PART III

WHAT CAN BE DONE

In this section we have analysed problems of the most relevant areas important for development and broad guidelines to tackle the same to place the country amongst the most prosperous and powerful nations in the world.

11

Rural Development

Our first task will be to emancipate our people from their day-to-day sufferings and uncertainties for tomorrow

11.1 Introduction

"Villages are the reflection of our country," is an old saying, today even our cities reflect what we are. Our country is still a land of villages. Unless villages prosper, the country shall not. In the past 60 years, we have provided them relief for droughts, floods, epidemics and starvation deaths but have never attacked the causes effecting the same. Then there was scheme for mid-day meals for the **farmers** of Tamil Nadu. The scheme may be extended to other states also (News item, Jan 2003). Our villages have become living stigmas of harrowing human sufferings, sorrows and maladies. Latest in the series (2005) is 100 days job/year to one person in each family living below the poverty line (Chapter 8) and Rs 500/p.m. to each unemployed youth in UP (Section 5.2 II). And for sure such gimmicks shall only increase the numbers "below the poverty line."

Our thrust shall be to uplift the villages first. We have concrete plans to reverse the present scenario and achieve the impossible through **city centres** discussed in Chapter 12. These plans are evolutionary and together we shall construct them into reality. These will transform the villages into vibrant cities and the villagers into educated urban society with unbound prosperity such that one day the whole country would be placed amongst the most powerful and prosperous nations in the world. While reasonable prosperity shall be achieved within 5-7 years as said before, total transformation may take 20 to 25 years. If not all of us, at least our children will reap the fruits of our hard work, dedication and sacrifice. The job is enormous and everybody shall contribute his might. ***We*** wish to see the transformation take place before our eyes and complete as much of the task as possible in our times, our children doing the rest.

Ours is an agrarian society. Agriculture feeds about 115 cr people and provides livelihood to about 73% of them. It is unfortunate that this sector has remained neglected in the past 60 years. Talking of mid-day meals or 100 days job/year to the same providers of food is an insult. Despite neglect the farmers continue to pursue this profession religiously as they have nothing else to fall back upon. Since most of our resources are generated from the primary and secondary sectors, it is logical that their upliftment is first and foremost as without this the upliftment of the nation will remain only a distant dream. It is unfortunate that along with the system, general public too has no feel for them. We never pause to pity their miserable existence. In fact we despise them as illiterate, backward and ignorant, which to a great extent they are, but they themselves are not responsible for this.

Perennial droughts, floods and lack of earning means have resulted in their large scale exodus to nearby cities in search of livelihood. But this too has a limit and cannot continue for long. After all, urban population is growing too. Means of earning and employment are not rising at a commensurate pace. The scarce means of livelihood and employment shall first go to urban poor and then to migrants and soon shall come a stage when it may become impossible for cities to absorb this immigration. Even now one can witness rising numbers of idle youth in the resettlement colonies in the urban areas. After sometime they may have to necessarily stay back at their home towns and villages and search for means of living there or wait for the mid-day meals or paltry employment schemes of the government. We are not threatening the masses, just cautioning them of the harsh realities that may befall on them in times ahead. With time the situation will only deteriorate. The state of anarchy that has already set-in will rise rapidly and normal living may not only be tough and stressful, it may even become frightening a few years hence. Look at occasional agitations and clashes between people of two or more states on employment issue resulting in tension and killings, the last being (Nov. 2003) in Assam, Bihar, UP and Maharashtra and now in Assam (Jan. 2007) against job seekers from Bihar and other states.

Note

Many large industrial houses — Hindustan Lever, ITC, Reliance, Bharti and Tata to name a few, realizing the neglect of rural sector and large opportunities there have begun spreading their wings in these areas to establish agri-businesses, information and communication systems, large commercial centres and retail supply networks to reach out to the rural masses. All such efforts may generate employment opportunities to the educated few. How many shall be rendered jobless only time will tell. Nevertheless the basic developmental works still remain the responsibility of the

government to make the rural conditions naturally prosperous. SEZs (Section 11.5) too are no solution to alleviate the rural miseries.

