

# RURAL DEVELOPMENT

***In this chapter, you learn about the following :***

- *The meaning and significance of rural development.*
- *Rural development and decentralization.*
- *Rural development and panchayat raj institutions.*
- *Rural development and women.*

India is a land of villages. In 2011 census report 68.84% of the population lives in villages. One-third of this population lives in abject poverty. Therefore the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi said, long ago, that development of its villages is the true development of India.

The development techniques that the Indian government adopted after Independence enabled only urban development. Industries developed in the cities and the cities expanded. However, rural industries started getting extinct and the rural people began to migrate to cities. Due to liberalization and globalization, the industry and service sector which made use of the latest technology, expanded very rapidly. The job opportunities in these sectors are available mainly to the urban people. The cities are enjoying ultra-modern lifestyles.

Poverty has increased among the rural people who depend primarily on agriculture. One third of them live below subsistence level. Under the onslaught of modernization, rural cottage industries are vanishing unable to withstand the competition. Though 60% of the people work in the primary sector, the contribution from this sector to the national income is very less, and is reducing year by year. Due to this, the gap between urban and rural areas is increasing gradually. If this imbalance has to be got rid of, and over-all development of the country has to be achieved, there is a dire necessity of developing the rural areas first.

### **1. Meaning and Importance**

**Meaning of Rural Development :** The phrase 'Rural Development' has a broad meaning. In addition to development of agriculture

and agriculture-related activities, it encompasses extended development of housing, education, health, hygiene, transport, communication and other essential social and economic amenities, creation of employment opportunities, social welfare etc.

The rural development very ambitiously envisages improving the standard of living of farmers, agricultural laborers, people belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other backward classes. To put it briefly, 'Rural Development is improvement of the social and economic status of the rural people by proper utilization of the locally available natural and human resources'.

**Importance of Rural Development :** Rural development occupies a very important place in the development of the Indian economy. The majority of the population lives in the villages, and is plagued by problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, ill-health, lack of basic amenities etc. These problems should be tackled through rural development, and rural India should be empowered.

Various basic facilities like education, training, health, hygiene etc. should be provided to the rural people, and their knowledge, skills and capability to work should be enhanced. In addition to agriculture, cattle-rearing, fishery, silk industry, poultry and other agriculture-related activities should be promoted, through which agriculture can become a profitable and attractive occupation. Through such measures, the migration of rural people to cities can be avoided.

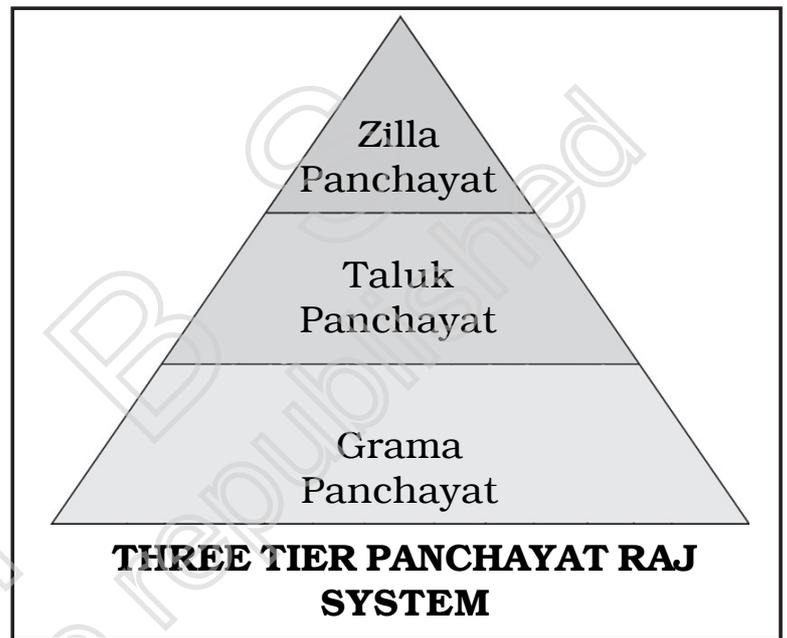
A deplorable lack of basic amenities can be noticed in rural areas. The rural people should be provided with essential facilities like electricity, irrigation, transport, communication, market-yards etc., and their productivity should be augmented. Instead of sending the raw agricultural produce to the cities and selling them, they can be processed in the village itself and transformed into ready goods, thereby enhancing their value. As a result of this, not only will the villagers get more employment opportunities, but their income will also increase. Small-scale and cottage industries can be improved, thereby strengthening the rural economy.

