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DEVELOPING RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN MAHARASHTRA – A CHALLENGE



S.S. Shejal

Vice-Principal & H.O.D. Bus. Eco Ganpatrao Arwade College of Commerce, Sangli.

Abstract: Infrastructure plays a pivotal role in overall productivity resulting in the development of the economy as well as improving the quality of life. The Physical Infrastructure i.e. energy transport, irrigation, finance, communication and social infrastructure i.e. education and health contributes significantly in fastening the pace of economic development. The process of creation of infrastructural facilities generates employment and simultaneously accelerates the economic growth.

Key words: Developing Rural Infrastructure, communication, social infrastructure, Physical Infrastructure.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Latest estimates of United Nations tell the sorry tale that 1000 million people out of the 7000 million people in the world live in misery with low incomes. They earn less than a Dollar a day on an average. Out of these 300 million live in India, makes us the single largest country with impoverished majority of these live in rural India. Removal of poverty and provision of the basic civic amenities to the population has been most important objectives of our Governments. Special efforts were made to uplift those living in the rural areas.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:-

- 1) Examine the state of rural Infrastructure.
- 2) Identify the areas for action which would remove the road blocks towards transforming rural Maharashtra on the fast track of development.
- 3) Examines the challenges before the development of Rural Infrastructure in Maharashtra.

DATA BASE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:-

The present study solely relies on the secondary data. The necessary data has been collected from the publications like Economic Survey of India, Economic Survey of Maharashtra, Human Development Report, World Energy Outlook, Various Research Papers and articles. The present study has made use of simple tools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Rural Development:-

Rural development involves raising the socio-economic status of the rural population on a sustainable basis through optimum utilization of local resources both natural and human. Rural development can be achieved only when the rural people actively participate in the development process. Rural development denotes overall development of rural areas with a view to improving the quality of life of the rural people. Rural areas have high concentration of poverty because of the slow growth of agriculture as compared to

industry. Employment is seasonal in agriculture which necessitates the government intervention in generating employment. During period from 1994 to 2002 the share of budgetary expenditure on all social services and poverty alleviation programmes declined from 2.08 to 1.87 percent and the share of rural development in all social services and poverty alleviation has fallen from about 32 to 25 percent during the same period.

Safe Drinking Water:-

Providing safe drinking water has become the biggest challenge to the state Governments even today. Significance of quality water supply increases from the realization that 90% of infections are water born. People have to walk miles to fetch water. The state is having with sizeable water resources. Due to subdued and scanty rainfall water availability in some parts of the states has become alarming especially in Aurangabad, Jalna, Beed, Osmanabad, Nanded, Sangli, Solapur, Ahmednagar, Nasik, Jalgaon, Pune, Satara and Buldhana districts. These districts are facing very severe water scarcity. The state has taken various measures to tackle scarcity situation. During 2012-13 total Rs. 413.98 crore has been disbursed by the state to tackle the scarcity situation. The state has taken various measures such as temporary piped water supply, rejuvenation of bore wells and other water sources, water supply by tankers etc.

The National Rural Drinking Water Programme is being implemented under 'Bharat Nirman'. This programme aims providing safe, adequate and permanent drinking water in rural areas. Scarcity Programme is implemented every year from October to June in water scarcity villages and wadis.

The percentage distribution of household by principal source of drinking water in rural area of Maharashtra is shown in table No. 1

Table No. 1
Percentage distribution of household by principal source of drinking water in rural area.

Source	2008-09	2011-12
Tap	58.9	62.8
Tube well / Hand Pump	20.3	19.5
Protected/ Unprotected Wells	18.2	15.3
Tank/ Pond (Reserved for Drinking)	0.7	0.6
Others	1.9	1.8
Total	100	100

Source: - Economic Survey of Maharashtra – 2010-11 and 2012-13

Above table shows, there was percentage of households depending on 'Tap' as the principal source of drinking water has increased from 58.9 to 62.8 % during 2008-09 to 2011-12 and percentage of all other sources of drinking water has decreased during the same period.