11.2 Stopping destruction of our primary resources

To begin with we give below a brief account of how our rich agricultural base has been eroded in the past 60 years.

1. As discussed in Section 5.3 less than 25% of our national income is agri-based and 73% of our rural populace survive on this. This means that roughly three-fourth of our population lives on one-fourth of national income. Their earnings are therefore less than one-ninth[1] that of urban people besides bearing the agonies of droughts, floods and other calamities that they have to weather perennially. The income distribution considered in Table 5.4 corroborates this.
2. Similar inference can be drawn from the area under irrigation. The gross irrigated[2] land in 1950-51 was 2.26 lac km^2 and population 36 cr. By 2002 the irrigated land rose to 9.43 lac km^2 (9.43/2.26 = 4.17 times) and the population to 105 cr (105/36 ≅ 2.92 times). The land area increase in proportion to population rise works out to 43% (4.17/2.92 ≅ 1.43), while the food supply has improved only marginally from 395 gms/day in 1950s to barely 460 gms/day by 2002, a rise of hardly 16%, suggesting misuse of land. Therefore the plight of the rural populace has remained much the same or even worse than it was at the time of independence, neither has the higher yield through green revolution played much role in improving their plight or economy of the nation. **Officially 70% of our children under 5 years of age still suffer from malnutrition or are under-fed, and about 40% of our population is not able to arrange minimum food for themselves as per government statistics (according to us it is minimum 68%).**

   While it is true that the voracious rise in population has swallowed bulk of our riches and resources, it is equally true that somewhere

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1. Rural per unit income = $\frac{25\%}{73\%} \cong \frac{1}{3}$

   Earnings of 27% urban population is about 75% of national income.

   ∴ Urban per unit income = $\frac{75\%}{27\%} \cong 3$

   ∴ Ratio of rural to urban inome = $\frac{1}{3} \div 3 = \frac{1}{9}$

2. Source — *Statistical Abstracts of India*

we have grossly misused our resources as well. Since this is a very serious matter on which depends not only the prosperity and well-being of our rural masses but also the economy and prosperity of the whole nation, we have tried to analyse the reasons of this serious problem as below, to make it easier to tackle the same;

- Sizes of land holdings are too small (Table 11.1).
- Lack of tangible research and development.
- Perennial droughts and floods have destroyed our crops on a regular basis.
- Droughts cause drying up of the surface soil's moisture, resulting in parched and cracked land and receding ground water table. All these land scars drastically erode the soil's genetic stratification and render the soil incapable of supporting the crop compelling us to resort to artificial watering. Excess use of water and fertilizers causes chemical reaction and renders the soil less fertile.
- Same is the effect of floods which bring with it silt and sand, cause water logging, create slush and marshy lands and erode the fertility of the soil.

The perennial recurrences of droughts and floods over the years have eroded the fertility of our arable land to a great extent. While the soil can be partially nurtured through manures, minerals and fertilizers, it is a costly process which our poor farmers can ill afford, even then some permanent scars are left. Moreover doing this is a national loss.

- **Poor quality of seeds**

  In the face of advanced hybrid seeds that the west has developed, we are ages behind. They have developed seeds which raise the crop yield and quality manifold. They have also incorporated in their seeds a property that the crops raised by these seeds yield seeds which do not germinate. They make the grown seeds infertile. Such '**seedless seeds**' are dangerous because if we do not develop our own, every time we will have to buy these from them and pay a heavy price for it. Things have changed in our country also as some hybrid seeds have been developed by us too, but a lot more needs to be done on this front.

  Note

  I remember the story of one of my friends, who had a kitchen garden and who used to grow tomatoes. Every time he would buy a packet of thousands of Indian seeds for just a rupee and every time the seed merchant would advise

him to buy American seeds costing rupees ten for 40 seeds. He won't buy these because of cost. One year out of curiosity he bought a packet. He was amazed to see the size and quality of tomatoes grown with these seeds. But when he tried to dry the seeds and grow more plants they would not germinate and he had to buy fresh seeds every time.

