

# A Review of Rural Society and Status of Women in Rural Areas

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**Abstract – A thinly populated rural community with a concentration on agricultural occupations. Rural life is characterised by a simple culture, a natural environment, and an informal social life. Such individuals are frequently homogeneous in their vocations, clothing, language, and social practises. Because of the sluggish speed of communication, the rate of change is slow. Their occupation is agriculture. In paper I discuss the history of rural society, problems in rural development, analysis and general solutions of problems in rural development, socio-economic status of rural women, labour force participation of women, factors imposing detrimental effects upon status of women, measures to enhance the status of rural women.**

**Key Words – Social, Development, Rural, Enhancement, Labour Force, Responsibilities, Socio-Economic Status, Women**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A rural area, sometimes known as the countryside, is a geographical area outside of towns and cities. The United States Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration defines rural as "everything that is not urban." "...all people, housing, and land that isn't part of an urban region. Everything that isn't urban is classified as rural." Small villages and a low population density characterised typical rural areas. Agricultural and forestry regions are sometimes referred to as rural. For statistical and administrative purposes, different nations have different definitions of rural.[1]

Rural areas' economics differ from cities' because of their unique economic and social dynamics, as well as their ties to land-based industries like agriculture, forestry, and resource extraction. Rural areas' economics can be subject to boom and bust cycles, as well as vulnerability to extreme weather or natural disasters like droughts. These dynamics, combined with larger economic forces that encourage urbanisation, have resulted in significant demographic declines known as rural flight, in which economic incentives encourage younger populations to move to cities for education and job opportunities, leaving older, less educated, and poorer populations in rural areas. Slower economic development leads to deterioration in services such as healthcare and education, as well as in rural infrastructure. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization, three quarters of the world population living in poverty lives in rural regions.[2]

Some towns have been successful in supporting economic growth in rural regions, with initiatives such as increasing access to electricity or the internet proving to be particularly effective in promoting economic activity in rural areas. Larger extractive sectors, such as mining and forestry, have historically been the focus of development initiatives. Recent approaches to sustainable development, on the other hand, have taken into account the economic diversification of these communities.[3]

## 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL SOCIETY

Following are the characteristics of rural areas.

1. **Rural settlement:** They have settlements that are open to the public. The pattern of dwellings is dispersed, with open houses spanning a large space for courtyards.
2. **Mud constructed houses:** The majority of the dwellings in these communities are made of mud. Despite the fact that the usage of bricks and stone is rising in society.
3. **Agriculture:** The majority of the inhabitants in these societies are involved in agriculture. Some of them are also engaged in agricultural labour.

4. **Informal social norms:** Formal social standards are less essential and less followed than informal social norms.
5. **Informal social groups:** There is a lot of informality among the various groupings. People used to sit in a communal location called 'dei-a' in the evenings, sharing their day activities and discussing subjects of common interest.
6. **Informal social interaction:** Interaction between members of society is more frequent, deep, face-to-face, and informal.
7. **Informal social control:** In rural life and civilization, informal social control is more successful than official control. The Panchayat system is incredibly functional and is used to solve their day-to-day problems.
8. **Low literacy rate:** In these communities, the literacy rate is often low, and females are discouraged from pursuing formal education.
9. **Less social change:** These cultures are characterised by a lack of change. Modes of social transformation are very gradual and selective.
10. **Attachment with religion:** Rural residents have strong emotional attachments to their religious beliefs. People in this community have a weak understanding of religion, and they tend to follow imam masjids or religious professors in their social lives.
11. **Poor urban facilities:** Hospitals, schools, colleges, and universities, as well as paved roads, electricity, gas, telephone, internet, cable, recreational parks, and large retail malls, are all absent in this civilization.

### 3. PROBLEMS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Although the media reaches out to the most remote villages and tries to fulfill its obligations by sending information as quickly as possible, there are certain challenges in educating, informing, and developing rural society. Dr. Sambhaji categorised rural development issues into seven categories: people, agriculture, infrastructure, economics, social and cultural issues, leadership, and administrative issues.[4] However, in my opinion, we may split the issues of rural development into these two categories-

- A. Individual level
- B. Family level

- C. Psychological level
- D. Professional level
- E. Agricultural level
- F. Indian Weather level
- G. Infrastructural level
- H. Local area level
- I. Social level
- J. Economical level
- K. Political level
- L. Cultural level
- M. Leadership level
- N. Administrative level
- O. Media and mass communication level
- P. Interest level

