

## Rural Reconstruction

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### Essay No. 01

Before Independence, the lot of the villages was very miserable, although at least eighty percent of Indians lived in villages.

Mahatma Gandhi and other Indian leaders laid great stress on the necessity for rural uplift and reconstruction.

As time passed, the govt. and the people of India began to take more and more interest in improving a lot of villages. New roads were built. Dispensaries, hospitals, schools, and milk collection centers were established. In many villages, community halls were also set up. Of late, the Panchayat system in the villages has been strengthened.

Villages in certain states like Punjab and Haryana have reached a considerable level of development as compared to their condition in pre-independence India. In these states, most of the villages are electrified.

In the early decade after Independence, agricultural produce in India was very small. Thanks to the Green Revolution, this condition changed for the better. Now farmers began to get sufficient remuneration for their crops. The installation of tube wells also helped in irrigation and in increasing productivity. Added to these were better crop yielding seeds researched by agricultural universities, insecticides, fertilizers, etc. Free electricity and water were also provided to the farmers in some States.

Still, there is a dire need for establishing agro-based cottage industries in villagers to enable the villagers, especially farmers, to augment their income and also keep busy. The level of literacy should be raised in villages to rescue the villagers from the evils of drinking, drug-taking, litigation, etc. They should also be told about the importance of small families. Much still needs to be done for the uplift of villages in most of the States in India.

### Essay No. 02

## Rural Reconstruction

Mahatma Gandhi said frequently that our villages should be self-reliant and their dependence on towns should be minimum. It implies that there should be

flourishing cottage and small-scale industries in each village so that it should be sufficient to meet the needs of the rural people.

Also, certain basic facilities like education, technical training or skill, medical aid, health care, employment, drinking water, entertainment, departmental stores, etc. should be available in each village. Moreover, there should be a strong Panchayati Raj system in villages to ensure the development and to decide minor disputes. Actually, in certain respects, such a system existed in ancient India. The village and cottage industries were destroyed by the British and the Panchayati Raj almost came to an end.

During Rajiv Gandhi's regime, Panchayati Raj Came into strong focus and the successive governments tried to make it more powerful and effective by allotting funds for the development purposes such as starting and maintaining village schools, dispensaries, community roads, etc. Today we have a sufficiently vibrant Panchayati Raj system in most of our villages. Still, there are certain problems that require urgent attention.

The most ambitious project for rural reconstruction, Bharat Nirman, has been started. In P.M.'s words, "Bharat Nirman will be a time-bound business plan for action in rural infrastructure for the next' four years. Under Bharat Nirman, the action is proposed in the areas of irrigation, road construction, rural housing, rural water supply, rural electrification, and rural telecommunication connectivity."

It is seen that sometimes even ambitious plans flop for want of transparency and accountability. However, in this case, the Prime Minister has assured the nation saying, "We have set specific targets to be achieved under each of these goals so that there is accountability in the progress of this initiative."

Bharat Nirman is an essence of several rural schemes. It is like') to change the face of rural India in due course of time. It is not just road construction under the Rural Roads Programme. The Accelerated Rural Water Supply targets about sixty thousand rural habitations. About a million rural houses have already been built under this scheme. Many thousand villages have been given telephone connections.

The ambitious program, aiming at improving the rural infrastructure has been further enhanced by an allocation of a 54 percent increase in funds. The Northeast component has got a special focus. The bulk of resources have been allocated to rural schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-day Meal Scheme, Total Sanitation Campaign Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission, National Rural Health Mission, and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

