

QUESTIONS ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

SSI and Rural Development

Q. "Unless the Small-Scale Industries (SSI) and Cottage Industries are set up in a big way, rapid development in the rural areas is not possible in India." Give arguments For and Against this view.

Ans. *It is well-known that most of the Indian population still lives in the rural areas and the policies aimed at rural development directly influence this segment of population. Immediately after independence, agricultural sector was high on the agenda of the government and the measures like land reforms and 'Green Revolution' contributed immensely to strengthen the primary sector as well as the rural areas in the country. But it was realised that the farm-based development model would yield only moderate and low growth rate as the monsoons played very vital role in the growth of agriculture, despite the extension of green revolution to many parts of the country. Eighties and nineties in the previous century witnessed the rapid growth of the manufacturing and services sectors, as the government nursed these sectors for higher growth. But in the manufacturing and industrial sectors the emphasis was on heavy and medium industries and though the importance of the SSI and Cottage industries was well-known, yet this area remained a low priority area. Many feel that the development of the rural areas in the country to the desired extent may not take place unless the government promoted SSI and cottage industries in a big way.*

Arguments For the View

(a) SSI and cottage industries have the potential for more employment generation as these units are generally labour-intensive and employ lesser capital. Moreover, the requirements of labour are also non-skilled in nature and the people in the rural areas are able to get employment without migrating to the urban areas.

(b) Even the entrepreneur skills are not required to be of very high order. If this sector is duly promoted by the government, the pace of rural development can be hastened.

(c) Small-scale industries can easily be set-up in the rural areas, giving all the resultant benefits to the local population in these areas. The problem of disguised unemployment in the agriculture sector would also be tackled considerably.

(d) In addition to employment generation and development of the infrastructure in the rural areas, the setting up of more SSI and cottage industry units would result in more investment in these areas. As a result the economic activity would pick up and the growth in and

around the SSI areas would have a cascading effect on the rural economy of India.

(e) Raw material requirement of most of the SSI and cottage industries is agro-based. Required skills are also locally available. Since the urban professionals would be reluctant to move to such areas, more opportunities for the rural labour force would open up even at the supervisory and executive levels.

Arguments Against the View

(a) The problems of the rural economy in India cannot be solved by only one solution in the form of development of SSI and cottage industries in these areas. The problem needs to be tackled in a holistic manner and a package of measures is required to be undertaken.

(b) It is important for the rural economy in India to attract more capital investment to generate the desired level of economic activity there. It need not be only in the SSI or cottage industry and could be in heavy industries, infrastructure or even in the social sector. Hence, the endeavour of the government should be to promote capital investment in the rural areas by adopting appropriate policies to ensure rapid development of these areas.

(c) Agriculture is the backbone of the rural economy in India. Most of the rural population is well-versed with the conventional agricultural practices. Rather than developing the SSI and cottage industries exclusively for rapid development of the rural areas, the primary sector also needs to be strengthened by encouraging more investment, irrigation facilities, better quality seeds and diversification and selective commercialisation of agriculture.

(d) There is a need to carry out a massive exercise of human resource development of the rural population and appropriate policies must be framed and adopted to make use of this resource in the developmental process of the country. This need not be only in the SSI and cottage industries.

Social Change and Development

Q. "Economic development is the most important change agent in Indian society." Give arguments For and Against this view.

Ans. *India is a traditional society and has been so for the past several centuries. Family system and social values are dominant in India and influence most parts of Indian society as well as the*

economy. Indian culture influences most processes in the economy. For the past several years the Indian economy has been growing at a rapid pace. At the same time, over the years Indian society is also experiencing some discernible changes. It has been established by some studies that there is some link between the economic development and positive social change. Even in India, high economic development is also accompanied by certain changes in the society, like dilution of caste system and improvements in the position of women in the society. This also means that rapid economic development is one of the most important change agents for positive social change in Indian society.

Arguments For the View

(a) Economic development directly results in improving the economy of the nation concerned and the income levels tend to rise with higher levels of economic development. Higher incomes, in turn, bring in certain changes in the society. Hence, it is certainly an important change agent for the society.

(b) Primitive societies tend to protect their culture and social values. But when the wave of modernisation hits such societies, their value system as well as social practices gets disturbed. Most of the times such a shift is positive, but in some cases it could harm the society. In any case this triggers the process of social change in the society.

(c) Empirical evidence has been that the rapid economic development has always acted as an agent of social change. To this extent India is no exception and here also the higher pace of development is acting as an important change agent in the society.

(d) With rapid development, the processes of urbanisation as well as industrialisation become prominent. These two changes influence the social fibre in the form of family system as well as the position of the women in the society. This change in the Indian society is being witnessed today and the economic development has already become an important change agent for the society.

Arguments Against the View

(a) It is wrong to say that rapid development is the most important change agent in the society. In fact, it is the sociological factors which result in bringing change in the society. Economic development may have certain impact, but it is not the most important factor.

(b) Social change is an ongoing process and is not hampered by the rate of development of the economy. It may coincide with rapid development but it is only incidental.

(c) Exposure to modernisation and literacy are the two most important factors that influence the social change in any country. Pace of development may be one of the factors, but it certainly is not the most important factor responsible for changes in the society.

(d) Economic development levels determine the living standards, literacy levels, moral values in the society, outlook of the people towards life and consciousness towards healthcare. All these aspects may be responsible for certain degree of change in the social behaviours over a period of time. But this does not mean that the pace of

economic development acts as the most important change agent.

Environment and Awareness

Q. "Awareness of general public is more important than the legislative framework to check the environmental degradation in India." Give arguments For and Against this view.

Ans. Degradation of environment has emerged as a serious problem in the country today. The pressure of increasing population is one of the most important factors to have triggered it in India. The nation needs to grow rapidly and for that rapid industrialisation is being pursued. Industrialisation results in higher levels of pollution of the air, as well as that of the water. In addition, certain industries produce a lot of pollutants in the form of solid wastes. Urbanisation is yet another factor that contributes to the water pollution and generates lot of solid waste pollutants. Increasing number of vehicular traffic in the country, particularly in the urban areas, adds to this problem. Needs of fuel for the rural poor and the requirement of fodder for sustaining a large number of cattle in the country have resulted in deforestation and soil erosion. Various laws have been enacted to check the degradation of the environment. Awareness programmes have also been launched. Many people feel that it is more important to increase the awareness about the environment among the people, rather than having stricter laws to check the environmental degradation in the country.

Arguments For the View

(a) Environmental degradation affects the human beings the most. Hence, the people have to be made aware about the environmental issues and this aspect is more important than having legal framework to ensure clean environment.

(b) Any law which is not in the common knowledge of the majority of population is of no use.

(c) It is not possible for the law enforcing agencies to be present at each and every place of violation of the environmental laws. But if adequate public awareness is there, some enlightened person would point out the violation and force the violator to act as per law.

(d) Today's children are the citizens of tomorrow. It is better to educate the children about the environment and catastrophic consequences of its mindless degradation.

Arguments Against the View

(a) It is not possible for the enforcement agencies to take action or to move to protect the environment unless there is a law in their support.

(b) Even if the public awareness is there, it is of no use unless the aware public also knows that in the event of non-compliance there will be prosecution under law.

(c) Laws act as deterrents. Hence, the legal framework can only be supplemented by the public awareness. Public awareness cannot replace the need for having a law.

(d) It may be wrong to say that public awareness alone is more important. The awareness required by the society emanates from the legal framework.