### 4. ANALYSIS AND GENERAL SOLUTIONS OF PROBLEMS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Indian youth and people are uninterested in developing themselves. They don't want to go through any more suffering. They want to work in a conventional manner. They never put their trust in technology. They saw the faces of others most of the time to make decisions on their behalf. They believe it is the role of some leader, strong person, or heroes, or, at the very least, that solving their issues is impossible. They forgot that the best way to win any battle is for everyone to work together and understand one other. Introversion, aggression, lethargicness, avoidance of competition and change, initiativelessness, and other factors all contribute to the advancement and development of rural regions.<sup>5</sup> Everyone is aware of serials, movies, materialistic items, and so on, yet they avert their eyes when rural development is discussed. Family members can also be a source of opposition to growth. If the family's leader decides to do something different, certain members of the family stage the scenarios. When a member of the family gets a job or starts a small company, he or she loses sight of the importance of the family and begins to shun it. For the whole family, this scenario becomes intolerable and critical. A psychological level is also a contributing factor. Change is sometimes necessary, but family members do not accept it. Although change has its drawbacks and necessitates greater adjustment, not everyone is emotionally prepared for it. As a result, the person

spends all of his or her time playing a psychological game. Fighting spirit is a superior alternative for changing one's mental outlook.

Professionally, our rural people are likewise behind the times. Some people become so skilled that they employ chemicals to increase output while sacrificing quality and control. While others are occupied with traditional methods. Our rural residents do not wish to sell their belongings at their own peril. They are completely reliant on local agents, who abuse them. 'Over the last hundred years, migration from countryside to city has been continuously growing,' stated Ranjit Rajadhyaksha. The "push" factor has been probably more important than the "pull" factor in this: increased population pressure on land has driven the most vulnerable section of the rural population, the poorer tenants and labourers, to cities and plantations. ("Dry" or non-irrigated areas have been more vulnerable to excessive pressure than "wet" or irrigated areas.)' Our agricultural land in India is capable of producing according to the weather. Agriculturally, our rural Indians can earn more money, but relying only on nature is a recipe for failure or loss.[6] Area-based production can be a source of progress, although agents, shared ownership of land, and exploitation of rural people's simplicity can be detrimental to progress. This difficulty can be solved by distributing facilities evenly.[5] Floods, droughts, gale storms, conflict, politics, insufficient water, barren agricultural land, swampy soil, heavy rain or little rain, and so on all have an impact on agricultural advantages. Rural Indians are likewise confronted with infrastructural issues. There are several processes in farming for a rural person, from ploughing the land through selling the crops. Obtaining a loan from a private source may often be a big source of conflict for farmers and rural residents. High interest rates and illiteracy are to blame for a slew of loan repayment issues. The fact that they are clueless is used by mediators. Responsible people are uninterested in informing the rural population about government goals, services, and good initiatives.

## **5. SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN**

Women in rural India are confronted with a variety of issues that have a negative impact on their socioeconomic condition. They've also been victims of a variety of illegal and violent crimes, which are proving to be significant roadblocks to their advancement. Girls in rural regions are expected to participate in the execution of household tasks. People's perspectives have shifted in recent years, and they now want their daughters to have an education. However, the predominance of poverty is seen as a major impediment to obtaining an education. When people in rural areas have few means, they prioritise male children's education. Girls, on the other hand, are taught how to carry out

home tasks such as cleaning, washing, livestock raising, fetching water, food preparation, caring for siblings and older family members, especially when their parents are at work, and so on. [7]

When girls want to learn, enrol in schools, and improve their skills and talents, but are unable to do so due to a variety of factors, their male brothers teach them what they learned in school. The literacy rate among boys aged seven and above was found to be 83 percent, while girls' literacy rate was found to be 67 percent. Similarly, it was discovered that around 4.5 percent of males and 2.2 percent of girls in rural communities finished their education to the level of graduation or above. In metropolitan regions, males account for 17 percent of those who finished this schooling, while girls account for 13 percent.[8]

Women were involved in more dangerous physical labour than males in lower socioeconomic levels of society. More over half of the workers in the agriculture industry are women. Nonetheless, it is regrettable that women's efforts are not recognised, and males are seen as the household's breadwinners. Diligence and resourcefulness are characteristics shared by rural women. They contribute enthusiastically to the completion of numerous duties and activities. Despite their meticulousness, their job is underpaid outside the house and unpaid within. In a variety of work environments, they are paid less than men for performing equivalent tasks. These characteristics indicate that they are seen as inferior to males. Men typically believe that women should be restricted to the home, responsible for domestic duties, and responsible for the family's upbringing.[9]

