

The Growing Rural-Urban Disparity in India: Some Issues

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ABSTRACT

The paper critically examines the understanding, approach and indicators that have been used to measure the degree of disparity. It is fact that disparity exists everywhere. However, this paper highlights on disparities existing between rural and urban areas. In this context, it talks about 'why' and 'how' disparities exist between rural and urban areas. The study suggests that 'income' is not a sufficient indicator to capture the magnitude of disparities at any level. It is, therefore, necessary to develop some indicators representing human resource development and infrastructure facility to understand the growing rural-urban disparity in India.

Keywords : Disparity, HRD, Gender Issues, India

1 INTRODUCTION

RURAL-urban disparities, particularly in post-colonial countries, have for long been one of the causes of concern for the policymakers. The disparities are seen in all spheres of human life-economic and non-economic. The extent of disparities, however, differs from country to country. India is the largest democracy with consistent economic growth rate since independence. India is also third largest scientific and technological workforce. In agriculture India produces sugar, groundnut, tea, fruits, rice, wheat, vegetables and milk in a large scale. With regard to demographic profile more than 720 billion i.e. one third of its population live in rural areas. Despite these developments, there is a wide gap between rural and urban India with respect to technology, living condition, economic empowerment etc. Many in rural India lack access to education, nutrition, health care, sanitation, land and other assets and they are trapped into poverty. In rural India there is high number of Infant Mortality with low Life Expectancy at Birth Rate. Rural India mostly depends on agricultural sector. The growth rate in agricultural sector (primary sector) is 2-3% when compared to secondary and tertiary sector which are growing at the rate of 8-12%. Due to this there is a large scale migration of labour forces from rural to urban in search of employment. 8-12% growth rate in the secondary and tertiary sector help Urban India as an emerging global information based economy still urbanization of poverty is a major concern. In this paper an attempt is made to study the rural-urban disparity with the help of selected socio-economic indicators. Apart from this, condition of women in rural-urban area is also discussed in this paper.

2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To explain the nature of rural-urban disparity;
- To analyse rural-urban disparity on the basis of select socio-economic indicators; and

- To examine the status of women in rural and urban India.

3 METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary data collection. The secondary data was collected by various published sources like Census Report, NSS Report, Economic Survey, Demographic and Health Surveys, Human Development Report, Books, Journal, Magazine, etc. The findings were discussed in the light of published literature.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The total land area of India is 2,973,190 Sq.Km. Of which 70% of area comes under Rural area which consists of 6,40,867 villages. Out of this 5,98,000 are inhabited villages. There are only 7,935 towns and 4,041 urban areas as per 2011 Census of India.

From the below Table 1, we can understand that rural population constitute more than one third of the total population of India. But with respect to other development indicators rural India is far behind. This we can understand from the following socio-development indicators.

Table 1
Population in India

India	Total	Male	Female
Total	1210193422	623724248 (51.5%)	586469174 (48.5%)
Rural	833087662 (68.8%)	51.4%	48.6%
Urban	377105760 (31.2%)	51.9%	48.1%

Source: Census of India, 2011

SEX RATIO

The sex ratio is the proportion of females to males in a given population, usually expressed as the number of females per 1000 males. In India the sex ratio as per 2011 Census is 940 female per 1000 males. In rural area this number is 947 females per 1000 males but in urban area this ratio is lower than all India average. This obviously shows that the urbanization process in India does not bring desired social changes and did not bring any positive attitudinal change towards women. Advanced technologies influenced the urban masses to terminate the girl child in the foetus itself. High mortality of women during pregnancy is also one of the reasons for low sex ratio. We can substantiate this argument by looking at the overall maternal mortality rate in India. This coupled with gender bias at health care and less social attention to girl child results in missing women. The sex ratio in India is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Sex Ratio

India	940
Rural	947
Urban	926

Source Census of India, 2011

LITERACY RATE

Education plays a pivotal role in laying a proper foundation for the overall social and economic development of any region. No single nation in the world with illiterate and uneducated people is developed or advanced. Education is an investment that contributes to individual and social development. Many developing countries have achieved universal primary education enrolment as a result of their efforts over the past decades. In particular last 50 years many developing countries invested more resources in education. The rate of growth of educational system exceeded the rate of economic growth. As per the Millennium Development Goals the following targets are proposed to be achieved by the year 2015.

