
UNIT 6 RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE IN INDIA

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

There is often a reference made to India as Bharat. Here India is mentioned consisting of people living in more developed cities and towns and Bharat consisting of people primarily living in rural areas. Due to vast differences between standards of living between the two, there are socio-political differences also. India today has more than 60% people stays in the villages. Gandhi saw the development of India in development of Rural India. Rural Urban development issue is of significance to the nature of some the conflicts not necessarily violent in India.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this unit, you would be able to understand:

- The concept of rural and urban area and Rural-Urban divide;
- The theoretical basis of the Rural-Urban Divide;
- The indicators of Rural-Urban divide in India;
- broad explanation of Rural-Urban divides; and
- policy and programmes to reduce Rural-Urban divide.

6.2 RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE

According to Rural Development Report 2012-13 rural-urban areas are: (a) statutory towns, viz. those administratively notified, such as municipalities and cantonments and (b) Census towns viz. those with (1) minimum population of 5000 (2) At least 75% of male workers engaged in non-agricultural pursuits and (3) A population density of at least 400 per 59 K.M. (1000 per Sq. Mile). Areas that do not meet these criteria are rural. Sixty nine percent of India (69%) – 833 million people lives in rural areas. In view of faster decline of rural area, population growth in rural areas has declined to 1.2% during 2010-11 from 1.7% during 1991-2001. Urban population growth was about 2.8% year during both periods (Census, 1991: 2001).

6.3 UNDERPINNING OF RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE

The origins of Rural-Urban divide are first found in Gandhian economic thought. Gandhi, who undertook deep study of Indian poverty in the light of history of India and British India government policies, established the fact that Indian Poverty is not due to its Culture of Poverty but British capitalism in India was aggressively engaged in what Schumpeter calls creative destruction. First of all it destroyed cottage industries like hand spinning. Another very critical cause of poverty was introduction of urban bias by the British administration. This urban bias policy led development of cities at the cost of villages and agricultural sector (B. N. Ghosh. 2012, pp. 64-65). According to Gandhi, when the British first established themselves in India their idea was to build cities where all rich people will gravitate and help them in exploiting the country side. These cities were made partially beautiful; services of all kinds were made available to their inhabitation while the millions of villages were left rolling in hopeless ignorance and misery.

To Gandhi, urban bias by implication meant the growth of modern capital intensive industries, dehumanisation and exploitation of labour and concentration of economic power. Gandhi had a strategy of development that evidently was rural biased. He entertained this idea of village swaraj (Gandhi 1942). He made it clear that India's salvation could only come through the farmer (Erikson, 1969, p. 283).

Since India opted for the westernised model with the diluted format of Communist/Socialist format under the mixed economy aiming at democratic socialism strategic investment in big industries/ basic industries and urbanisation was made greater than investment in agriculture and village development. The seeds of rural urban divide thus, got planted in Indian planning.

‘I am thinking more and more about Gandhi's Approach, I am aware of the best machines and technology but looking to the position of India, despite the rapid progress that we can make in modern age; it is a matter of fact that for the long time, it will not reach common peoples hand. We will have to choose production systems where people can participate in production even if it is less efficient in comparison to modern techniques’ (Nehru, 11-12-1963 in Lok Sabha).

Micheal Lipton (1980) in his study on Rural-Urban divide brings out that people in South Asia and India are largely poor due to urban bias in the sense that planning and resources got diverted for the development of urban cities at the cost of rural villages. Consequently, unjust distribution of resources and poor allocation of investment in agriculture, much less

resources for the development of rural infrastructure and social overheads led to three major damaging results, namely (1) Denial of equality in the sense that largest non-rural people (80%) got not even 20% of planned resources (2) the limited resources thus led to inefficient use as greater rate returns with large rural employment could have been possible and (3) Rural sector got exploited to develop urban sector as could be seen in various evidences of different rural-urban comparative indicators such as (i) Investment in Agriculture (ii) Investment in Rural road and Electricity and water etc. (iii) Correction of Unfavourable Terms of trade in Agriculture etc.

