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EDUCATION FOR RURAL TRANSFORMATION: IN INTERCONNECTED  
WORLD

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**Introduction:**

The Flat World (Friedman, 2000) denotes a level playing field for development. It simultaneously announces that there can be no peaks and valleys of development. Cliched version of this is sustainable development. Addressing a particular section in the process of development is rural transformation. The ‘why, what and how’ of rural transformation requires deliberation. The authors of this paper explore the various contexts of rural transformation subsequent to which a model of education for rural transformation is proposed.

Rural transformation entails an important issue. It assumes that transformation is for the purpose of development. It indicates there is some entity which is not in proper form and needs transformation that is, shift from current form to a renewed form. It is essential to raise a few questions about development and transformation. Who decides these? Are the ones deciding it entitled to do so? How are their notions of development and transformation received by those for whom these are intended?

Patkar (2007) observes very pertinently about this issue, “People who depend upon the natural resource base are finding that it has been unjustly acquired or stripped from them and its natural wealth commodified to serve the interests of consumerist elite. Lands, water and forests are harnessed for the profit and benefit of those with power to

purchase and invest nationally and globally. Local systems of government have been forced to 'adjust' in such a way as to intensify the pauperization of those who, in many societies, still represent considerable numbers and even the majority people faced with loss of life, dignity and livelihood have no option but to fight for their survival. From the micro level, these movements connect to a global action demanding a major transformation of what development is and ought to be about".

### **Development of the idea of development:**

The idea of development is located in the West and not the developing world. It is a product of post colonial age. Though several thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi, Mao Zedong of China, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania have contributed to the idea of development. Yet, Black (2007) observes that its evolution in theory and practice has been driven by the industrialized world. Underdevelopment implied that every form of infrastructure was lacking which includes physical infrastructure, political, institutional, professional, financial, administrative, systems for health, education. These could not emerge spontaneously, courtesy of a transfer of funds, western know how.

The word development itself is an elusive term. There may be many ways of looking at it. When it is considered in terms of social development, it can be defined as overall movement towards greater efficiency and complexity but with recognition of the concomitant problems (Hobhouse, 1924). Social development involves a process of change which is fostered through deliberate human action (Midgley,1995). It is a process of planned social change designed to promote the well being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development (Midgley,1995). It includes any and every effort towards the advancement of the interests of the community.

Inclusion policy would demand people to get together, move together and grow together and develop together. But where do we in India stand in terms of human capital? According to McKinsey and company report, India will need to up-skill or re-skill 500 million people by 2020 to meet its growth requirements. However at current capacities we can train barely 50 million – an astounding gap of 90% will still exist. Similarly the XI th five year plan points out that only 2% of the existing workforce has skills training. Another report by Boston Consulting Group highlights that out of the 89

million people who are expected to join the workforce from 2009-13, over 14 million will be school drop outs.

The UN Development Program annually publishes a Human Development Index. Its list of what is necessary for successful development includes ‘an improvement in living standards as well as access to all basic needs such that a person has enough food, water, shelter, clothing, health, education and so on’. What is human development?

In the rich world, social and psychological ills mount even as ‘standard of living’ rise. The Human Development Index was intended to counter crude economic indicators of development. Yet the table of countries with a high human development index diverges only slightly from that which measures economic success. The idea is powerful; yet its application is undermined by timidity and reluctance to depart from the definition made by the dominant powers of human purposes – which remains overwhelmingly economic.

In subjective surveys of the world, the people who express the greatest happiness live in Bangladesh. A ‘world happiness survey’ conducted by the London school of economics in 1998 found India to be fifth happiest country in the world, with Britain at 32 and the US at 46. Ghana, Latvia, Croatia and Estonia all came above the U.S. People in rich countries, including Austria, Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada and Japan were less happy than their counterparts in the Dominican Republic and Armenia. The least happy people were in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, including Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova. Of course there is a link between resources (or income) and happiness. In poor countries a small increase in income leads to a disproportionate improvement in lifestyle and life chances. Beyond a certain level, however, the direct relationship breaks down. Happiness in the rich countries depends on close personal relationships, good health and job satisfaction. Wealth is much more than just economy, wealth of experience, wealth of details, health is wealth, wealth of information, we all came into the world with nothing and will leave with nothing. Yet the monetary view of wealth has imposed itself upon all others.