Sanitation Facilities:-

Misery of rural life reflects from the fact that 48 % of the rural populations do not have proper sanitation and latrine facilities. Adequate sanitation is essential for the protection and promotion of individuals and community healthy and enables one to lead a productive and dignified life. Various schemes are being implemented by the state to improve sanitation conditions, such as Maharashtra Sujal and Nirmal Abhiyan, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, Sant Gadge Baba Urban Sanitation Campaign, Integrated Low Cost Sanitation Scheme etc.

Road Transport:-

Transport is a crucial infrastructure component in the development process. It is both cause and effect of social and economic development. It is said to be one of two major nation building influences the other being education. A village connected by road develops much faster because a modern technological inputs being easily available. Since railway has limited rural coverage, road transport is the effective solution compared to personal modes of transport like two wheeler, car and buses yield noticeable economy in the use of road space, fuel consumption, and cost of operation. However buses can operate when the roads are provided. The types of roads laid in Maharashtra as shown in Table No.2.

Table No. 2
Types of Roads Laid in Maharashtra (Km)

Year	National Highways	State Highways	Major District Roads	Other District Roads	Village Roads	All Roads
1965-66	2364	10528	12628	8744	17524	51788
1970-71	2445	14203	17624	11012	20020	65364
1980-81	2945	18949	25233	25404	68600	141131
1990-91	2959	30975	38936	38573	61522	172965
2000-01	3688	33212	46751	43696	89599	216946
2010-11	4376	34102	49936	46897	106400	241712
2011-12	4376	34157	50256	47529	10660	242919

Source:- Public Work Department, Maharashtra

The above table shows, the total road length was 242919 km in 2011-12. During 2011-12 there was no upgradation of state Highway to National Highway. During the same period total road length increased by 1207 km of which 54 km in state highways, 320 km major roads, 632 km other district roads and village roads by 201 km.

LAND:-

Land is the most important endowment by the nature which is the basis of human development. India is one of the few countries with rich soils and rivers. However these natural endowments were not utilized properly due to which hunger prevails in our country in spite of green revolution.

Table No.3 provides an insight on the development of land in Maharashtra.

Table No.3
Land Areas in Maharashtra by usage.

Year	Cropped Area	Area Under Forests	Non agricultural Use	(Area '000 hector)	
				Barren and Uncultivable Land	Cultivable Waste Land
1990-91	21859	5128	1091	1622	966
1995-96	21504	5148	1349	1544	960
2001-02	21619	5150	1364	1544	959
2005-06	22556	5212	1407	1720	1252
2010-11	23175	5216	1449	1731	1242

Source: - Economic Survey of Maharashtra – 2009-10 and 2012-13

In the above table, we can see that cropped area decreased from 21859 to 21619 during 1990-91 to 2001-202 and increased to 23175 in 2010-11. Area under forest increased from 5128 to 5216 hector during 1990-91 to 2010-11, use of non-agricultural area i.e. buildings, roads, factories etc. increased from 1091 to 1449 hector during 1990-90 to 2010-11. Barren and uncultivable land and cultivable waste land increased from 1622 to 1731 and 966 to 1242 hector respectively during the same period.

ENERGY:-

Development in the Agriculture and Allied Activities, industries and service sector largely depends upon the reliable and affordable availability of electricity. The percentage of State government expenditure on Energy Sector to GDSP is about five percent. Electricity consumed

by type is given in table No.4.

Table No. 4
Consumption of Electricity in Maharashtra.

Type	2008-09	2011-12	Percentage Change
Domestic	16878(23.12)	21041(21.8)	24.66
Commercial	9102(12.46)	11768(12.17)	29.29
Industrial	28850(39.52)	36486(37.8)	26.46
Agricultural	12733(17.48)	21693(22.5)	17.36
Public Services	2560(3.50)	3270(3.38)	27.73
Railways	2110(2.89)	2229(2.30)	5.63
Miscellaneous	761(1.04)	157(0.16)	79.36
Total	72994(100)	96644(100)	32.40

Source: - Economic Survey of Maharashtra – 2010-11 and 2012-13
(Figures in brackets shows percentage)

Table No.6 shows, the aggregate consumption of electricity in the state during 2011-12 was 96644 MKWH, higher by 32.40 per cent over 2008-09. The industrial sector (37.8 %) was the largest consumer of electricity followed by agriculture sector (22.5 %) and domestic (21.8 %). These three sectors together accounted for 82 % of the total electricity consumption.

