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CULTURE AND AGRICULTURE IN
RURAL INDIA

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Culture and Agriculture in Rural India

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INTRODUCTION

The idiosyncratic notions of Indian village life as 'idyllic' and 'unchanging' has been transforming a lot in recent decades. The twin factors of Indian villages, agriculture and caste system are losing its vigorous hold and as a result, fragmented caste rigidities and agricultural stagnation are forcing towards diverse occupational choice and migration to urban spaces. Within the vote bank politics, where poor farmers get only lip-service from the politicians there the dynamics of culture around agriculture and the villages is properly understood by the policy-makers and Indian masses or not, that is the unanswered question.

THE COUNTRY-TOWN NEXUS

While rural India is changing in factual terms, there the conceptual and analytical frameworks largely remain identical. In practical terms, things are not now what earlier they used to be. It is not the urban inputs like better roads, electrified villages and motorized transport, rather it is

the impetus of change, absolute inertia of the agrarian economy out of which the villagers want to come for a sustained and suboptimal livelihood and respect. The uprooting of village life than the previous rubrics focuses on a new country-town nexus.

VILLAGES UNDER DURESS

The village is shrinking its usual cultural fabric, sociological reality and economic morphology. The importance of agriculture is drowning as a mainstay of village society, losing rural ethos. Farmers got dependent on the whims of weather as its irregularity and insufficiency lead to droughts and good monsoon causes floods, infrastructural and technological inputs. Farmers are no longer proud of being a farmer unlike early days. Besides, many village fabrics like joint family, caste hierarchy, village harmony etc. are disappearing on a quick pace. Due to opened up urban horizons, rural India is constantly sprawling its centrality, taking it far from its egalitarian utopia.

CONCEPTIONS OF VILLAGE INDIA

During her longitudinal study across 1960s and 1970s, Scarlett Epstein found that the poor families are becoming poorer in their standards of living, whereas the riches were getting richer due to opened jaggery market. Then the typical Indian villages were to be little republics, eternal and persistent. Ronald Inden found villages as the atom of Indian civilization, whereas M N Srinivas opined that dominant caste were the flagbearers of the village. Thus, Indian villages used to be quiet, lacklustre rural heaven inside academic spheres.

CASTE IDENTITY AND CASTE SYSTEM

Caste and villages in India run on a synergy. The proclamation of caste identities is becoming more open nowadays. That is why, the caste politics plays a pivotal part in contemporary India. For example, in rural Maharashtra the literate and culturally sound mahars now opens up for employment in city areas beyond their traditional occupations. Thus, it has a long history of its process across Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, reddy of Andhra Pradesh, pariahs of Tamil Nadu. Though caste system is collapsing, still every caste is proudly digging their ancestral heritage for an elevated social status.

RURAL NON-FARM EMPLOYMENT

The staggering figures from 50th and 57th round NSS indicated the trend in shift from agrarian based to non-agrarian non-farm employment, especially in the states of West Bengal, Kerala, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir. The major reasons behind this trend are rapidly falling scope for agricultural employment, risk in agriculture and increased wages. Studies of Simmons and Supri show an inverse relationship between RNFE and land ownership. Hence, RNFE emerges as a beacon of hope for livelihood diversification.

THE VANISHING INDIAN VILLAGES? – CONCLUDING NOTE

A lot of usual rural nerves are found to be changing in cultural sphere. For example, untouchability has been widely reduced, old taboos are disappearing, caste system getting non-operational though caste pride and identity still exists loudly, existence of upper caste intransigence and most importantly deagrarianization etc. In this

context, we have to understand the culture of agriculture in rural hinterlands as it is ever-changing and continuously losing its legacy. Agriculture is no longer be a satisfactory livelihood choice. Rural economy is getting as lifeless as the villagers are getting bloodless. From rich to poor, everybody wants to go outskirts for a better and sustainable living. Hence, every debates and discussions are seeming so alarming, but this is what our Indian villages have to say us irrespective of we want to pay attention to these rustic murmurs or not.

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