

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA: TRIBULATIONS AND INSINUATION

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Abstract: *India lives in Villages – Mahatma Gandhiji* Indian economy is mounting rapidly. Industries and big corporate are contemporarily going globalized. There is an imbalanced changes in rural development and other sectors like IT, Manufacturing and service sector. There is a need to study as to why this disproportional progress and development. The author intends to probe answers to the questions as to why rural areas lag behind cities by decades, why rural areas lag behind cities in growth, why lack of opportunities in rural area, why rising disconnect between cities and villages. Further, an attempt has been made to study a five fold impact on the economy which correspond to mechanism through which the rural infrastructure could be raised and economic growth can be facilitated. This article highlights the role of government to improve infrastructure and the mode of raising funds to have better rural infrastructure.

Key words: Rural Development, Disconnect, Government, Funding.

Introduction: Our economy is developing fast, industries and big corporate are going globalize. With liberalization tremendous changes are being felt in IT, Manufacturing, service sector but nobody thinks of rural development to make it as faster as these sectors. Then, What this progress and development means ? Today 71 % of Indians live in rural areas, 89 % donot have access to telephones, 52 % of them have no access to power, 10 % have no access to drinking water and 91 % have no access to toilet facilities.

So, benefiting to 30 % in total population which is already developed and are living above poverty does not mean any development at all.

Some questions prod to ones mind and seize deep in to the topic are :

1. While we have international fully air-conditioned schools in our cities, the schools in villages still donot have benches and chairs. Leave alone the computers we have huge shortage of teachers in rural areas and the school drop-out rate is huge. **“WHY RURAL AREAS LAG BEHIND CITIES BY DECADES ?”**

2. In cities we have wide roads, flyovers and underpasses while many villages still donot have proper roads. Urban-rural road link can play a vital role in rural growth. **“WHY RURAL AREAS LAG BEHIND CITIES IN GROWTH ?”**

3. Employment opportunities are hardly there in villages which forces youth to move to cities creating imbalance in the eco-system and leaving villages deprived. **“WHY LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL AREA ?”**

4. While we have number of hospitals, nursing homes and medical facilities in cities, villagers neither have health awareness nor health facilities. Many of them have to fly to cities for even basic treatments. **“WHY RISING DISCONNECT BETWEEN CITIES AND VLLAGES ?”**

The immediate objective and key strategy of the government is to provide universal access to the infrastructural services so that the resident of every

village should be able to access a common telephone, able to connect to electricity grid, have access to road and be close to a portable water sources. In other words, infrastructure is positively correlated to economic growth in rural areas.

Broadly speaking, it can be said that rural infrastructure development has a five fold impact on the economy. They are

- Creating better access to employment and providing further earning opportunities.
- Creating access to previously inaccessible commodities and services due to better physical access facilitated by roads.
- Increasing production efficiency due to improvements in technology and mechanization facilitated by electrification and telecommunications.
- Saving time which can be better utilised in productive activities.
- Sanitation and potable water facilities create better health and physical conditions of rural population.

These five channels correspond to mechanism through which the rural infrastructure could be raised and economic growth facilitated.

But there lays some unique issues pertaining to rural areas, they are,

1. Population size is very low in rural areas due to which economies of scale don't work because fixed cost that is, installation cost is greater than variable cost, that is, cost per user. For example,
2. Density of population is also low.
3. The purchasing power of the rural people is also quite low due to reduced income.

Role of government to improve infrastructure ;

1. Constitutional Amendment Act has been enacted to empower Panchayats.
2. Bharat Nirman Program has been introduced to provide infrastructure in rural areas.

3. Other schemes like Pradhana Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana for rural roads,
4. Accelerated rural water supply program for rural water and sanitation.
5. Rajiv Gandhi Vidyutkranti yojana for rural electrification have been introduced.
6. Universal service obligations exist in the telecom sector to raise funds for rural phone connectivity.
7. To provide atleast 100 days of guaranteed employment to improve the economic conditions of the people in rural areas.
8. PURA Scheme has been floated to provide Urban amenities in rural areas.
9. Rural infrastructural development fund has been set up by NABARD.

In order to have better rural infrastructure, funds can be raised from:

1. Central Government Grants
2. Micro finance institution and NGOs
3. Multilateral bank loans through community pooling of resources.
4. Commercial bank loans and
5. Private partnerships

To conclude, the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations in this regard is indeed commendable. But much remains to be done. If we all work together with undivided attention in this direction we can surely achieve rural economic development in the provision of access to rural infrastructure.

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