COMMUNICATION:-

Communication is the vital component of infrastructure of modern economy. This sector is key element of socio-economic development. Efficient and affordable communication network will ensure global competitiveness along with creating an integrated national market. The main component of communication system are postal services, telephones and internet services.

Postal Services:-

The total number of rural and urban post offices in 2011-12 was 12600, number of letter boxes and delivery postmen are 50429 and 27671 respectively (rural and urban) in 2011-12.

Telephone Services:-

The total number of telephones (landline and cell phone) in Maharashtra shows in table No. 5.

Table No.5
Landline and Cell phone users

Year	Landline	Cell- Phone
2008-09	64.29	505.79
2009-10	59.55	700.00
2010-11	58.45	965.16
2011-12	56.56	1067.54
2012-13	55.62	1021.00

Source: - Economic Survey of Maharashtra – 2010-11 and 2012-13

Above table shows, the total number of landline connections in 2012-13 was 55.62 lakh. The number of cell phone users per lakh population in 2012-13 in the Maharashtra state was 84,414.

SUGGESTIONS:-

Development of Agro-Based Industries:-

Industries that uses unskilled manpower could be set up in villages. Traditional occupation like weaving, pottery could be strengthened with little innovations and marketing. Food processing industry could be encouraged. Tax concession should be given to aquaculture, horticulture, sericulture etc. to encourage value added produces from villages.

Education Facilities:-

Education is the only weapon that could change mind set of villagers. Various government schemes are not implemented due to the lack of participation from villagers. In order to empower villagers to participate in governance and improve quality of life in rural areas, educational facilities must be provided to all sections at an affordable price at a near place.

Rural Credit:-

Much of the rural credit was offered by commercial banks under various schemes of priority sector lending. Due to the changed regulation in the banking sector, banks are reluctant to lend to the rural sector because of poor recovery. Cooperative societies have failed to maintain themselves and many of them are about to be closed. Finance is the single most important problem faced by rural farmers. Private money lenders are changing abnormal rates of interests due to which farmers could not come out of debt trap.

Marketing Facilities:-

Marketing yards, cold storages, government procurement etc, have helped farmers to market their produce. Farmers are not able to market their produce at far off places due to restrictions on the movement of food grains. Government should remove all the restrictions to set agriculture produce within the country. Government should declare minimum support prices to agriculture produces and ensure that farmers benefit out of that.

Providing Urban Facilities to Rural Villages:-

Urban attraction like shopping, cable television, Function halls, play ground, schools, colleges, hospitals should be set up in villages. Tax incentives must be given to all types of projects set up in villages.

Development of Rural Infrastructure:-

Rural villages need the basic facilities for living and pursue their occupation of choice. Employees who work in villages stay in nearby towns due to lack of proper amenities. Even rich farmers stay in towns for want of education for their children. Villages must be provided with roads, schools, hospitals, electricity, drinking water etc. which discourage migration to urban areas.

CONCLUSION:-

The above discussion reveals that backwardness of rural area in terms of development. Despite the rapid growth of some related subsectors, the rural economy does not meet the required standard living conditions. Communication,

transport facilities should extend in rural areas at large level for achieving rapid growth and maintenance of sustainable development. Despite the increase in the source of water many villages are not having access to safe drinking water.

Hence focus should be need on rural economy to achieve balanced development.

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258/34 Raviwar Peth Solapur-413005,Maharashtra
Contact-9595359435
E-Mail-ayisrj@yahoo.in/ayisrj2011@gmail.com
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