



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### RURAL REVIVAL: INDIA NEEDS TO ADDRESS AND BROADEN RURAL INCLUSIVENESS

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#### ABSTRACT

The world has been converging and converging to the megacities in a big way in Asia, Africa and other regions since last century. As our cities have expanded exponentially, the reality and ugliness of the “growth” of the cities is coming to the fore. Today’s cities may seem glamorous with dazzling shops and malls, gleaming skyscrapers, ultra fast transport and diverse models of automobiles on the roads and attractive airports. However, on the other side, garbage and sewer stinks, dirty and polluted rivers, perpetual digging and construction debris and traffic gridlocks are leading to unlivable conditions. Open spaces are being gobbled up by malls, offices and hotels. Further, the human element in cities is clearly missing. City folks have no time for themselves. Neighbours don’t meet neighbours even in the times of crises now. Accident victims are left for hours without care because of fear of facing too many questions from authorities. No doubt cities are too busy to reach out to problems of rural hinterland. The cities are becoming heartless monsters with no human touch at all. Rural areas are again acquiring attraction because of low pollution, green spaces and more human touch and death of distances caused by great communications set up by telecom giants. The clear solution to the crisis is to stop the downstream migration from hinterland to cities and encourage upstream migration back to villages and towns. But this paradigm can only be successful on the premise that broader depth of opportunities are leveraged, targeted and encouraged to make rural areas economically strong and self sustainable. This paper attempts to give some solutions to the grave problems of 21st century of balancing growing urban rural chasm. Rural Revival, by fostering the growth of rural areas, is a compelling necessity to stop the growing congestion, pollution, crime and deteriorating humanitarian values in cities.

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#### INTRODUCTION

1. Long March is synonymous with China of the 1930s when Red Army of the Communist Party of China marched almost 9000 km in tough and mountainous terrain. India had a relatively modest Long March of farmers when they commenced their journey into India’s financial capital on 06 March 2018. Their march continued until they reached into the heart of Mumbai on 12 March 2018. India’s Long March is not over though.
2. India’s series of next Long Marches has but begun. In June 2018, again farmers went on the path of protests. The Farmers distress keeps rising with the times. But eventually matters are expected to settle down and reach an equilibrium. Rural Hinterland is soon going to be new frontier of development, investment, growth and inclusiveness. This Paper outlines the possibilities of the coming Rural Transformation or, better term, Rural Revival in India.
3. Rural Revival in India can be a game changer in the way our Nation works in harmonious equilibrium with all stakeholders having their respective needs, wants and interests satisfied equitably and amicably. The chart matrix below outlines in brief the factors for Rural Revival in India.
4. Rural Areas have been left behind, by combination of factors, including low confidence of farmers, bureaucratic lethargy, poor connectivity, saturation in crop research, most of the circulation of capital limited to cities, poor connectivity and no substantial investments. Further, growth in Agriculture is showing huge certainty year on tear. As per Govt of India figures, the growth rates of agriculture & allied sectors have been fluctuating at 1.5 per cent in 2012-13, 5.6 per cent in 2013-14, negative 0.2 per cent in 2014-15, 0.7 per cent in 2015-16 and 4.9 per cent in 2016-17. Other areas of Economy are showing broader growth.
5. Rural Areas have a lot going for them. They need not seek doles and charity. But they do require to be guided, empowered and encouraged to stand on their own for growth. But rural people also must change themselves with the times.

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Fig. 1 Farmers on Long March in Mumbai in March 2018

RURAL REVIVAL IN INDIA		
Necessitated by factors	Aggravated by factors	Solved by factors
Rising Farmers Distress	Inadequacy in pricing support to yields	Leveraging emerging opportunities in Technology for less dependence on Agriculture
Falling Farm incomes	Diminishing returns and Saturation of current farm practices	Broadening the range and depth of jobs other than Agriculture for youth in villages
Increase of Climate change impacts	Inadequate Weather stations/No systematic readiness	De risking from the vagaries of Nature by investing in water canals and water optimized farming
Growing disparity with urban living standards	Low investment in non urban areas	Bring the attractions of cities to rural areas including malls, mass transport, Education
Increasing disgust with pollution and congestion in cities	Resources/investment concentrated in urban areas heavily	Investment in areas where competitive/differentiation advantage from cities is substantial