## **6. LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN**

There is a link between the educational system and the female labour force. When women are educated or have the basic literacy skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, they are able to obtain employment opportunities that are potentially well-paying when compared to jobs in which women are employed, particularly those in which they are not educated or do not have the basic literacy skills. In both urban and rural sections of the country, there has been a growth in the need for skilled and semi-skilled labour. When women are looking for work, it is critical that they become informed of the credentials and experience necessary to satisfy the employment criteria. Employers may need them to have at least basic reading abilities in certain positions, while others may demand them to have at least a senior secondary educational certificate in others.[10]

Women face a variety of negative and positive consequences when they enter the workforce. Employers may impose expectations for educational prerequisites and talents that women may not possess. As a result, when individuals lack the necessary educational credentials and abilities, they frequently face difficulties in obtaining career possibilities. Rural women who are uneducated or lack basic reading skills are more likely to work in minority jobs, such as unskilled manual labour. Women labour in construction in both rural and urban regions, as well as cleaning and sweeping. These are considered minority employment, and they may not require any specific expertise. These occupations just demand people to perform manual labour. The majority of women travel to cities, where they work as domestic workers. Cleaning, sweeping, washing, and taking care of the needs and wants of senior family members, particularly those who are not ambulatory, are duties they conduct in domestic families.[11]

## 7. FACTORS IMPOSING DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS UPON STATUS OF WOMEN

The following are some of the elements that have a negative impact on women's status:

- **Poverty** – Poverty in rural communities is having a negative impact on people of all ages, not just women. Nearly 45 percent of people in rural India live in poverty. They are mostly employed in low-wage occupations and are trying to make ends meet. Women and children are the ones who must bear the brunt of the negative consequences in such situations. According to research, when a family's money is restricted, the majority of it is spent on providing education, health care, and other services to the male children.[12] Male children are given high-quality meals and their health care demands are given greater attention. On the other hand, suitable diet and nutrition as well as health care facilities for girls and women are not adequately addressed. As a result, girls and women suffer more disadvantages as a result of poverty than men.
- **Criminal and Violent Acts** – Girls and women are subjected to a variety of illegal and violent behaviours both within and outside the family. These include verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, as well as exploitation, neglect, and discriminatory treatment. Women are disproportionately targeted for illegal and violent crimes due to a lack of education and a preference for male children. Girls are subjected to criminal and violent activities by rural people who consider them as burdens. They are oblivious to the fact that girls may make a significant contribution to the well-being of

their families and communities if they are given equal opportunity. Experiencing criminal and violent activities at home and in other environments, such as educational institutions and workplaces, has a significant detrimental impact on their mental health.[13]

- **Economic Exploitation** – On a worldwide scale, women and girls do two-thirds of the work yet earn only one tenth of the world's GDP. They account for 40% of the paid workforce. Women make up half of the world's population yet hold only 1% of the world's wealth. In all facets of social life, their situation has deteriorated in rural India. Even though they accomplish the same sorts of work activities as their male colleagues, they get paid half of three-quarters of the money. They conduct half of the work in the agricultural industry, yet their efforts go unnoticed. Women in rural areas labour an average of 15 to 16 hours each day. In India, women earn 25% less than males. This shows that there are salary differences between men and women when it comes to calculating pay rates.
- **Educational Deprivation** – Aside from discriminatory treatment and neglect, a variety of issues prevent females from enrolling in schools to improve their educational skills and talents. Poverty, a lack of financial resources, a lack of interest in studies, a shortage of teachers in schools, ineffective teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies, a lack of proper transportation, a lack of extra-curricular activities in schools, a discouraging attitude among family members, unpleasant home environmental conditions, and the implementation of household responsibilities are some of these factors. When a female encounters one or more of these conditions, she will have difficulty obtaining an education. They frequently have difficulties in obtaining an education as a result of their incapacity to comprehend academic topics. Their parents are uneducated at home, and they are unable to focus on their academics. When students are unable to express their concerns in school, the end result is that they do not perform well on tests and examinations and must drop out of school.[14]
- **Child Marriage** – Child marriage is considered a criminal conduct that has harmful consequences for children's life. Girls, as opposed to boys, are the ones



that suffer the most. It occurs when young girls and boys marry when they are under the age of eighteen. Girls are instructed in the application of domestic tasks in their natal households throughout the childhood period. It has been discovered that females as young as ten years old are encouraged to help with domestic tasks. When parents believe they have effectively developed their talents and abilities, suitable grooms are located and marriage is arranged. Girls and women are entrusted with the major task of carrying out domestic activities in their married families. As a result, child marriage inhibits girls not just from obtaining an education, but also from participating in other childhood activities. They just have to follow the rules and directions that their family members have imposed on them.[15]