Lipton provided three major explanations why “urban biased planning” could take place in India:

- a) Dominance of urban elite on institutions of independence government political, parties, law, civil society, trade unions, education, business etc.
- b) The urban elite not only had economic power but also capability to organise, centralise and control while rural people are much more dispersed and unorganised.
- c) Rural cities led by big farmers are the major partners of the urban biased policies leading to large scale disparities in favour of urban areas. ‘Urban alliance’ got cheap surplus food; export of raw cotton and rural better offs got by way of rural investment price support, input subsidy power and water subsidies etc.

6.4 RECENT EVIDENCES OF RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE

There had been scholarly differences with regard to urban bias and its effects. But there is agreement on rural urban divide in the area of infrastructure development, i.e. roads, electricity, water, communication etc. We may document recently available evidences indicating Rural-Urban divide as follows:

- A) Rural-Urban Divide in Planning for Agriculture
- B) Rural-Urban Divide in Infrastructure
- C) Rural-Urban Divide in Social Development
- D) Rural-Urban Divide in Poverty, Unemployment and Inequality.

6.4.1 Rural Urban Divide in Allocation of Planned Resources

Agriculture is the main stay of Indian economy because of its high share in employment and livelihood though the share of agriculture in gross domestic product has registered a steady decline from 36.4% in 1982 to 18.5% in 2006. Yet agriculture continues to support more than half a billion people providing employment to 52% of work force (Rural Development Statistics – 2011).

The flight of rural setback against the urban development could be seen in the importance given in our planned allocation as capital was used to urban areas and industries at the cost of rural and agricultural development. This is evident from planned allocation for agriculture as shown in Table-6.1.

Table 6.1: Share of Agriculture and Allied Sector in Total Gross Capital Formation (%)

Year	Public Sector	Private Sector	Total
1970-71	13.8	14.6	14.3
1975-76	12.2	15.1	13.1
1980-81	17.7	13.6	15.4
1985-86	10.2	9.5	9.8
1990-91	7.1	11.9	9.9
1991-92	6.6	9.9	8.7
1992-93	6.9	10.5	9.1
1993-94	6.9	9.4	8.4
1994-95	6.7	7.7	7.3
1995-96	7.1	5.9	6.2
1996-97	7.0	7.5	7.4
1997-98	6.2	7.5	7.1
1999-2000	5.1	8.2	7.2
2000-01	4.9	8.2	7.1

Source: The Plan of India

This table shows clear neglect of the rural livelihood sector more severely than even Lipton had depicted the allocation around 20% of total plan outlay (1). Highest allocation is just 14.0% in 1st plan reduced to 4.9% in Sixth Plan. In fact in the post-liberalisation period allocation was reduced to 5.0% of the allocation. The other evidences show the similar trend.

Table 6.2: Investment in Agriculture

The plan has documented gross capital formation in agriculture as % of GDP as follows:

Year	Investment in agriculture as % of GDP
1993-94	1.6
1994-95	1.6
1995-96	1.6
1996-97	1.5
1997-98	1.4
1998-99	1.3
1999-2000	1.3
2000-2001	1.3

Source: The Plan

Investment in Agriculture in terms of GDP shows very poor allocation for Agriculture and that too with continuous decline by 50% over pre-liberalisation period.

According to another evidence of C.S.O. data, the investment in Agriculture at % of GDP at constant price between 1999-2000 to 2005-2006 shows the trend given in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Investment in Agriculture at % of GDP at constant price between 1999-2000 to 2005-2006

Year	Investment (%)
1999-2000	2.2
2000-2001	1.9
2001-2002	2.2
2002-2003	2.1
2003-2004	1.9
2004-2005	1.9
2005-2006	1.9

6.4.2 Agricultural Credit

Agricultural credit is a key input when largest number of farmers is by and large resource less. The unjust and extremely deprived scenario is found in the case of agriculture credit.