A system wherein agricultural labourers, poor people, people belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other backward classes are assured of continued employment opportunities has to be created in the rural areas.

The facilities and opportunities that are available to people in urban areas should be available to people in rural areas too. The villagers should be able to participate in the process of development. The benefits of development should be available equally to them too. This has to be achieved through rural development.

## 2. De-centralisation

Providing the administrative power, and the responsibility of developing the village to its own people is called administrative decentralization. Through decentralization, self-reliant, self-sufficient and prosperous villages can be developed. This process was called 'Grama Swarajya' by Mahatma Gandhi. Decentralization puts a stop to all kinds of exploitation, upholds human independence and dignity, and nurtures humane values like compassion and co-operation.



To enable decentralization, the Panchayat Raj system has been brought into practice. The Indian Government in 1993, through the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, brought into existence a uniform system of Panchayat Raj institutions throughout the country. Due to this, the Panchayat institutions got Constitutional status. As per the Amendment, three-tier system of panchayats came into existence. They were Grama Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat. Panchayat institutions operate according to principles of democracy.

### 3. Role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Rural Development

Panchayat Raj institutions play a major role in enabling the rural people to participate in rural development. They can help to provide the rural community with basic facilities of roads, drains, drinking water, street lights, toilets, school and hospital buildings, market-yards etc. Through encouragement of primary and middle school education, adult education, technical and vocational training, and expansion of health and hygiene facilities, panchayat institutions have striven to develop human resources too.

More employment opportunities can be provided to the people through nurturing the rural productive activities of agriculture, cattle-rearing, poultry, fishery, social forestry etc. Agricultural irrigation can be expanded by undertaking construction of ponds and tanks, de-silting them regularly, maintenance of minor irrigation works etc. Rural and cottage industries can be improved. Establishment of food processing units can be encouraged. Through the Panchayats, seminars, conferences and training programmes can be organized for all the above activities.

Various programmes like 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Project', (MGNREGP) 'Swarnajayanti Grama swarajgar Yojana' (SGSY) etc. for generation of employment and alleviation of poverty can be implemented effectively through panchayat institutions. With the success of such programmes,

#### **Do you know this?**

**PURA** : (PURA = Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas)

*Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas is an excellent project conceptualized for rural development by the former President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam. In this model, four ways of linking villages is planned:*

- 1. Under physical link, a group of 15-25 villages will get mutual road links. Around these villages, there will be a ring road. In addition, they will get electricity link.*
- 2. Knowledge link involves establishing a school, a higher education institution and a hospital at a distance of every 5 – 7 kilometers.*
- 3. Electronic link involves providing modern telephone and telecommunication services to the villages.*
- 4. Economic link involves establishing a proper market-yard within the group of villages. This yard should enable the villagers to sell all of their products and buy their daily necessities.*

rural poverty and unemployment can be eliminated. Various housing programmes like 'Indira Awas Yojana', 'Ambedkar-Valmiki Housing Programme', 'Ashraya Yojana' etc. can be implemented, and all shelterless people provided shelter. Through 'Suvarna Gramodaya Yojana', basic facilities can be enhanced. The public distribution system in villages can be strengthened and poor people can be provided with the essential food grains adequately.

