

RURAL UPLIFT PROGRAMME IN INDIA

In free India, rural uplift programmes were initiated in the year 1952 under community development programme. These were aimed at changing the face of the countryside, and building a new outlook among the village folk. Under the Five-Year Plans, a high priority is being given to these programmes. Much is yet left to be done as most of the people live in villages. However, a new awakening is growing among the people living in villages.

The goals of the community development programme are quite ambitious. With the advent of scientific methods of agriculture, increased production of wheat, rice, barley, cotton and other crops has been achieved and efforts go unabated in this direction. Cottage industries are the backbone of village wage-earners. Substantial increase in the production of cottage goods based on agro, marine and natural products or bio-products has generated employment in the rural sector. Co-operative credit societies have sprung up to cope with the increasing demand of capital by small farmers and workers engaged in cottage industries. Beside, this, efforts are continuing to execute works of common benefit for the village community; such as, village roads, tanks, gas plants, technical know-how centres and adult education units in the rural sector. Increase in agricultural production, rural industrialization and a change in the outlook of the rural people are thus the outstanding features of the village uplift programmes.

During the Five Year Plans, the community development programme has shown excellent results. Village link roads, rural water supply and sanitation, electrification and mass education are the areas where much work has already been done. Radio and Television are today as common in rural areas as in towns and cities. Schools, colleges, and technical institutes are now being opened in the rural and semi-rural areas. There is a spate of tractors, harvestors and tubewells in villages. Improved seeds and fertilizers are made available to farmers near their homes. Minor irrigation schemes are coming up and the village industries are booming. Primary health centres and veterinary health care units are roaring with improved life and livestock. A new awakening has now dawned upon village people heading for a bold advance in the new set-up. Village boys and girls are now teeming with latest information on various topics touching science, politics and life itself.

An important aspect of the community development is the Panchayati Raj which has been introduced in all the provinces. The panchayat system has been thought necessary to decentralize and democratize the administration of community development. The system envisages a far reaching change in the

structure of local administration and rural development. Its chief purpose is to involve all the people living in rural areas to work for their own development and betterment. This mini government will now look after rural water supply, irrigation facilities, housing programme, consolidation of holdings, roads, schools and health centres. In this new set-up, women are more than ever before occupying exalted positions in these Panchayats.

Banks have also been pressed into service to help entrepreneurs from villages to start new projects and generate job opportunities in the countryside. Banks are advancing huge sums of money at low interest rates to the rural folk to set up industries, by seeds and machinery for increasing production and launching various development projects. It is because of this massive programme launched under different names by different financial institutions that the face of the Indian villages is quickly changing. The government of the day appears to be alive to its duties towards the vast rural population in the country. India, it has been rightly said, lives not in its towns but in its villages. Village uplift programme is, therefore, being taken up at the top priority. That is why that plans are always afoot to see that the farmer gets a proper price for his produce and all the inputs required by him are made available to him at a subsidized price.

The village uplift programme is poised for a bold advance. Much, however, remains to be done. Prosperity has, no doubt, percolated to villages. But the landless agricultural labourers are still a neglected lot. Red tapism and unscrupulous and dishonest officers are blocking the roads to the prosperity of villages. Dirty politics has also crept into the fabric of the village life. Vices like drinking, gambling and litigation are still playing havoc with the lives of the people in villages. It is time that village people recognized their new role in the new set-up and managed their affairs. Rural employment, health, education, sanitation, co-operative farming, storage of wheat and rice and increase in agriculture and industrial production are the areas which still demand their attention. Let us hope that villages in India regain their old glory, health and prosperity.