1. All children to complete full course of five years of primary education.
2. Eliminate Gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all education by 2015.

After independence India started its planning process but the impact of colonial legacy influenced our educational system but still we concentrate on achieving universal primary education, mass education, adult education etc. The constitution of India has resolved to provide free universal primary education. It stated that "the state shall Endeavour to provide, within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years (Article 45). From the first five year plan onwards, Government of India concentrated on education as well as economic growth. But only in the year 1966 the Kothari commission stressed the relationship between education and productivity and the critical

role of education in National development clearly. The fifth five year plan recognized education as a key factor in production. However, many countries are still far from achieving this goal. The 42nd amendment to the constitution in 1976 brought education which was largely a state responsibility into the concurrent list making the education as the responsibility of both the state and centre. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment stressed the greater role of Panchayats in education especially elementary education and the 86th amendment to the constitution in the year 2002 made education as a fundamental right.

The following Table 3 shows the percentage of literate population. This will help us to understand where India stands in its educational status.

Table 3
Literacy Rate

India	Total	Male	Female
Total	74.0%	82.1%	65.5%
Rural	68.9%	78.6%	58.8%
Urban	85.0%	89.7%	79.9%

Source: Census of India, 2011

Literacy is an effective tool for empowerment. The following factors like women's education, women's ownership pattern, employment opportunities and the working of the labour market are important for empowerment. All international conferences like Beijing Platform for Action, Millennium summit have given importance to literacy. If human beings are educated their productivity will increase and they concentrate on their well-being. In India only 68.9% of people are literate in rural areas. Where as this percentage is higher in urban areas which accounts for 85.0%. In rural areas percentage of male literate is 78.6% nearing urban literacy percentage. But literacy among women in rural area is very low. This also contributed to the low development of socio-economic indicators in rural areas. In spite of several measures taken by both central and state government, literacy rate remains to be low in India, particularly in Rural India. This is reflecting in all educational indicators also

GENDER DISPARITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

With regard to educational indicators in primary, secondary and tertiary level rural India is lagging behind urban India. The Right to Education Act (RTE) passed in August 2009 has committed the Government of India to the provision of free and compulsory education to all Indian children. To measure the educational status at the school level there are several indicators. With regard to Net attendance Rate there is not much difference between rural and urban areas, among male and female in urban India and male Net attendance rate is higher than female. Several studies cited the reasons for the low attendance rate in rural areas. Familial commitment, migration, climate induced disasters, famine and poverty led the girl children to abandon schools in rural areas. Rapid urbanization and globalization led to the development of many slums in the urban India. Children in urban areas are also lack access to schools.

Table 4
Net Attendance Rate-Primary

India	Total	Male	Female
Total	88.3%	85.2%	81.4%
Rural	81.5%	-	-
Urban	88.5%	-	-

Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2005-06

Like primary school the net attendance rate of secondary school in rural areas is very low and it is only 49.1 %. This figure is slightly higher in urban areas. But the figure is not promising in both rural and urban areas

Table 5
Net Attendance Rate-Secondary

India	Rural	Urban
Total	49.1%	64.2%

Source: Demographic and Health Surveys, 2005-06

HEALTH

Status of health shows the development of the society. This health status is influenced by different indicators like employment, income, educational attainment, social groups, level of awareness, accessibility to health care and availability of health services. Poor health leads to deficiency in human capabilities and it also shows the level of deprivation among the people. There is a close linkage between health and poverty and health and development but the relationship is very complex. So the poor health is considered as the major constraint of development. Health being the basic rights of all individuals, they are entitled to have quality health care service, safe drinking water, sanitation and so on. It becomes the obligation of the government to care for the health condition of the people.