- Lack of modern irrigation systems and mechanisation and sticking to primitive and outdated practices of irrigation and harvesting.

  Note

  Even if we use mechanised farming the size of most of our land holdings is too small to make use of these techniques. Mechanisation is imperative; the sooner we adopt to it the better. That would mean that smaller farmers may have to form cooperatives or sell their plots to bigger farmers. Mechanisation will result in large-scale unemployment and alternative means of employment shall have to be evolved to engage the unemployed. We have identified enough avenues where they can be gainfully engaged (Chapter 1).
- Lack of educational back-up and guidance to the farmers.
- Inadequate prevention from insects and diseases. Sometimes it is not the floods or droughts that harm the crops but the spurious insecticides that cause the damage. The poor farmer spends money on these crop-saving chemicals but many a time these are ineffective and the whole crop either gets destroyed or results in poor yield. In Warangal district (Andhra Pradesh) alone, Rs 200 cr worth of insecticides were used during a particular year but these were ineffective, being spurious. **Fake pesticides destroy crops worth thousands of crores every year.** We have failed to protect our crops from insects and the farmers from man-turned fratricides.
- Inadequate and poor quality fertilizers.
- Lack of irrigation means – canals, rivers, ponds, pumps and shortage of power.
- Poor storage system and rodents destroying the crops.
- Lack of easily accessible markets and proper transportation system.

With mechanised farming, hybrid seeds and technological advancements the US employs just 2% of its population in the primary sector as against our 73% rural populace engaged in this activity. The disparity of income and poverty in our case is therefore conspicuous (it also forewarns us that besides other evils, we are also far too many by size of population).

Before the industrialised countries' highly scientific and mechanised farming our practices of farming are primitive and outdated. Now foreign investors are eyeing on our farmlands. They will club small holdings and

implement their farming techniques on our lands. The process has begun. If it picks up where will our landless farmers go! **We are afraid we may be on the threshold of a self-afflicted economic slavery once again.** History tells us that our farmers have fought many battles at different times for their survival. They fought with East India Company in 1859 and against unscrupulous financiers in 1874. They may have to fight yet again, this time against their own inert, kleptocratic and fratricidal system of governance.

LAND HOLDINGS

Table 11.1
Approximate land holdings

No. of farmers		**Approx. land holding each farmer**	**Total land holding**	
(crore)	%	(hectares)	(lac hectare)	%
0.20		17	340	
0.75	3.07	6	450	44.1
10.0	32.31	1[a]	1000	55.9
20.0	64.62	Landless farm labour [a]	-	-
Total 30.95 cr (the rest may be their dependents)			[b]1,790 lac hect or 17.9* lac km^2 (56.5% of available land area)	

1 hect = 10,000 sq m. Source : based on Statistical Abstract, 1999

* For break up see Table 11.3.

[a]1. Most of them live under stark poverty.

2. Many of them have almost negligible land holdings. Since major part of the land holdings is small, farming has become unviable. A radical change is required before we can expect a high yielding agri base.

[b]1. This is suggestive of harsh reality of the acute shortage (and consequent limitations) of available land for meeting rising urban needs. Even if we aim at reforestation at 26% only (of usable land) hardly 12% will be available for urbanisation (housings, industries, education, medical services, roads, rivers, canals, ponds, railways, civic services etc.), see Table 11.3. No surprise that all our cities (big or small) are already so crammed that proper movement on roads and breathing have become difficult leading to congestion and suffocation. Under these circumstances it will be catastrophic to think that we shall be able to convert more of our already hard pressed agriculture land for rapidly increasing urbanisation. In fact we have already over-utilised the land for urbanisation. **Caution! Stop the increase in population immediately. Moreover setting up of SEZs shall further erode the agri-base (Section 11.5)**

2. Of 17.9 lac km^2 the present gross irrigated area is only 9.43 lac km^2 (52.7%) (2002) as noted before. For more details see Section 11.4.