After 20 years of economic reforms, India is recognized as one of the high growth economies with the potential. We have a large army of youth. But this demographic dividend can be encashed only if this large army is well prepared to handle posts,

positions and workstations – in offices, on shop-floors and on sites across the nation and indeed the globe. In a situation of rapid change, this preparedness must be fast tracked to empower our people for the enormous opportunities that lie ahead of us.

In an increasingly interconnected world our talent must be best in accordance with the international benchmarks in terms of education, skills and training. We have seen and realized that any progress needs sustained intellectual input, creativity, problem solving, consistency and quality delivering and disseminating mechanisms. Unemployment has always been one of the grave concerns of independent India. A classic study by Blaug (1973) showed that higher education has expanded in the country despite high levels of unemployment among the graduates. This situation remains largely unchanged today.

According to the Economic survey (2005-2006) the unemployment rate went up during 1993-94 to 2004. According to the task force on employment opportunities, the number of job-seekers in the age group of 20-39 years, which was approx. 77% of the total number of job seekers in the age group of 30 years and above had increased during the period 1991 to 1999 from 18.5 in 1991 to 28.0 in 1999. There is a steady shift from the lower (20-29) to the upper age (29 or more) from year to year, which indicates that job seekers face difficulty in securing suitable jobs at a younger age and continue in the registers of the employment exchange.

In this connection, various people's movements that merit attention are Zapatistas in Mexico, indigenous communities in the Amazon and in Canada, farmers in France, India and fisher workers in Japan. These movements are struggle for a different conception of what development ought to be.

There are three things that affect country's progress – **hunger, disease** and **ignorance**. These blights of the society are common in urban or rural areas. In India government has given thrust to sustainable development and also concomitant development of urban and rural areas of the country. The divide between the urban and rural is quite marked in our country. The average percentage of urban population to the total population in India is 27.8% which means 72.2% of the total populations are in the rural areas. One of the ways that India had tried to bring fair amount of improvement in rural areas is through extension programmes.

### **A Historical Perspective Rural Development**

The social life was well organized in olden days. The villages were self contained, self sufficient and self governed units and there was little need for social welfare. This was disturbed by the invasions of foreigners and Mughal rule. When people felt the need for rural reconstruction work, the panchayat system provided some of the facilities. The series of famines from 1875 to 1901 forced the government to appoint some commission. It recommended rural development work. It followed certain acts for the establishment of development departments like agriculture, animal husbandry and veterinary, irrigation etc. In 1935, the rural development work was transferred as a provincial subject and as a result of this several provinces established their rural construction departments or village uplift boards. These boards or departmental programmes never emphasized people's participation, co-operation and involvement.

### **Initiatives for Rural Development: Extension Programs**

Extension programme in India combines all the activities related to the promotion of all sided development of village communities including political, social, cultural and moral improvement.

In India, extension work had its beginnings with a few outstanding individuals of a philosophic and philanthropic bent of mind. The work of most of them was necessarily confined to relatively small areas.

One of the pioneering work in India for rural welfare was done by Rabindranath Tagore. He believed in both self help and mutual help and was one of the first to recognize the need for a change in the outlook of rural population as a pre condition for improvement. Therefore he urged every villager and his family should be educated. Tagore's Rural Reconstruction Institute in Shantiniketan teaches subjects like agriculture, village welfare, cooperation, scouting, village industries and education, attesting his insight into the needs of the villagers.

### **Shantiniketan**

In 1908 Rabindranath Tagore started youth organization in the villages, in the Kaligram Pargana of his Zamindari.

In 1921, he established a rural reconstruction institute at Shantiniketan. A group of eight villages was the center of the program.

Objective of the program

1. to create interest in people for rural welfare work
2. to study rural problems and to translate conclusion into action
3. to help villagers develop their resources
4. to improve village sanitation.

These objectives were to be achieved by Creating a spirit of self help, Developing village leadership, Organizing village scout called Bharati-Balika, Establishing training centers for handicrafts and establishing demonstration center at Shantiniketan.

The institute could not get much help from the government and it could not conduct research work. So, its work remained limited to the eight villages only. It has now been recognized as an important center.

#### **Gurgaon Experiment:**

This was organized by Mr.F.L. Bryne, Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon district in 1920. He was prompted by the poverty and the misery of the people. The project emphasis was laid on increasing farm yields, curtailing expenditure on social and religious functions improving health standards and organizing welfare programmes.

