hunting in certain pockets of India is being heard intermittently. A woman is branded as a witch or is accused of practicing witchcraft, and harassed in many ways. She might be killed, or even executed in public by the villagers. There many instances of such criminal witch-hunting cases occurring in Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Rajasthan etc. Single women, widows, childless couple, lower-caste women etc. are the easy targets of such accusations. Though there are various penal laws to deal with this, unless people give up these kinds of deep rooted superstitious believes, rural society cannot be said to be progressive. Similarly, there are many other religious superstitions that people in rural India practice. Religious superstition is not just limited to any single religion, but spreads across all religions.

Last, but not the least, one cannot help thinking of state of rural sanitation and hygienic practices. It is a deep cultural practice that makes people believe in purity-pollution norms. They believe that cleaning garbage is not everyone's responsibility, but only certain caste/gender has the duty to clean. One need to think hard how to make people change their behaviour in this regard. In addition to this, one should also think of segregating bio-degradable waste from non-degradable waste and plan proper waste management practice. It is not that waste-management is only for the urban areas. The kind of plastic pollution and garbage piles that one witnesses in rural areas should be reason enough for that.

To-Do-Activity: Watch the documentary film *No Man's Land: Ecofeminism and the organic food movement* (45 minutes) by Dani Sherrik available at https://vimeo.com/397687184. You should also watch *The seeds of Vandana Shiva* (5 minutes) at http://vandanashivamovie.com. Moreover, explore the Navadanya website and try to understand the destructive impact of capitalist agro-business on the environment , farmers' perspective on agriculture and gender equality.

Summary of the Chapter

From mid-twentieth century to the second decade of the twenty-first century, Indian village society has travelled a long distance. Rural economy has been transformed to ensure upward mobility for certain sections, yet it has also brought in severe agrarian crisis. Large-scale farmers' suicide has a telling impact of the overall farming community, and it casts a sad reflection of the state's inability to protect the interest of the farmers from a predatory capitalist agriculture.

The transformation in the education and health sector is recognizable, yet remains ineffective. Education has become a fundamental right, but the quality of education has been severely compromised. Health services have been expanded, but the state is not taking full responsibility of peoples' health care needs. Health insurance policy is not the solution to the crisis that the rural people face. What is required is a strong political resolve to make education and health care free for all. Privatization is not a solution, especially for the rural masses.

Water, sanitation and hygiene are long neglected aspects of rural India. While water problems continue to remain neglected, sanitation issues have received some attention lately. The government and non-government organization have been trying to make India open defecation free, but enough attention has not been given towards the cultural and behavioural aspects. Constructing toilets is not enough; making people understand the importance of using them for personal and community health is very significant. Hope, the concerned agencies will focus on them through appropriate policy formulations.

The material and non-material aspect of rural life has changed. People have better and bigger houses, electrical and electronic goods, new style of dress, and new entertainment and communication tools. Education and migration also have made it possible for rural women and men to cross the traditional boundaries of life and find a place in the new world.

However, the concern that is raised is about the sustainability of the existing paradigm of development. When we are experiencing large scale development related violence and environmental devastation, how to we think of a sustainable paradigm? The last section of this chapter tries to deal with this question through invoking the idea of eco-feminism and sustainable agricultural farming.

Model Questions

1. Write a short essay on the main reasons of agrarian crisis in rural India.
2. What do you think the government should do to prevent farmer's suicide in India?
3. What are the features of Samagra Shiksha and Midday Meal Schemes? What are their achievements and failures?
4. Do you think the increasing reliance on private healthcare companies for providing healthcare services is a good idea? Can providing insurance through schemes such as Ayushman Bharat help in tackling India's healthcare crisis?
5. What are the problems of sanitation and hygiene sector in rural India?
6. Explain the gender and caste dimensions of WASH in rural India.

7.Write an essay on the government and non-government initiatives on sanitation and hygiene problem in rural India.
8.Explain the changes in the rural infrastructure that has occurred in recent times?
9.Explain the reasons of change in rural aspiration in recent times?
10.“Development should be democratic, eco-friendly and sustainable.” Do you agree with this statement? Explain with suitable arguments and illustrations.

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Editors' Profile

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Dr. W. G. Prasanna Kumar, PhD in Education with basic degree in Social Work and Master's Degrees in Sociology, Public Administration and Political Science has professional education in Environmental Economics, Public Relations, Communication and Training and Development. Presently Chairman, Mahatma Gandhi National Council of Rural Education (MGNCRE) under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, in Government of India strives to promote resilient rural India through Higher Education interventions. The national initiative of reviving Mahatma Gandhi's ideas of NaiTalim, spearheaded by Dr. W G Prasanna Kumar, has met unprecedented success at both national and state levels. The primary objective of this initiative is to promote Gandhiji's ideas on Experiential Learning, NaiTalim, Work Education and Community Engagement, and mainstreaming them in School Education and Teacher Education Curriculum & Pedagogy. As Professor and Head Centre for Climate Education and Disaster Management in Dr MCR HRD Institute, conducted several capacity building and action research programmes in climate education, disaster management and crowd management. He has handled many regional, national and international environmental education programmes and events including UN CoP11 to Convention on Biological Diversity and Media Information Management on Environmental Issues.

He was Director in National Green Corps in the State Government for over 11 years and Senior Social Scientist in State Pollution Control Board for 6 years. Conducted various curriculum and non-curriculum related training programmes in environmental education. He was a Resource Person for AP Judicial Academy, AP Police Academy, AP Forest Academy, EPTRI, Commissonerate of Higher Education and Intermediate Education, State Council for Educational Research and Training and National Council for Educational Research and Training New Delhi, CCRT, Bharathiya Vidyapeet University Pune, CPR Environmental Education Centre Chennai and Centre for Environment Education Ahmedabad. Dr W G Prasanna Kumar was trained in Community Consultation for Developmental Projects in EPA Victoria Australia in 1997 trained as State Chief Information Officer by IIM Ahmedabad and MCRHRDI Government of Andhra Pradesh in 2004 and trained in Environmental Education and Waste Management Technique by JICA, Japan in 2011.

He was awarded Best State Nodal Officer of National Green Corps Award from Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, 2008, Jal Mithra Award from Earthwatch Institute of India and Water Aid New Delhi, 2014 and Certificate of Commendation for the services in UN Conference of Parties to Convention for Biodiversity conducted at Hyderabad from 1-20 October 2012 by the Government of Andhra Pradesh 2012.

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Dr K N Rekha, is a PhD Graduate from IIT Madras. She has 14 years of experience in training and education Industry. She works at Mahatma Gandhi National Council of Rural Education (MGNCRE), Hyderabad as Senior Faculty. She is involved in curriculum development on Rural Management and Waste Management. Prior to this, she worked as a researcher at Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, a short stint at Centre for Organisation Development (COD), Hyderabad. She has co-authored a book on "Introduction to Mentoring", written book chapters, peer reviewed research papers, book reviews, Case studies, and caselets in the area of HR/OB. She also presented papers in various national and international conferences. Her research areas include Mentoring, Leadership, Change Management, and Coaching. She was also invited as a guest speaker at prominent institutions like IIT Hyderabad.

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