Table 6.4: Ground level credit flow for agriculture and allied activities (in Rs. Crores)

Agency	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Cooperative Banks	18260	20718	23524	23636	26875	3123
Regional Rural Banks	3172	4220	4854	6070	755	12404
Commercial banks	24733	27807	33587	39774	52441	8148
Other Agencies	103	82	80	80	84	193
Total	46165	52745	61965	69480	86981	12530

Table 6.5: Credit to farmers according to different size classes of land holding

Class of Farmer	Credit to Farmers - 2005		Status
	Number of Farmers (%)	Credit to farmers (%)	
Marginal	40.5	25.1	-
Small	29.7	16.0	-
Medium and Large	29.7	48.7	+

Source: RBI hand Book of Statistic on Indian Economy, NSS Report

The table clearly shows that the highest % of the credit was available to large farmers only.

Institutional Credit Flow

The institutional credit from the banks etc. have derived from cultivators of India could be seen in the following:

Table 6.6: Distribution of outstanding loans of cultivators from different sources

Reference year	Non-Institutional credit		Institutional Credit	
	Total	Money Landers	Total	Banks
1951	92.7 -	69.7	7.3	0.9
1961	81.3 -	49.2	18.7	0.6
1971	68.3 -	36.1	31.7	2.4
1981	36.8 -	16.1	63.2	28.8
1991	30.6 -	17.5+	66.3	35.2
2002	38.9+	26.8+	61.1	36.3

Source: *Report on Currency and Finance, 2003*

We can observe that the positive trend of the shift from non-institutional credit to institutional credit reversing particularly in the post-liberalisation period but even after 50 years as much as 40 % share is by non-institutional sources and it may be noted that according to finance ministry's statement, as much as 59 % rural farmers have no access to any kind of credit.

6.4.3 Terms of Trade and Farmers

Deliberately designed unfavourable prices of food and agro-raw material to feed and clothe urbanites has been one of the major arguments of urban-biased policy sharply leading to Rural-Urban Divides. The XIth Plan Document the Report of the Commission of Agricultural Cost and Price (CACP) states that the terms of trade have generally remained unreasonable to agriculture. Indices of terms of trade in agricultural estimated by CASP are as follows:

Table 6.7: Terms of Trade

Year	CACP base 1971-72
1981-82	82.8
1985-86	82.4
1990-91	90.0
1991-92	92.7
1992-93	86.6
1993-94	90.9
1994-95	90.8

1995-96	90.3
1996-97	93.1
1997-98	91.7
1998-99	95.6
1999-2000	95.0

At the Index 100 it has constantly remained marginally increased from 82.8 to 95 but reached to 100 which clearly shows unfavourable trend of term of trade in Agriculture. Apart from the unfavourable terms, farmers lose by food price inflation and distress sale. Most of the farmers have to do away with production. Increasing marketable surpluses without assured price and storage facility is the source of exploitation. The increase in marketable surplus in almost all commodities has been recorded in the XIth plan (SSI) as. It is given in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8: Marketable Surplus

Commodity	Marketable surplus ratio of total output
Rice	43.0
Wheat	51.5
Cereals	43.5
Pulses	72.4
Ground Nut	68.3
Mustard	84.3
Oilseeds (Others)	86.3
Sugarcane	92.0
Vegetable	83
Fruits	97

Source: *Sub-committee on restriction of marketable surplus ratio*, Ministry of Agriculture, XIth plan, Vol. II

The table shows that most of the cash crops are sold out by farmers to meet their cash needs. Similarly, food items are underestimated; even then ratio is quite high enough to indicate 'Distress Sales'.

6.4.4 Infrastructure

Lipton's thesis had positive evidence in the area of infrastructure. Roads, connectivity, electricity, power and pure drinking water etc. are not only important for development but also for quality of life and health and education etc. Some of the facts regarding the infrastructure can be stated as follows:

- 1) There is hardly 57% of area covered by surface road and largest part is in urban area.
- 2) In the year 1971 there were no approach roads for 74.81% villages. During 1991 the area was reduced to 63.1% and yet 39% of rural areas lack the approach roads.

- 3) The % of villages with electricity was hardly 1.1% which increased to 69% in 1990 and 86% in 2001. However price quality and sustained supply is questionable. Therefore hardly 26% of pump sets in India are electrical (Rural Development Report-11).