Village guides were appointed in villages and they made extensive use of films, folk songs, dramas, etc., to approach the people. He also encouraged the education of women. Village guides were not technical men, but they acted as channels for information from outside.

The experiment remained dependent upon the initiative of a single person and when he was removed through transfer to another district, the people reverted to their traditional way of life. In 1933, Mr. Bryne was appointed Commissioner for rural reconstruction in Punjab and his work was further expanded. The Punjab Government aided the work financially in 1935-36. Later, it was transferred to the co-operative department and 'Better living societies' were organized to take up this work in villages.

#### **Shri Daniel Hamilton's scheme of rural reconstruction:**

In 1903, Sir Daniel Hamilton had experimented with model village along co-operative lines in Bengal. This work continued with the organization of Central co-operative Bank and a co-operative marketing society. This later offered training in cottage and subsidiary industries through its rural reconstruction institutes.

#### **Rural Reconstruction Work by Christian missions**

The activities of these Missions can be accounted under three heads:

- a. Education
- b. Medical services
- c. Rural reconstruction

#### Education

Educational institutions run by these missions were about 2000 elementary schools 225 high schools and 38 colleges. In some of the colleges, there was a separate block attached to it for the extension work.

#### Medical services:

There were mission hospitals spread throughout the country which became effective centers for imparting training in medicine, nursing, compounding and midwifery and many students after receiving training in these institutions have established themselves in village to carry on their work.

#### Rural reconstruction:

Several agricultural demonstration centers, at Mathandam, Ramnathpuram, Patanchery and other Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., Institutions have been doing useful work in rural areas.

### **Marthandam Attempt**

This project was started by Dr. Spencer Hatch at Travancore state in 1921 under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A. He was an American agriculture expert. The objective of the project was to bring about a complete upward development towards a more abundant life for rural people in spiritual, mental, physical, social and economic fields. The working principles of the project were self – help with expert guidance, training person to improve their performance, making people conscious of other wants and needs and organizing reconstruction programmes to include the poorest. From the demonstration centre at Marthandam about 100 villages were covered through YMCA centers in villages. Most successful projects like Egg selling club, Bull club, Weavers club etc. had extensive social activities which could meet the needs of the villages. It arranged exhibitions, lectures and had a wide range of health programmes.

### **Gandhian Constructive Programme:**

Regarding development work in the country, Gandhiji emphasized that the “Salvation of India lies in villages”. Key-words of his economy are:

1. Decentralized production and equal distribution of wealth
2. Self sufficiency of Indian villages.

He wanted to eradicate the class of middleman exploiters so that the farmer could get the full price of his produce and he also wanted that the tiller should be able to consume his own products like fruits vegetables etc. He formulated an 18- point programme which includes the promotion of village industries, basic and adult education, rural sanitation, upliftment of backward tribes and women, education in public health and hygiene, economic equality, organization of kissans, labour and student and so on.

Gandhiji created leaders like Vinoba, Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan, Meeraben and others.

#### **Etawah Pilot Project:**

This programme was conceived and born in 1947 at Etawah (U.P). First 64 villages (later risen to 97) were covered under it. Albert Mayer of USA who came to India with American forces in 1944, was the originator of the project.

The main objectives of the project were to see what degree of production and social improvement, initiative and co-operation could be obtained from an average area.

The pilot programme included introduction of improved agricultural and animal husbandry practices, public health education, literacy campaigns, improvement of cottage industries, training in repairing and evolving simple agricultural implements and all round village uplift activity.

#### **Firka Development Scheme:**

It was a government sponsored scheme established at Madras State. It aimed at the attainment of the Gandhian ideal of Gram Swarajs. The scheme was launched in 1946, in 34 firkas throughout the states. In 1959, it was extended to another 50 additional firkas.

In order to effectively stimulate healthy competition between the official and non official agencies, government of Madras decided to entrust the development schemes to non-official agencies engaged in doing constructive work. Five non-official agencies engaged in constructive work were selected and paid grants, for doing firka development of:

1. Rural Reconstruction



2. Drinking water facilities
3. Sanitation
4. Agriculture and
5. Khadi and village industries.

### **Nilokheri Experiment**

It was originally started to rehabilitate 7000 displaced persons from Pakistan and later integrated with the 100 surrounding villages into what came to be a rural – cum – urban township. In 1948, it was built round the vocational training centre that was transferred from Kurukshetra.

Sri S.K. Dey was the central figure of this project, late Union minister of community development and co-operatives upto 1965.