Health is wealth. Good health and nutritional status is one of the indicators of the overall well being of population and human resources development, and also an important component of human capability. In few states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu in India there has been a significant improvement in the health and nutritional status. Over the last two decades India had a steady improvement in the health condition of its people. But the percentage of underweight children and severely malnourished children is alarming. India has number of programmes for childhood care for survival growth and development and better nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women.

However, sub-clinical malnutrition incidence of low weight for age, anaemia, disability and hunger still continues to prevail among children in the lower socio-economic sections of the population particularly in rural India. This prevents them from reaching their full potential as vibrant and productive adults. Among upper socio-economic groups in urban India new problems of malnutrition such as obesity are manifesting themselves which arise out of increased consumption of processed and refined foods combined with sedentary life styles. This leads to great rural-urban divide in the health status. To measure the health status indicators like

birth rate, death rate, total fertility are, percentage of anemia, Doctor-patient ratio are used. Government of India collects these data regularly and analyze and publish. These data are published in the form of National Family Health Survey and District Level Household Survey. Being a signatory of all UN conferences and summits, Government of India is taking number of measures to improve the health status and to minimize the rural-urban disparity.

Table 6
Percentage of Anaemia

India	Total	Rural	Urban
TFR	2.7	3.0	2.1
Children 6-35 months who are anaemic	78.9	80.9	72.2
Ever married women age 15-49 who are anaemic	56.2	58.2	51.5
Pregnant women age 15-49 who are anaemic	57.9	59.0	54.6
Ever married men age 15-49 who are anaemic	24.3	27.7	17.2

Source: NFHS-3, 2005-06

Table 7
Availability of Facilities

India	Total	Rural	Urban
% of Households that have Electricity	70.3	59.8	92.2
Have access to Toilet Facility	49.3	34.1	80.8
Live in a Kachcha House	35.5	46.4	12.9
Live in a Pucca House	32.7	19.6	60.2
Improved source of Drinking Water	84.4	79.6	94.4
Lowest Wealth Quintile	20.0	24.9	2.7
Highest Wealth Quintile	20.0	9.9	55.3
Mean age at Marriage for Boys	24.0	23.4	25.5
Mean age at Marriage for Girls	19.8	19.2	21.2
Births to Women during age 15-19 out of Total Births	5.6	6.4	3.5
Mothers who received and Antenatal Checkups	75.2	70.6	87.1
Institutional Delivery	47.0	37.9	70.5
Delivery at Home	52.3	61.3	29.0
Child Immunization-Children 12-23 months fully Immunized	54.0	50.4	63.1

Source: DHS, 2005-06

Access to safe water refers to percentage of the population who use any of the following types of water supply for drinking: piped water, public tap; borehole/pump; protected well; protected spring; rainwater. Improved water sources not include vendor-provided waters, bottled water, tanker trucks, and unprotected wells and springs. The numerator is the number of persons who use any of the following types of water supply for drinking: piped water, public tap; borehole/pump; protected well; protected spring; rainwater. The denominator is the total population.

The Indian state has the primary responsibility to supply safe drinking water to all the people in the country irrespective of their place of habitat. But the situation is far from desirable. The National Sample Survey (NSS) data (1998, 5th round) shows that while 70.1 per cent of urban dwellers have access to piped water, in the case of the rural people it is as low as 18.7 per cent. Data on rural-urban disparity on the availability of sanitary facilities indicate the gravity of the problem. The NSS data indicate that 84.4 per cent of rural households are devoid of toilet facilities; in the case of urban areas it is 23 per cent.