6.5 QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL INDIA

Quality of life is a major factor leading to rural-urban divide with reference to simple indicators of drinking water, sanitation latrines, houses etc. Recent report of Ministry of Rural Development, department of drinking water and sanitation has noted that more than 60% of the rural households neither have source of drinking water nor latrine and pakka houses.

59th NSS round made the following comparative analysis of rural – urban India in terms of sources of Quality, standard of life.

Table 6.9: Quality of Life Standards

Item	Rural	Urban
Electricity	53%	92%
TV	26%	66%
Channels	10%	41%
Refrigerators	4.0%	28%
Air Coolers	2.5%	25%
Washing machine	1%	11%

Source: 59th N.S.S. Round

The survey was based on the data collected from 4769 villages and 3538 cities which shows very sharp differences of quality of life of rural households as compared to urban households.

Social Development

Investment in the social sector in the area of health and education are essential to reduce the rural-urban gaps. Unfortunately an overall trend of social expenditure in India is declining which could be seen in the following table.

Table 6.10: Social Development Expenditure

Year	Central Government	State Government	Education	Health
2005	7.4	5.7	2.7	0.8
2006	7.6	5.8	2.7	1.3
2007	7.8	5.8	2.8	1.3
2008	8.2	6.5	2.9	1.4
2009	8.5	6.5	3.0	1.4

Source: RBI Annual Reports

It shows that expenditure has been very inadequate as large share has gone to urban area.

This imbalance and unjust allocations deprive the rural people from the basic social development. Grave consequences for health can be judged from the XIth plan documents as shown in table 6.11.

Table 6.11: Rural Health Scenario

Category	BPL%	IMR	MR Mortality Rate	% of children under nourished
Urban	23.6	44	63.1	38.4
Rural	27.1	75	103	49.6
Total	26.7	70	94.9	73.0

NFHS Research Reports

We could very clearly find urban-rural differences in the health status of the rural areas measured in standard IMR and MR ratio which is in rural areas. In the area of Education also, the position is similar in that we can observe from female literacy and dropout rates etc. Tenth plan provides evidences and examples that out of 200 million children in the age group of 6 to 14 years 42 million did not attend schools. 68% of these belonged to rural area. Nearly 300 million in the age group 7 and above were illiterate. Though there was improved situation from 1951- 16.67% to 65.37% however the male / female difference 75% and 54% remained vital. Similarly, literacy differences are sharper. For examples as against the overall literacy rate of 52.2% in 1991 ST literacy ratio was only 37% and SC ratio is 29%.

The rural urban area differences are clear. Literacy ratio was 59% in the rural area as compared to 80% in the urban area as per 2001 census. This scene is a consequence of poor and unequal infrastructure and neglect.

Basic Facts of Nutritional and Drinking Water and Sanitation : Status of Rural India

According to 54th round of NSS data,

- 56% total people were nutritionally poor
- 30% born children were significantly under-nourished
- 60% of pregnant women were anaemic
- Access to safe drinking water available was 38% in 1981 and 62% in 1991
- Hardly 25% had a toilet facility.

According to 54th round of NSS, only 17.5% of rural population were using latrines, while urban area had 64% toilet facility in 1991. Similarly according to 59th NSS survey hardly 31% of rural households had water facility within premises. 60.5% have to go beyond 0.2 Km. to fetch drinking water.

6.5.1 Rural Urban Differences of Poverty, Unemployment and Inequality

Ultimate consequences of the urban – biased policy had resulted in the sharp rural-urban differences in the rural development as summarized by the indicators of poverty, unemployment and the inequality. We may briefly explain this phenomenon as follows:

- **Poverty ratio**

According to the Planning Commission document based on both NSS data as stated in Economic survey (2010-11) shows rural poverty ratio has remained higher in comparison to urban poverty ratio.