The scheme that was called “Mazdoor Manzil” aimed at self sufficiency for the rural-cum urban township in all the essential requirements of life. The colony had day school, farm, polytechnic training center, diary, poultry farm, piggery farm, horticulture, garden, printing press, garment factory, engineering workshop, soap factory etc.

### **Adarsh Seva Sangh Pohri (Gwalior)**

This plan of rural reconstruction was put into operation in 232 villages, falling in the Jagirdari of Col. Shitole, which aimed to increase the per capita income of villages. In each village a village reconstruction society was formed and the important items of work were compost making, deep ploughing, improved breeding and management of cattle etc. The Sangh published a monthly journal “Rural India” which is devoted to planning and community projects.

### **I.V.S. (Indian Village Service)**

Its founder was Mr. Arther T. Mosher of Newyork and Shri. B.N. Gupta established it in 1954. The objectives of this organization were to assist village people to realize the best of their own villages by developing individuals, volunteer leaders and local agencies and enable them to be effective in helping themselves and others. The objective also includes assisting government in developing villages.

For realization of the above objectives, the organization adopted techniques like personal contacts, informal discussion groups, use of volunteers, demonstrations, use

and production of periodicals etc. It is financially supported by contributions and donations. The organization has branches in Lucknow and Etah (U.P) and is affiliated to the Presbyterian Church in U.S.A. Residents of 15 villages were the beneficiaries of this organization.

### **Sarvodaya Programme**

It was on Gandhian conception and evoked great enthusiasm in Bombay state. The main features were simplicity, non violence scarcity of labour and reconstruction of human values. It aimed at raising the standard of living, a scientific development of agriculture, promotion of cottage industries, spread of literacy, medical and health facilities and the development of village panchayat.

In the recent times, the initiatives of some corporate sector for rural transformation is welcome change.

### **Corporate initiatives:**

Indian Space Research organization's (ISRO) commercial arm Antrix corporation was awarded the globe sustainability research award 2010 set up by Stockholm- based Global forum for fostering sustainable development.

Tata Steel Rural development society (TSRDS), an organization involved in the steel major's community building initiatives, embarked on an initiative to empower communities by creating awareness on the right to information (RTI) act at the grassroot level, in October 2009.

### **Lessons to be learnt from these initiatives**

The above initiatives talks about the focus of each agency in the task of rural transformation. It can be gauged from these that certain aspects like village leadership, sanitation, women education, scientific use of farm land, improving yield, marketing of produce, projecting local arts and crafts are being repeatedly mentioned. It indicates that these aspects are still in need of improvement and any rural reconstruction program cannot overlook these. The proposed model of education encompasses these aspects.

### **Education for rural transformation:**

India has the advantage of a relatively large size of population in the working age group. However this advantage has not been exploited so far. If employment opportunities can be created and persons of working age are equipped with knowledge and skills we will be able to embark upon newer growth rates.

It is important to recognize that growth biased in favour of lower income groups would ensure stability since their consumption patterns are likely to be more stable. India can sustain high GDP growth and improve its position in the world GDP ranking, the moot question is whether this growth would be inclusive. Inclusive growth is not only desirable from the equity point of view, but is also important for ensuring stable growth.

The assumption in rural transformation is that the transformation is aimed at development. Development symbolizes “betterment” from the present. What is the ‘betterment’ or ‘improvement needs deliberation.

Should Education for rural transformation be same as the urban education or should it be different from the so called urban education? The term ‘urban’ also changes connotations as we look at the underdeveloped, developing and developed nations and their respective cities. Do we all need a universal design of education or should it be tailor made as per the requirement of the local communities?

### **Understanding Rural Development**

These could be the specific objectives behind the idea of rural development

- to change the outlook of the villagers
- to develop responsive village leadership
- to develop village people to become self reliant
  - to emphasize on improving and modernizing agricultural practices
  - to introduce new skills and occupations
- to provide health and medical facilities

### **Steps In Organizing Development Programmes**

In order to make development programmes run smoothly the following steps could be followed

#### ***Establishing rapport in the community***

Rapport is a condition of mental responsiveness that requires the knowledge of the people and ways of motivating them. In India each village is similar at the same time there are wide differences too. Right from the landforms that sustain the agricultural practices and sources of water and irrigation the predominant crops and trees. Some --- are looked at with suspicion and distrust

### ***Identifying problems and needs***

There has to be an understanding of the situation present there. The problems that are related yield of land or transporting the produce to places where it is demanded selling of their produce at reasonable price weather forecasts obstacles in the obtainment of water or in drainage of excess water taking care of livestock. The inputs in knowledge and skills will be required in these areas.