- **Limited Visits to Other Places** – Women were often expected to remain restricted to their homes, with restrictions put on their trips to other locations as well. When they showed a wish to visit specific locations, they were subjected to restrictions, such as being compelled to return home within a given time range or being escorted by others. Girls and women frequently express a desire to attend their friends' homes, as well as various religious, social, cultural, and other locations. In such circumstances, individuals are advised, particularly inside their married residences, that they will only be permitted to go out for leisure reasons if they have completed certain chores. Women are oppressed both socially and physically.[16]

## 8. MEASURES TO ENHANCE THE STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN

As is well known, women in rural areas face a slew of negative repercussions, many of which strengthen their sense of inferiority in relation to their position. There have been policies and initiatives put in place in recent years that have made a substantial contribution to improving their situation.[17] The following is a list of them:

- **Encouraging towards Acquisition of Education** – The educational system in rural areas is not well-developed. Inadequacies in teaching-learning techniques and instructional strategies are the main characteristics of this. In addition, the schools lack well-developed infrastructure, municipal amenities, extra-curricular and creative activities, and there is a teacher shortage. These are some of the school issues that have contributed to a major drop in student enrollment. Parents, on the other hand, do not push their daughters to pursue

education in the same way that they do their sons. As a result, one of the most important initiatives is to encourage girls to pursue higher education.

- **Encouragement towards Acquisition of Employment Opportunities** – It has been shown that rural people, particularly those from disadvantaged, marginalised, and socioeconomically backward portions of society, choose to engage in work possibilities in the majority of situations. The primary motivation is to create cash in order to maintain their living standards, which is seen as more significant than any other factor. Women and girls in rural regions are discouraged from enrolling in schools as well as pursuing employment possibilities, particularly those that are relevant to their interests.
- **Providing Equal Opportunities** – Equal chances for girls and women should be extended to their male counterparts. When providing equal chances, family members must believe that if females are given the same opportunities as boys, they can contribute to the well-being of their families and carry out the same jobs and activities. During the early stages of life, it is critical for family members to ensure that girls are sent to school and participate in a variety of activities. When they reach adulthood, they should be sent to metropolitan areas to pursue Bachelor's, Master's, and even PhD degrees at higher educational institutions.
- **Eliminating Criminal and Violent Acts** - For a variety of causes, family members in both natal and marital families abuse and mistreat females. These include possessing feelings of enmity and hatred, believing they are too demanding and would not yield any returns on investment, failing to carry out household tasks and activities according to expectations, being unable to follow rules and instructions, engaging in any activity without obtaining approval, making use of any item or object without permission, and so on. Individuals force illegal and violent behaviours on women in the majority of situations, even when peaceful solutions to issues are available. This is mostly due to sentiments of rage and frustration.
- **Promoting Effective Communication Skills** – When girls and women are confined to their homes and are largely responsible for domestic tasks, they are unable to acquire appropriate communication skills, particularly with

others outside the home. In other words, they are unable to recognise that there is a world outside of their house with which they must engage. They are only able to communicate with their family members and have no interactions with the rest of the community. As a result, they have a cautious and reserved demeanour.

- **Implementing Morality and Ethics –** Morality and ethics must be practised by people of all ages, classifications, and backgrounds. Individuals of all castes, creeds, races, religions, ethnicities, occupations, and socioeconomic backgrounds must grasp morality and ethics. Individuals who have a thorough awareness of these characteristics may distinguish between proper and inappropriate behaviour.
- **Up-gradation of Status of Widows –** The status of widows has always been precarious. They are denied of numerous rights and opportunities, which is one of the key causes of their status decline. These include being barred from participating in social, cultural, and religious programmes, not being allowed to wear coloured clothing or jewellery, not being allowed to consume certain foods, such as sugary or fried foods, being denied the right to own property, not being allowed to have a say in decision-making, and having a lower social status. Because of these difficulties, widows have been unable to make a meaningful contribution to society or improve their own situation.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The optimistic and analytical approach of the media is beneficial to India's development. It is also necessary to do research in order to come up with innovative ideas for the development of the Indian rural community. Women in rural communities face a variety of concerns and hurdles as they work to improve their status. Women are generally responsible for managing home tasks and caring for family members' wants and expectations. Apart from these obligations, their involvement in the informal economy has grown. Poverty, criminal and violent acts, economic exploitation, educational deprivation, child marriage, lack of health care facilities, prohibition from participation in decision-making, prohibition from participation in other tasks and activities, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, and limited visits to other places are all factors that have a negative impact on women's status.

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