Table 6.12: Rural-Urban Poverty

S. No.	Area	Reference Period	
		1993-94	2004-05
1	Rural	37.3%	28.3%
2	Urban	32.4%	25.7%
3	All India	36.00%	27.5%

Source: 10th Plan document

- **Unemployment:**

The 64th round of NSS 2007 – 2008 provides all India rural-urban unemployment data.

Table 6.13: All India Rural and Urban Unemployment rates

	Estimated	Rural	Urban
1	UPS	2.2	4.5
2	USO	1.6	4.1
3	CWs	3.9	5.1
4	CDs	8.4	7.4

Though, the unemployment ratio is relatively similar between rural-urban areas, the rate of growth of employment is not same. In that level, employment in both farm and non-farm sectors are unsatisfactory and dividing.

Source: Rural Development Statistics – 2005 NIRD

Employment rates are far below both farm sector as well as non-farm sector.

3) As per India development reports of IGDR – 2011 poverty and inequality in the age of economic liberalisation. The inequality in rural and urban India in term of Gini coefficients for the monthly per capita consumption, wealth and finance are stated below:

Table 6.14: Summary of inequality

	MPCE			Wealth	Income	
	1983-84	1993-94	2004-05	1991	1994	2004
Rural Gini	0.30	0.29	0.30	0.61	0.43	0.50
Urban Gini	0.35	0.34	0.38	0.7	0.69	0.47
Total Gini	0.33	0.33	0.36	0.64	0.66	0.31

Source: *India Rural Development Report - 2011*

We can observe that the income inequality is sharper than consumption inequality. The consumption inequality in rural area has remained same while income inequality in rural area has increased. Unlike in rural area, urban India Income inequality has declined since 1991 and while in the same period rural Income inequality has got increased.

6.5.2 Rural-Urban Divide in Neo-Liberalised Period

Despite a large number of policies and programmes undertaken by government, latest evidence of 2013 shows that gaps between the Rural-Urban areas have not reduced. This is evident from the latest NSSO-2013 data in the per person spending (Rs.) of rural rich and rural poor against urban rich and urban poor. The following table depicts the widening divide.

Table 6.15

Per person monthly spending (Rs.)	Rural		Urban	
	Poorest 30%	Richest 5%	Poorest 30%	Richest 5%
Milk and milk Products	58	331	111	422
Egg, fish and meat	42	201	66	200
Fresh fruits	14	118	30	244
Education	20	278	54	908
Medical	43	494	59	659
Durables	17	586	26	1287

Source: *NSSO – 2013 Time Nation: Times of India*

6.6 POLICY SUGGESTIONS

The above discussion makes it clear that in our society there are wide-spread social and economic differences between rural and urban areas. As a result, many rural people tend to migrate to urban areas thereby increasing pressure on infrastructure, population patterns and employment opportunities. As a result, there emerge conflicts between immigrant and existing populations. Also migrant population in the absence of jobs and opportunities tend to get involved in crimes. Within rural areas in view of class-caste converge and lower caste (class) getting less opportunities, there takes place caste conflicts. As these conflicts are primarily due to differences in social –economic differences and alienations, the same cannot be dealt with law and order approach. What are required are reductions in rural-urban differences.

Restructuring of Our Growth Policy

The liberal, market friendly, manufacturing sector growth via expert promotion may give us economic growth but it is bound to be 'jobless' due to its capital intensive character; not only that, it can destroy 'traditional/ cottage /small and micro industries/ artisans related jobs; also as the process of growth is not confined to infrastructure but manufacturing sector dealing with similar products, the production at mass (not for masses) with scale benefits and technological innovations for cost reduction via unregulated market competition can prove to be job destroyer. Therefore, ways and means for labour intensive industries have also to be continued.

Infrastructural Development

Infrastructure can transform rural India leading to reduction in rural urban divide several studies have confirmed the positive link between rural infrastructures with improved livelihood, health, productivity and reduction of poverty. The XII plan has noted that since 2004 Central Government and State Governments are spending more on infrastructure by way of various direct and indirect programmes, schemes and public private participation programmes. It is still not very adequate and satisfactory. This is what exactly has been stated by (XII Plan).