### ***Planning the programmes***

What and how to transact the required knowledge and skills, when and where it can be conducted and who or who all will be involved. A year long or more than a year long programme can be planned

### ***Selecting initial and long range programmes***

There might be areas which may need immediate attention in the economic and social areas and long term planning concentrates on basic problems facing the community and there has to provisions for planning for emergencies or accidents

### ***Securing participation of the people***

The programmes become successful only when major decisions are made by the officials and the representatives of the community. Only organized approaches and efforts can only help in gathering their opinion and decisions

### ***Developing effective communication channels***

Communication is a conscious attempt to share information ideas attitudes. It is the act of saying the right things, at the right time in the right way to the right people on the right occasion for obtaining right results in the right direction

***Developing and using existing organizations***

There might be farmer's organization, youth clubs or women's organization already existing whose capacities can be utilized instead of setting up new organizations.

***Developing adequate community leadership***

Leaders initiate actions which help organizations to adopt improved practices

**Proposed model of education:**

Based on the philosophical basis of ideas and practices proposed by Gandhi, Freire, Gokhale and Mohammad Yunus a model of education for rural transformation is proposed. It has four aspects. The model is only indicative. Further details can be worked out on locale specific demands.

**Aspect 1**

**Entrepreneurship skills:** Certain areas in India thrive specially on certain type of tasks like the bidri work, carpet work, filigiri work, brass work, bangle work etc., different areas specialize in different aspects. The need is to modernize and train the people in making of various things and also to see that they learn it in a systematic manner that can make them self sufficient. It would include value addition, marketing, packaging and maintaining quality and appropriate supply chain.

**Communication skills\ Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills:**

The expanding market needs to look for better avenues and sales so it is important to develop communication skills and also the ICT skills in the students coming in the fold of entrepreneurship skills program.

**Finance in entrepreneurship budget and funds:** Any business or activity would need to be planned budgeted and financed. The people will have to be made aware about the variety of funding agencies and funding patterns available for them.

**Collaboration with institutions like National Institute of Design, National Innovation Centre Research and Training:** Continuous and constant research and innovations are carried out, if the artisans are made aware about the researches and the market demands, how to modify and present the art which they have been making so far can make them understand the pulse of the market.

**Centre for tapping indigenous knowledge:** A center can be created to study the indigenous knowledge and its development.

**Community center sales and publicity:** Not all artisans may be well equipped with the publicity department. A community center for sales and publicity could be worked out on a mutual basis to benefit the artisans.

Initially the Partners like NGO, Village panchayat Institutions, financial institutions banks, Corporate Social responsibility cell can help them.

**Compensatory Education** (so that the student don't have any complex): Compensatory education is also the need of the hour to bridge the gap between the skill inherent and skills acquired. Awareness of possibilities and chance available can also be built along with the compensatory program. Sharing of success stories can also be a part of the program.

## **Aspect II**

Human rights, choices, opportunities available, ethics, RTI, consumer rights, participation in public life, preservation of their cultural heritage

Education for rural transformation needs to build awareness regarding ethics, human rights, right to information, consumer rights etc.

### **Aspect III**

Academics: The option of general academics currently available in the urban areas can also be made available to the students.

### **Aspect IV**

Harnessing local/ native physical / sports skills: Many areas also have native sports skills, wrestling, shooting, swimming etc. Such skills can also be further developed and sports special sports academy can also be build in certain areas.

### **Conclusion**

Wealth creation, wealth generation, wealth dissemination in monetary terms is not related to happiness. But at the same time monetary gains does bring improvement in the living standards of the community. At the same time there is need to make the rural economy self sufficient for sustainable development of any country it is an essential parameter of its development. The growth pattern of any country has to be inclusive the proposed model aims at building the needed self sufficiency pattern for the rural transformation. The area of rural transformation needs further deliberation though to indicate what exactly is rural. Any area is continuously growing, we for our paper have considered the Indian villages where there is scarcity of electricity, shortage of water, and other basic infrastructure facilities including health care, basic sanitation and educational facilities. Cities have expanded and the population and urban problems multiplied but the telltale of the rural sector remains to be same even after so many years of independence.

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