By identifying the old people, the disabled, widows, mentally retarded people etc., it can be ensured that all the facilities from the social welfare programmes of the government reach them promptly. All the self-help groups of women can be brought together, and proper encouragement can be given to their productive activities. In this way, women too can be made to participate in the development of the nation.

Social and cultural activities can be encouraged through celebration of village fairs and festivals. Through such activities, village arts and crafts will get an impetus and the rural culture will get enriched.

Thus, panchayat raj institutions play a significant role in the over-all development of rural areas, in alleviating poverty and unemployment there, in making the life of the villagers independent and prosperous, and thereby, strengthening the democratic fabric of the country. We can see the panchayat raj institutions engaging themselves in all the above-mentioned activities and taking the villages further on the path of development.

#### **4. Women in Development**

In her lifetime, a woman performs a variety of duties as a mother, wife, daughter-in-law and a daughter. Every man's life is shaped by a woman. She works not only in the house but also outside as a farmer, worker, employee, officer, businesswoman and lawmaker at an equal level with men. Hence her role is decisive in the development of the country, especially rural development.

There are more women working in the areas of farming, cattle-rearing, fisheries, silkworm rearing, horticulture, floriculture and poultry. Women form the majority among agricultural workers too. Educated women are successfully handling a variety of jobs in various fields in the economy. Women are rendering exceptional

service in government offices, commercial establishments, educational institutions, hospitals, old age homes etc. In addition, educated women are playing a prominent role in controlling the rise in population.



**Women in Industry    Women in Agriculture    Women as Pilot**

Women are establishing themselves in the political field too. Starting from the gram panchayat to the position of a President, they are handling various responsibilities as political leaders at various levels of the government. As there is reservation for women in panchayat raj institutions, an ordinary village woman has the opportunity to handle political power and work towards rural development. A notable feature in Karnataka at present is that there are more than 50% women among the elected members of panchayat institutions.

'Women Self-Help Groups' have been created in all villages in the rural sector. These have been playing a very significant role in organizing poor rural

women and making them financially independent. Members of these groups can avail of loans easily and engage in productive activities. These associations have been very successful in mobilizing savings and in obtaining repayment of loans. Bad habits like alcoholism, gambling and others are spreading widely in the rural areas. Social evils like child marriage, dowry, caste system, superstitions, exploitation of women and children are still rampant. Through the self-help groups, alert women are able to get rid of such evils. They are able to contribute towards building a clean and progressive society.

**Activity :**

*Visit a Women's Self-Help Group in your village and know about its activities.*

The chores that women perform at home are not considered labour and so are not paid any wages. When the work done both at

home and outside is taken into account, women work for a greater duration than men. Still, a major part of that work is not paid, and does not fetch any direct income to the women. This kind of wageless labour is not taken into account in the national income also.

All in all, both men and women share the same responsibility in making the country economically developed. They are like the two wheels of the chariot of progress.

## EXERCISES

### I. Fill in the blanks with suitable words:

1. The true development of India is the development of its villages'. This was told by \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. After the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, \_\_\_\_\_ levels of panchayat institutions have come into existence.
3. Panchayat institutions operate under \_\_\_\_\_ principles.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ have been brought into existence in order to bring together poor rural women and make them financially independent.

### II. Answer in one sentence each :

1. Explain the meaning of 'Rural Development'.
2. What is meant by 'Decentralisation of Power'?
3. Name the three levels of panchayat raj institutions.
4. Mention any two housing programmes.
5. Which work of women is not considered labour?

### III. Answer the following questions in five to six sentences each:

1. How is the economic situation in the rural areas of India?
2. Explain briefly the significance of rural development.
3. Explain Gandhiji's concept of 'grama swarajya' in the light of decentralization.
4. What is the role of panchayat raj institutions in rural development?

### IV. Activities :

1. Visit the nearest gram panchayat and list the work being done by it towards rural development.
2. Visit the nearest women's self-help group. Learn about their role in making women self-dependent, and discuss with classmates in the class.