

Equality-Oriented Rural Development in India— Its Origins, Shaping and Consequences

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A review of the rural development of independent India suggests that it has gone through some phases. In the 1950s the basic infrastructure for rural development has been created. In the 1960s, the main concern of rural development was to achieve rapid growth through intensive cultivation. In the 1970s and 1980s, there has been an emphasis to achieve growth-with-equity in the rural sector. Thus, the rural developmental attempts in independent India can be viewed in terms of infrastructure building, growth and equity phases.

Out of these phases of rural development in India, the growth-oriented phase was most remarkable for several reasons. It is this phase during which 'Green Revolution' took place and it is the phase which also resulted a major imbalance in the rural India and had the potentiality to disrupt the existing social order (Frankel, 1972:198-9). Fortunately, the policy makers took a timely note of the situation and as a corrective measure, growth-oriented strategy was replaced by equity-oriented strategy. This shift in the policy from growth to equity is very significant, as this shows the equilibrium maintaining nature of the Indian State. Thus, this paper attempts to examine how this shift to equity-oriented rural development was conceived? How the Policy regarding equity-oriented rural development was formulated? and how this policy has been operationalised?

Several equity-oriented rural development programmes have been introduced in India during 1970s and 1980s. [1] Of these programmes, the Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA) programme was the pioneering one. Besides, this programme was very wide in coverage as this was a programme for small farmers, marginal