Government of India by recognizing the importance of health in the process of economic and social development and improving the quality of life of Indian citizens it launched National Rural Health Mission for the effective basic health care system. It adopted the holistic approach by integrating into nutrition, sanitation, hygiene and safe drinking water. It under took a number of measures like improving health infrastructure, pooling resources, integration of organization structure, optimization of health man power etc. The goal of the mission is to improve the availability of and access to quality health care by people especially for those residing in the rural areas, poor, women and children. At the international level world Human Development Report and the reports prepared by World Health Organization reflect the health status of different countries and the report reflected India's position also. India also prepares country human development report. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare maintains the data related to health status. Over a period of time Government of India has increased the health expenditure in GDP.

AGRICULTURE

The agricultural sector has always been an important contributor to the India GDP. This is due to the fact that the country is mainly based on the agriculture sector and employs around 60% of the total workforce in India. The agricultural sector contributed around 18.6% to India GDP in 2005-06.

Agriculture is the mainstay of most post-colonial countries. It supports roughly two-thirds of the workforce. But the lion's share of India's national resources is directed to the non-agricultural sector, as is evident from the Table 8.

Table 8

Sector-wise share in Gross Domestic Product (in percentage)

Sector	1950-51	1970-71	1990-91	1995-96	2005-06
Agriculture including livestock	48.7	39.7	28.7	25.0	18.6
Forestry	6.0	4.0	1.5	1.0	0.9
Fishing	0.7	0.8	0.9	-	-
All other sources	44.6	55.5	69.1	73.1	80.5

Source: NSS, 2005

The agricultural sector has been growing at less than half the pace of the other sectors. During the Seventh Plan, agriculture and allied sectors grew at a rate of 3.4 per cent, while the

national economy grew at 6 per cent. In 1997-98, there was a negative growth of 2 percent in the agricultural sector, although the national economy grew by 5 per cent. The slower rate of growth of agriculture has serious implications for the rural-urban relationship. In an article in Alternative Economic Survey, Kripa Shankar has shown that it results in the further widening of the divide, as the following data relating to agricultural and non-agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) at 1980-81 prices indicate. The GDP per agricultural worker was Rs.2,442.49 in 1950-51, followed by Rs.3,196 in 1970-71 and Rs.3,627 in 1995-96. The GDP per non-agricultural worker rose sharply from Rs.4, 469.63 in 1950-51 to Rs.9,179 in 1970-71 and to Rs.16,715.08 in 1995-96. There has been a further steep rise after the Central government accepted the Structural Adjustment Programme. While the GDP per agricultural worker rose from Rs.3,544.98 in 1990-91 to Rs.3,627 in 1995-96, the per non-agricultural worker rise was from Rs.14,660 to Rs.16,715.08 during the same period. The data tend to show that the ratio between the agricultural output per farm worker and the average output per non-farm worker, which was 1:1.83 in 1950-51, rose to 1:4.6 in 1995-96.

The introduction of the policy of liberalization has affected non-farm employment in rural areas. In 1997-98, the annual increase in non-farm employment in rural areas was 4.06 per cent. In 1983-84 it was 3.28 per cent. During 1999-2000 it came down to 2.14 per cent. The consequence has been a very slow reduction in rural poverty. In 1993-94 it was 39.36 percent, in 1999-2000 the figure came down marginally to 36.35 percent. Agricultural investments account for 10 per cent of the total investments in the country. The neglect of agriculture and allied sectors is evident from the budgetary allocation. It has never been more than 20 per cent. In 1997-98 the Central and State governments spent Rs.12,000 crores on the police, which was marginally lower than the Central and State plan outlay on agriculture and allied activities.

According to one estimate, the average income of an urban dweller is four times higher than that of a rural dweller. Rural deprivation becomes crystal clear if we look at the data on rural India's contribution to the GDP and what the rural areas get back. Rural contribution is 27 percent but the return is 5 per cent.