The green revolution thus has been only partially achieved. Moreover primary activity of farm development and high agriculture yield alone may not provide the desired results, unless it is also supported by secondary and tertiary activities - processing, manufacturing and marketing (and of course a meticulous control over population). This would mean a closed loop economy where one activity will be supported by another in the form of vertical integration. **Industrialisation of rural areas and involvement of rural populace in such activities is therefore a must to constructively engage the surplus rural populace.**

We have plans to achieve all this by improving the working conditions of cultivation (water and land management) and methods of working (scientific and mechanised farming). When this happens, our agri-yield will go up by at least 700-1000% within 5 to 7 years of what it is now, it could be even more and the plight of our rural populace shall improve tremendously. The country will become healthier and wealthier. **The concept of city centres is developed keeping these needs in mind.**

11.3 Stopping ruralization of urban areas

By urbanisation we mean development and growth of villages into cities and not migration of rural masses to urban areas. Statistics provided in Table 11.2a and b, however, speak to the contrary.

Table 11.2 a
Distribution of population

Year	Total population	Urban population		Rural population	
	(cr)	%	(cr)	%	(cr)
1901	23.84	10.85	2.59	89.15	21.25
1951	36.10	17.3	6.24	82.70	29.86
1991	84.63	25.7	21.75	74.30	62.88
2000	100.00	27.0	27.00	73.00	73.00

Source : *Central Statistics Organisation, Govt. of India* and *India 2001*

Urban population in 1901 was 2.59 cr compared to rural 21.25 cr. This can be considered as our basic demography in terms of urban and rural populations. The rate of growth of urban population by percentage and numbers should be much less than the rural population, because of their family control disciplines. Even if we consider the same rate of growth in the past one hundred years for urban and rural populations these figures would work out as under,

Table 11.2 b

Year	Total population (cr)	Urban population (cr)	Rural population (cr)
1901	23.84	2.59	21.25
2000	100.00	$\frac{100}{23.84} \times 2.59 = 10.86$ (as against 27.0)	$\frac{100}{23.84} \times 21.25 = 89.14$* (as against 73.0)

* In our discussions and inferences we have considered this figure as 91 cr (or 91%) to be more close to reality (see Section 5.3).

It reveals that the rural population is migrating to cities in search of livelihood. **The rise in urban population is therefore, not urbanisation rather ruralization of urban areas in the past 60 years because of appalling rural conditions incapable of sustaining its populace.** This has crowded cities with mushrooming of *jhopar pattis* and cuddled clusters of hutments at every nook and corner. In urban areas filth and dirt has become the usual arena and order of the day. **We failed to urbanize the rural areas, instead ruralized the urban areas, similar to removing the rich when we failed to remove poverty or stopping of teaching English when failed to educate the children.** One can now realistically visualise whether the country has made any progress in the past 60 years? The 68% populace of our country (in villages or cities) are poor, illiterate and weak in more than one way. The small development that meets the eye is meaningless. The work to be done is Herculean and near impossible. **But *we* have found ways and means how we can still steer through the enormous difficulties and lack of means to achieve our impossible-looking goals.**

As soon as we start working on **city centres** the situation will begin to reverse. We can expect this to start happening in about 5 to 7 years time depending upon the response and faith of the people in our plans. This will make the floating and migrated population return to their homes and also attract industries and businesses to these **city centres** easing pressure on cities. When this starts happening the cities can also be developed and beautified as much as practical from the present decaying state. **Development of city centres will one day transform the crumbled facets of our cities also and the whole nation shall not only regain its lost glory and reverence, it shall emerge as one of the mightiest and most prosperous nations in the world.**