Agricultural Development

Agricultural Development with inclusion of weaker sections with adequate inputs and irrigation can do a miracle to reduce the rural urban divide directly through reduction of poverty and other indirect benefits of agricultural development.

Growth in primary and tertiary sector consisting mostly agricultural and services respectively reduces poverty in both rural and urban sector. Thus it is well established that most effective solutions to reduce urban divide is through the promotions of income of poor.

Agro-Based Industries and Food Processing Industries: These sectors have very great potential to rapidly reduce the rural urban divide. In fact, in India, we have neglected these industries as some estimates suggest that in developing countries up to 14% of the total workforce is engaged in agro-processing sector directly while in India only about 3% of the workforce finds employment. Total processing of fruits and vegetable is not more than 7% and 58% of food is being wastage. The employment potential in terms of elasticity of labour is very high.

Providing Urban Facilities in Rural Areas (PURA)

The concept of 'PURA' is the brain child of our former president Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. This programme has great potential for reversal of migration plan urban to rural by providing urban amenities. The objectives of PURA are proposed to be achieved under the framework of public-private partnerships involving gram panchayat. It is supposed to provide amenities for rural infrastructure including drinking water facilities, sanitation, sewerage, village streets, drainage, solid waste management, skill development etc. The XII plan has included this programme for serious implementation.

Anti Poverty Programmes are very important safety nets to save these who are still outside the process of growth and new market oriented liberal economic policy. It is established by many studies that 'Inequality' of incomes and wealth is a visible consequence of the present economic growth. Therefore, direct anti-poverty programmes should have

the effect of moderating the impacts of growth process. This is because anti-poverty programmes focus on poor regions as well as poor people; critical studies like that of Ravi Srivastav (2012) have shown that these programmes have moved towards people centric and decentralised approaches along with clear advantage to poor people of poor regions. The flagship programmes like NREGA and food security are really great levelers of equality and despite the critical limitations have proved their worth in providing income, greater employment and nutritional food security in those states where it has been implemented. The moot question is how to reach the unreached poor so that poverty alleviation programme could help in reducing poverty and thus, narrow down Rural-Urban Poverty Divide. In this context, very important advice of eminent economist Prof. V. S. Vyas is worth implementation.

Economic Policy measures of expanding economic gains of the poor such as (1) Cash or in kind transfer to the poor (2) Labour subsidies (3) Rationalised subsidisation inputs and energy sources (4) Improved access and or subsidised access of the poor to credit markets. (5) Public investment that improves labour quality in created investment education and health almost double % of GNP as compared today and these programmes like 'SARVSIKSHA ABHIYAN' and Health for all most concentrate on rural areas. (6) National mission of skill development focusing on rural youth and rural traditional arts and crafts must be designed to improve the competence of these classes to compete with urban market available with full and new opportunities (Thomas E. Weisskopp, 2011).

Thus, there is much that government can do to reduce progressive distance between rural – urban divide. The process of equalizing the rural-urban gaps is a long-term process.

6.7 SUMMARY

In the light of theoretical backup further attempt is being done to draw the true picture of rural-urban divide in India.

- 1) Rural -Urban divide in development planning.
- 2) Rural -Urban divide in infrastructure development.
- 3) Rural -Urban divide in social sector education and Health.
- 4) Rural -Urban divide in poverty and unemployment and inequality.

The last point is enough to prove that urban development has taken place at the cost of rural development and thus balance development and all inclusive development. Because of vast differences in rural-urban socio-economic situations and opportunities on the one hand these gaps place widespread migrations from rural to urban areas causing pressure on available resources and leading to conflict and law and order within rural areas.

Resources and opportunities increase caste-class tensions and groupings. There is an urgent need to balance the development and reduce rural-urban to monitor social peace and order.

6.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain the concept of Rural -Urban Divide.
- 2) Describe Gandhi's thought on Rural -Urban Divide.

- 3) Describe three indicators of Rural-Urban Divide. Explain how these indicators provide evidence of Rural -Urban Divide.
- 4) Point out the social consequences of rural-urban divide.

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