The Human Development Report of India (2001) attempted to divide the rural and urban household on the basis of their incomes as shown in the Table 9. The income status is reflected in the per capita consumption expenditure. In 1999-2000 the per capita per month consumption expenditure on the rural areas was Rs.486.08 and in the case of urban areas it was Rs.854.96, according to HDR 2001.

In the Human Development Index prepared by the Planning Commission, there is a significant divide. The value for rural areas is 0.340, in the case of urban areas it is as high as 0.511. The index is a composite of variables capturing attainments in three dimensions of human development namely, economic, educational and health. The same is the situation in respect of the Human Poverty Index: rural 42.25 and urban 44.8.

Table 9
Rural-Urban Household Income (in percentage)

Income Groups	Rural	Urban
Low Income(Rs.20,000)	65.4	36.7
Lower Middle(Rs.20,001-40,000)	23.2	33.1
Middle(Rs.40,001-62,000)	7.5	17.1
Upper Middle(Rs.62,001-86,000)	2.5	7.8
High Income	1.4	5.3

Source: Human Development Report of India, 2001

Data collected by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) shows that the average per capita expenditure (MPCE) in rural India during 2000-01 amounted to Rs.499.90, which was a little over the corresponding figure of Rs.914.57 for an urban dweller. Interestingly, the gap between the average for urban and rural areas has widened by over 8 percentage points between 1987-88 and 2000-01. As 1987-88 was a drought year, the increase in the disparity level is all the more significant. The NSSO data show that while 75 per cent of the country's population in 2000-01 resided in rural areas, they accounted for less than 62 per cent of the total consumption expenditure

Table 10
Per 1000 Distribution of Households and Population by MPCE Class

Rural			Urban		
Rs.	House-holds	Pop-ulation	Rs.	House-holds	Pop-ulation
Less than 225	36	42	Less than 300	24	31
225-255	32	39	300-350	22	32
255-300	71	84	350-425	61	84
300-340	80	93	425-500	72	90
340-380	92	102	500-575	72	88
380-420	93	100	575-665	85	95
420-470	105	109	665-775	96	102
470-525	99	97	775-915	103	101
525-615	122	113	915-1120	126	116
615-775	121	104	1120-1500	140	119
775-950	63	52	1500-1925	78	61
950 & above	84	63	1925 & above	121	81

Source: Employment and Unemployment situation in India, NSS 60th Round, Jan-June, 2005.

The above shows the Monthly Percapita Expenditure of household in rural and urban areas in the 2004. The expenditure pattern of the rural area is lower than the urban areas

POVERTY

If we look at the poverty data, a similar situation is noticed. India, a developing economy of over a billion people, recorded a relatively high economic growth during 1980-2000, especially during the 1990s, a decade known for noteworthy structural eco-

nomi c reforms. This period also recorded a decline in the incidence of poverty and improvement in parameters of human development such as levels of literacy, health and nutrition conditions. Development policies focussed on enhanced and targeted public investments in programmes that facilitated improvements in the quality of life of the masses, but the disparity remains. Abusalef Shariff and others, in an article in Economic and Political Weekly (March 1, 2002), have shown that while the share of expenditure on urban poverty alleviation programmes in the total budgetary allocation by the Central government declined from 1 per cent to 0.8 percent during the period between 1990-91 and 2000-01, the per capita expenditure for urban poor increased from Rs.11 to Rs.28 during the same period. But for the rural poor, the per capita expenditure it is just one-eighth of this.

Table 11
Estimates of Poverty (in percentage)

Year	All India	Rural	Urban
1973-74	54.9	54.4	49.0
1977-78	51.3	53.1	45.2
1983-84	44.5	45.7	40.8
1987-88	38.9	39.1	38.2
1993-94	36.0	37.3	32.4
1999-00	26.1	27.1	23.6
2004-05	27.5(URP) 21.8(MRP)	28.3(URP) 21.8(MRP)	25.7(URP) 21.7(MRP)

Source: Economic Survey, 2005-06, Ministry of Finance, GOI

WORK-PARTICIPATION RATE

The labour force participation rate is an overall indicator of the level of market activity and its breakdown by sex and age group gives a profile of the distribution of the economically active population within a country. Work force participation rate in rural areas is higher with 41.9% where as it is 32.2% in urban areas. Among the workforce participation in rural area male constitute 52.4 % and female contributes 30.9%. Female contribution in urban area is only 11.6%.