Fig. 2. Matrix of Rural Revival in India



Fig. 3 Farmers are the unsung and unrecognized heroes of India



**LIST OF INDIAN CITIES**  
 AMONG THE MOST POLLUTED IN THE WORLD (PM 2.5 LEVELS)

Delhi	Muzaffarpur
Varanasi	Srinagar
Kanpur	Gurgaon
Faridabad	Jaipur
Gaya	Patiala
Patna	Jodhpur
Agra	Mumbai

Source- World Health Organization (WHO) NDTV

Fig. 4. Cities are no longer fun with severe traffic gridlocks and pollution affecting mental and physical lives of people

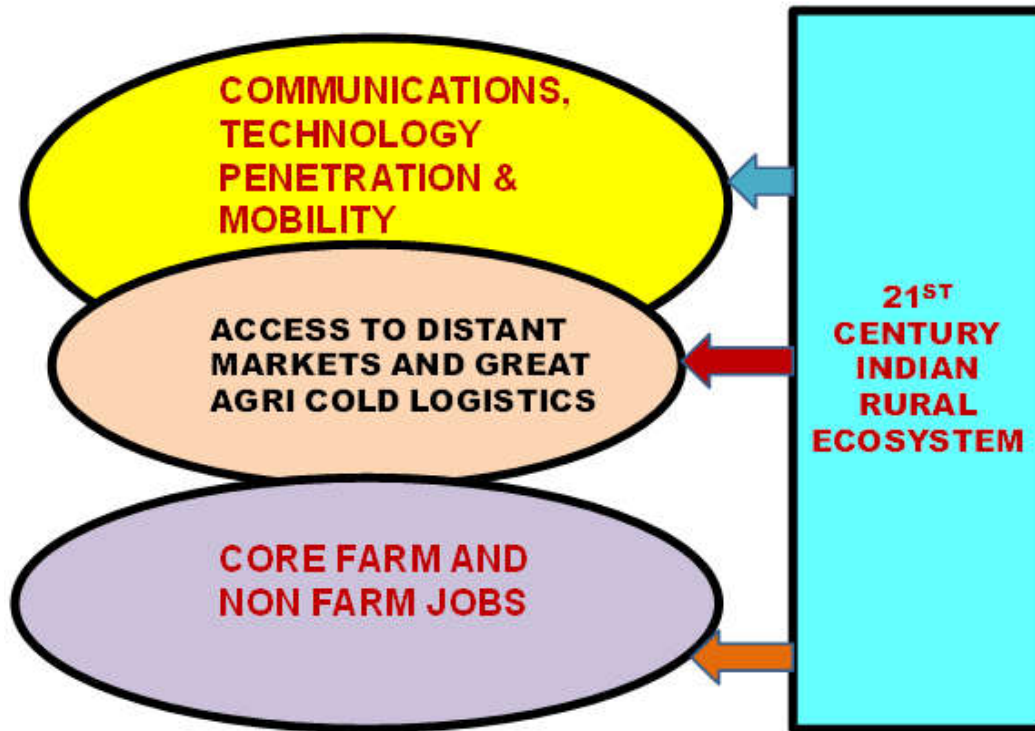


Fig. 5. India’s Agriculture Ecosystem for next level

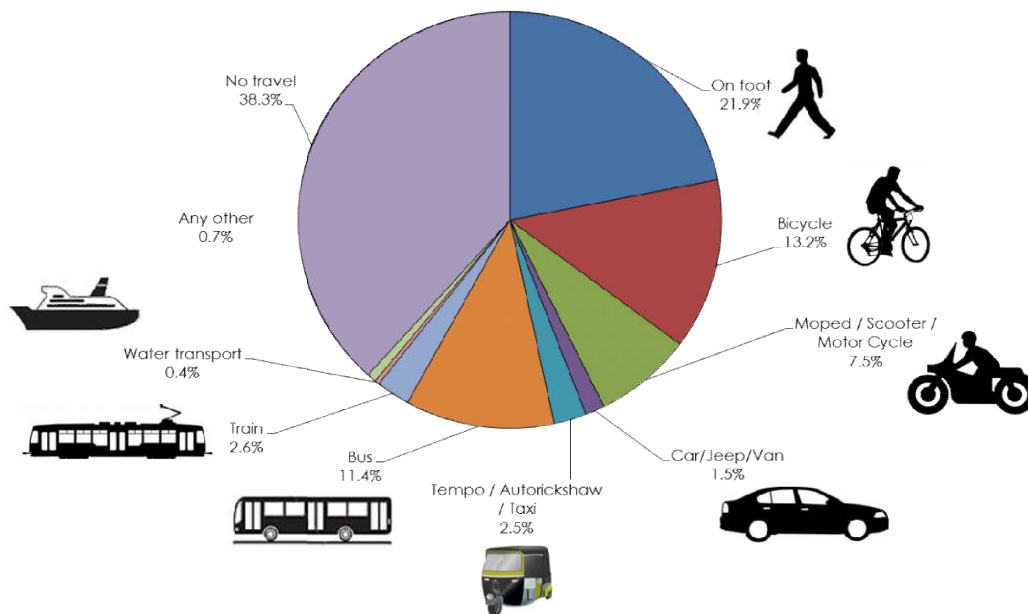


Fig. 6 Mobility in Indian villages has increasingly several options

They need to work even harder and smarter in this 24x7 world. Closing things early in the evening will be detrimental for their growth.

- It is indeed an opportune moment when lot of people in cities who are disgusted with perennial traffic gridlocks, high pollution, crowded streets are on “going back to villages mode”. The trend is catching up in many parts of the world including Thailand, America, Japan and other places. The factors behind this could be attributed to faster communications and increasingly better broadband connectivity, less dependence on physical offices with many services including banking and payments increasingly going to online mode, realization

that cities don’t bond humans but divide them even more. Television and Radio are playing their respective roles in bringing convergence and democratization to cities and rural areas.

**Areas of Major Rural Transformation/Revival**

- Rural Transformation and Rural Revival has been described “as a process of comprehensive societal change whereby rural societies diversify their economies and reduce their reliance on agriculture; become dependent on distant places to trade and to acquire goods, services, and ideas”. Rural India Revival is illustrated below:-

The drivers and necessitating forces driving Rural Transformation are as follows:-

- Population growth
- Climate Change and Resource Degradation
- Globalization
- Urbanization and Rural-Urban Linkages
- Technological changes
- Communications
- Influence of media and social media
- Migration and mobility
- Agricultural Modernization
- Precision Agriculture
- Increasing scarcity of Water
- Emergence of digital payments and digital technologies
- Growing urban angst in city folks

#### Other Drivers of Rural Transformation

- Infrastructure –Roads, Railroads, Electricity, Irrigation
- Technology –Green Revolution, Agriculture 2.0
- Government Policy –support to cereal production
- Entrepreneurial farmers
- Mobilization for social and gender equality – influencing government allocations through electoral system
- Migration
- Consumption – Production Asymmetry

#### Solutions Suggested for Effective Rural Transformation/Revival

Outlined below are certain fresh Solutions for study and implementation towards reviving the fortunes of our villages:-