11.4 Stopping misuse of land

The geographical boundaries of a country are already defined and the area bounded by these cannot be increased irrespective of rise in

population or misuse of land. Rather it may shrink gradually due to the greenhouse effect, which is causing the sea level to rise, inundating the coastal areas that we have on three sides of us (Section 18.6). **To accommodate rising population we denude forests or reclaim arable lands and for increasing agri-produce we try to reclaim more land out of fallow lands, unused lands or once again denude the forests. Every process has a limit and it cannot be infinite (see Table 11.3). But we love to remain oblivious to these frightening facts. We are already in the thick of a vicious circle.** We cannot for long convert arable land for urbanisation. The forest cover is already at a depleted low and human endeavour around the world is to raise the same as much as possible. Even we would like to raise it to at least 31-33% of the total land area from the present about 21.33%, but it is not feasible, as we have no land that can be earmarked for this. We can only improve the quality of our existing forests, make them dense and make prudent use of this resource and grow such trees that can provide better means to mankind. Destruction of forests will lead to destruction of mankind too. Those who are aware, know its seriousness. We also need land for more canals, ponds, constructing dams, adding more railway tracks, road routes and industries. But where is the land for all this? We already live in compact houses and crammed cities. The more we think the more aghast we become and this is awareness. ***We*** want our people also to be more aware of this frightening situation and think about it. One can visualise the acuteness of the problem by the disposition of land computed in Table 11.3.

The utilisation shown above is on optimum basis when every inch of land is utilised. But land cannot be utilised up to 100%, as lots of free spaces are automatically wasted when actually working. Moreover, we have optimistically taken into account retrieving and making use of the barren and unculturable land also besides the culturable waste and fallow lands as much as feasible even at some extra cost. To what extent we can succeed, only the experts can suggest. However, it is for sure that we cannot utilise the available land up to 100%. Even if we can, this is the maximum available to us. You will see that we have utilised almost the total available land and hardly any scope is left for further utilisation. It is a serious situation. One must understand that there is no scope for any further population increase. If our population rises we should also know its consequences. Life will become worse than living hell on earth. Even now living in cities is no less tormenting.

Table – 11.3
Utilisation of available land
(Data refer to the year 1999)

S. No	Disposition of Land	Present utilisation of available land (31.66 lac km²), (Chapter 4)		Tentative utilisation envisaged
		lac km²	%	%[a]
1.	Arable land	14.20[b]	44.85	50[c]
2.	Land under misc. tree groves	0.36	1.14	1.14
3.	Permanent meadows	1.09	3.44	5.0
4.	i) Culturable waste land	1.39[b]	4.39	nil
	ii) Fallow lands	2.41 [b]	7.61	nil
5.	i) Barren and unculturable land (mountains, deserts, sand dunes, marshy lands)	1.90	6.00	5.86
	ii) Data not available	1.17	3.70	
6.	Forests	6.89[d]	21.76	26[e]
7.	Area under rural and urban habitation, roads, railways, rivers, canals, ponds and civic services	2.25[g]	7.11	12[f]
	Total	31.66 lac km²	100%	100%

Source : Based on *Statistical Abstracts*, 1999

a This is only indicative. Exact details will be worked out by the experts in the respective fields to make optimum use of available land.

b 1. These together (S.No. 1 and 4) form the total land holding indicated in Table 11.1.

2. Of 14.2 lac km² arable land, present gross irrigated area is only 9.43 lac km² (net area is only 5.47 lac km²) suggesting enough potential for land development and water management.

3. With the gradual urbanisation and depletion of ground water table the dry agriculture lands are rising and so are rising the fallow and unculturable lands. This is gradually eroding the available agri-land for cultivation. The well-to-do farmers are sinking bore-wells to suck the ground water for their needs further depleting the ground water table. The dreadful effects of all this is rise in the dry lands. This is evolution of making of new deserts, sand dunes and drying of plants and trees dependent on soil moisture. All this is an alarming situation and a disaster in the making. Do we have some one in the present system to comprehend this and capable to stop further degeneration of scarce usable lands and also take immediate remedial measures to improve the ground water table?

c It is when we consider to stop our population growth at 125 cr. Otherwise increased population will demand increased land for irrigation and habitation and neither of that will be available. If the population exceeds this there may start some kind of self

destruction of human race. In our new system, however, we have considered a diminishing population (Chapter 13).