- Create opportunities for labor to shift gradually from agriculture and spread the Job Spectrum in Rural Areas by generating Non Farm jobs in hotels/restaurants, construction, trade, manufacturing and noncore and peripheral emerging jobs like Green Technologies including Solar Energy, Wind Energy, Electric Vehicles, IT Technology Solutions in farming, Agriculture Supply Chains, Cold Chains, Agriculture Export Logistics, opportunities in privatization of rural and semi urban roads. Also spread the jobs to secondary and tertiary services like Jan Seva Services, Senior Citizen Help services, Funeral services, Medical allied services, subcontracting services, MNREGA allied services etc. According to the figures of Niti Aayog, New Delhi there has been a rise in Rural Industry. In 2000, share of rural Industrial output to total Industrial output was 41.6%. This got augmented to 51.3% further in 2012. Further share of Agriculture in Rural Economy is showing consistently downwards trend. In 2000, share of Agriculture to Rural economy was 51.4% which showed deep downward trend to 39.2% in 2012. Clearly rural areas are showing potential to help themselves in getting rid of the heavy dependence on farm jobs. And, in their own “backyards”.
- Penetration of Air transport of fixed wing and rotary wing type to villages for Exports of farm produce/floriculture produce/dairy produce directly to markets in India and abroad. UDAN Scheme of Government of

India should be expanded further into more geographies across the length and breadth of the country.

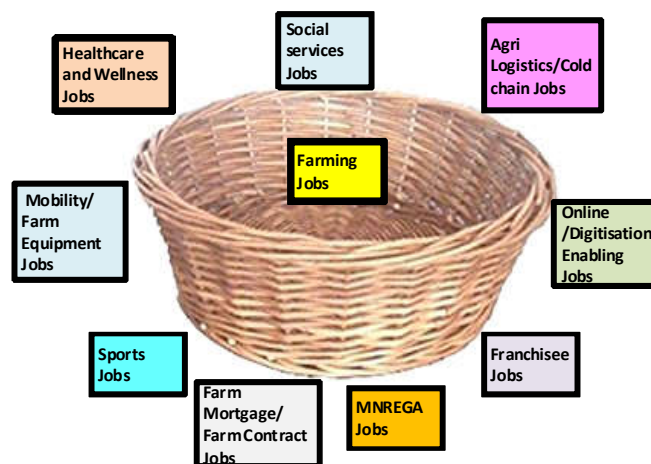


Fig. 7. The new Employment breadbasket in Rural areas

- Increase public investment in rural infrastructure like canals, roads and tracks, Forest cultivation, bridges, culverts, seed centres, waste management, tubewells, rain harvesting systems etc.
- Improve and strengthen rural health systems by building secondary and tertiary hospitals. Invest in Telemedicine Systems/ Technologies and Remote Robotic Surgery solutions for reduced dependence on big cities. This will decongest our deteriorating, messy and chaotic cities. The Hospitals in these cities will also thereby get decongested. In Indian cities like Jabalpur and Gulbarga are already operational with networks to rural areas.



Fig. 8 Telemedicine in rural areas can be a big game changer in Rural Healthcare

- Advance to gender equality/inclusiveness. Slowly and gradually gender mainstreaming is improving in India even though gender crimes are also continuing. But today even in Uttar Pradesh many females are going to schools than before. In some classes girls are even more than boys.
- Reduce extreme regional disparities by giving slew of incentives for contract farming. Pan Indian players will then come and bring best practices to remote rural areas.
- Develop local collective action institutions to integrate environmental concerns into production decisions.
- Develop technologies that reduce emissions from agriculture and livestock.

- i. Invest in Smart Agriculture Technologies like Drone Farming, Robot Farming, Lean Agriculture Farm Practices
- j. Shift to Power Neutral technologies i.e. Solar Energy, Wind Energy, Green Fuels for Agricultural Machinery
- k. Invest in Water Harvesting Grids in pan Uttar Pradesh and pan India
- l. Makeover of villages by using eco friendly resources rather than concrete/RCC resources
- m. Accelerate the huge push towards Rural Tourism which will include range of options like Hobby Farming, Nostalgia trips, Heritage revisits, rural farm treks, amla plucking, Mango plucking, Tractor rides etc.
- n. Develop Rural Cultural Centres in every block of the district for effective networking, Social interaction and develop taste for music/dance/poem narration sessions etc.
- o. Agro Metro systems similar to Urban Metros for commuting of persons as also transport Agriculture produces. It will give a boost to “last mile connectivity” to rural communities. Proposal of Amethi District Ring Metro is being studied at various levels.
- p. Leverage the Indian Mela ecosystem for marketing and promotion of products and boosting Tourism.
- q. Village areas have got loads of talent, brains and latent money. This needs to be tapped effectively. It will be a great idea to have franchises of core city industries in rural areas. Bollywood Franchises, Capital market franchises, Beauty franchises, Wellness franchises, Mall franchises, Fast food franchises can spread to rural areas. Amethi District town of Gauriganj in Eastern Uttar Pradesh is a shining example of potential of Mall culture extension to rural hinterland. V Mart opened its branch here recently and is showing robust footfalls.



**Fig. 9. The opening of V Martin Gauriganj, Amethi District is a pointer to shape of boom coming in Rural areas**

- r. Develop Rural Research and Development Centres which will boost Research in rural topics including Agriculture, Heritage, Dairy Farming, Arts and Crafts and other such activities.
- s. Outsource the work of senior citizens in big cities to the young generation of small cities/rural areas. These chores could be bill payments management, travel reservations, insurance/rent renewals, TV and mobile recharges,
- t. Rural areas have a very unique USP which can be leveraged appropriately. There is relatively less light in rural areas. Increased interest in Space and Aerospace

related matters is driving the need and urge to explore our distant galaxies, black holes, supernovae asteroids, satellites and planets in more detail. Private Investment in terms of setting up large and small telescopes in these areas will prove to be a boon for “Space Exploration “tourists.

- u. Increasingly the land in the villages will see new visitors. In case the farmers decide that their farm yields are not economical, they can decide to let out their farms to new emerging trends. The fields can be used for putting up solar arrays and windmills for generating electricity. The Indian landscape will move towards Solar technologies more and more in future. The revenue model can be shared between farmers and private and Government sector Power agencies.



**Fig. 10. Rows and rows of solar arrays and windmills may be installed by farmers in near future in their fields**

- v. Spread the culture of sports and enhance the range and depth of Sports in rural areas. Develop the Rural mini franchises for big brands like IPL. Their penetration into rural geographies will hugely transform our rural areas in a big way and also fulfill India’s quest to be a force to reckon with in Olympics and International level tournaments. But immediate results must not be expected. Day by day hard work will be the key to success.
- w. Privatize the Sports Infrastructure for promotion of Sports in villages and semi urban areas.
- x. Create job opportunities in opening up Radio FM channels for rural areas.



Fig. 11. Penetration of franchisees of big brands like IPL into rural geographies will provide a huge fillip to growth



Fig. 12 . Crop Diversification is now becoming very common with farmers in Pratapgarh and Amethi areas of Uttar Pradesh

- y. Liberalise the norms of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Education sector for rural areas. This will revive and revitalize our Institutes of huge talent pool in our villages and small towns. Imagine Vodafone and Pepsi style penetration in rural areas in education field. The dividends will be gigantic.
- z. Crop Diversification is acquiring increasing importance. The success of Patanjali and other Ayurveda brands is driving the growth in India. Therefore, farmers are getting more options to diversify their crops. Rows and rows of Amla (*Phyllanthus emblica*) trees and Eucalyptus(*Eucalyptus globulus*) trees are being grown

by farmers in Amethi and Pratapgarh districts in addition to traditional options like Mango trees instead of traditional crops like paddy and wheat. Regreening incentives may be provided by Government by planting trees like sal, teal, neem etc. This will mitigate and absorb the the effects of Climate change in a big way. China has embarked on an ambitious project of "Great Green Wall of China" whereby millions of trees are being planted/revitalized in China's areas in vicinity of Gobi Desert.

## Conclusion

As India grows further economically, the leaders, bureaucrats and think tank have to increasingly think of engaging, embracing and enhancing the Urban -Rural synergy effectively. This is a huge challenge, but a necessary need for long term stability and building inclusiveness across the vast great Nation. 21<sup>st</sup> Century is right time to improve upon our Rural areas with host of facilities like Internet, Communications, Green technologies, Remote sensing, Captive power, improved connectivity, Education institutions, automobiles, farm mechanization enabling a huge push for the growth with the availability of vast land resources.

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