d Reduced to 6.755 lac km^2 by 2001 (State of Forest report 2001).

e To improve environment we shall take care to create as much green belt as possible within the **city centres**, along the railway tracks and roadsides etc. as discussed in Chapter 12. The concept of going vertical shall increase our green belt area remarkably and improve environment enormously.

f To be on the safe side and to provide better living conditions to our people we have added the area of **city centres** of 1.5 lac km^2 in the present utilised area of 2.25 lac km^2 (totalling 3.75 lac km^2 which is about 12% of total land area)

g Assumptions :

1. City centres (see Chapter 12) :

Area of each centre	$\cong$ 150 km^2
Number of centres	= 1000
$\therefore$ Land area required	= 1000 × 150
	= 1.5 lac km^2

2. Major Cities :

Presently Existing	$\cong$ 100
Area of each city (approx.)	= 400 km^2
Land area covered	= 100 × 400
	= 0.4 lac km^2

[The remaining towns and villages will be merged with the **city centres**]

3. Roads and Railways

Roads	= 25 lac km
Railways	= 1.1 lac km
Total length	= 26.1 lac km

Considering average width of each road or rail track as 30m.

$$\therefore \text{Approx. covered area} = \frac{26.1 \times 30\text{m}}{1000} = 0.783 \text{ lac km}^2$$

4. Rivers, canals, ponds and lakes etc. = 0.783 lac km^2
(assuming equal to roads and railways)
Total area for rural and urban habitation
(1 to 4) = 3.466 lac km^2
(10.95% of the total land area)

Note

Since our impetus shall be on hydel power generation to its optimum level (Chapter 17), the excess land area (12% against 10.95%) considered by us may account for catchment and submerged land areas. However, utmost efforts shall be put to contain erosion and submersion of land as much as possible.

Propriety of Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

SEZs will further shrink the agri-land. The agri-share in GDP as such is depleting at an alarming rate. It has already shrunk from 40% in 1980-81 to 22% by 2003-04 and 21% by 2005-06 while population is rising voraciously. We have also resorted to import of wheat to meet our needs. With passage of time it may assume frightening proportions with heavy imports of food grains, their prices having started rising already. The large-scale official land garb for SEZs by the state governments at throwaway prices is mind-boggling. It has turned into a looting spree by the rich and the politicians.

The players in SEZs are top rich houses of the country who possess large resources to finance such projects. They surely will make huge fortunes out of them. Sops to them in terms of tax holidays and export benefits besides lands at throwaway prices is conspicuously misconceived and malicious. So much so that business and services operating in such areas shall also be entitled to such sops. All this in the guise of export promotion and infrastructure to be created by private hands, a job supposedly of the government.

Also there is sudden spurt of builders and developers in the past few years occupying every inch of usable land in and around urban areas unmindful of traffic congestions and lack of civic amenities (supposedly in connivance with the civic authorities). Real estates have also given boost to large-scale money-laundering and utilization of wealth amassed through unscrupulous means. The unplanned urbanization through colonisations and SEZs may also erode an already haphazard nation, further cramming the urban areas which are already a curse to the inhabitants and commuters.

Instead of developing the dwindling agri-land we are attempting to destroy the same and distributing sops to the rich few for the woes of 86% deprived. This is besides dent in the economy by way of loss of revenues. The short-term enrichment of the farmers (by land acquisitions) is also a long-term curse for them in the absence of regular earning means.

In the whole gambit, the poor man is a non-entity and destined to end up as a daily wager, domestic help, petty vendor or a destitute. The down-trodden is down and supposed to watch the glitter only from afar.

In total conceptual contrast our idea of **city centres** is to uplift and urbanise the rural areas through a holistic planning of the nation. It attempts to uplift the masses naturally with avenues created to self-determination and dignified earning. Our aim is to gradually bring them into the mainstream and work together for the absolute growth and prosperity of the nation.