Table 12
Work Participation Rate

India	Total Population			Total Workers			Work Partici-pation Rate		
	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
2011	1025	53042	49482	40251	27546	12704	39.3	51.9	25.7
Total	2510	2415	8644	2190	3736	8454			
	59								
Rural	7402	38043	35981	31065	19919	11145	41.9	52.4	30.9
	5537	8194	7177	5339	9602	5737			
	1								
Urban	2849	14998	13501	91856	76264	15592	32.2	50.9	11.6
	9568	4221	1467	851	134	717			
	8								

Source: Census of India, 2011

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The sharp increase in rural-urban disparities in India after decades of planned development is alarming. Planning is considered as an instrument to narrow down such disparities. India introduced centralized planning after independence for the overall socio-economic development of the country. India adopted five year and annual plans. The five year plans provide the overall direction and basic framework for policies, programmes and schemes for the ministries. Over the last six decades India's planning process has increasingly recognized the need to address the rural-urban divide and considerable budget allocation addressed these needs. Still differences persist. Along with the rural-urban divide gender inequalities also visible both in rural and urban areas. By realizing gender inequalities in rural and urban areas the government of India introduced monitoring of 27 beneficiary oriented schemes for women by the then department of women and child development in the seventh plan. The eighth plan period (1992-1997) highlighted the need for funds for the development of women. The monitoring of more schemes related to women was continued.

Apart from this, the ministry of finance established expert group in the year 2004 and recommended the establishment of gender budget cells in all departments. In the ninth plan (1997-2002) women's component plan is adopted which ensures not less than 30% of the funds or benefits are earmarked in women related sectors. The tenth plan (2002-2007) adopted women's component plan and gender budgeting. Eleventh plan (2007-2012) mandated to establish the gender budget cells in all ministries and departments. In the year 2005-2006 budgetary allocations under ten demands for grants estimated at a total of Rs.14,379 crore were shown in a separate gender budget statement. In the 2006-2007 budget speech revealed an estimated allocation of Rs.28,737 crore for benefit of women under 24 demands for grants in 18 ministries and departments. The Government of India also adopted gender mainstreaming approach and the ministry of women and child development will serve as a nodal agency for gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming programmes.

6 CONCLUSION

Apart from taking steps to increase human development facilities in the villages, such as health and education, and develop appropriate infrastructure such as roads and marketing facilities, there is the need for generating employment, which can better the living conditions of villagers. We need to adopt a long-term policy, keeping in mind the requirements of the rural and urban areas. A close look at the development plan exercises tends to demonstrate that ad-hocism permeates the policy processes.

In the rural areas there are many resources lying unutilised. It is time to identify these and make proper use of them. The application of Information Technology can be of great help in identifying what is lying unutilised or underutilised.

In West Bengal, it is being done in some rural and municipal areas. Jalpaiguri has done a remarkable job in this regard. It is the only district in the State to go in for participatory decentralised planning. Under this programme, the people themselves prepared village registers, electoral constituency-wise (gram sansad). These registers are mines of information, and they rec-

ord the people's perceptions of development. The database is important for the development planning exercise.

Kerala has shown the way through the people's campaign for decentralised planning. Rural-urban disparity is the least in Kerala. There is a rural-urban continuum, rather than a divide. The people's campaign has definitely helped to make further improvement in the situation. The fact, however, remains that these steps at the State level, no matter how significant they are, cannot fully take care of the problem unless there is a shift of policy at the national level. This calls for sustained pressure from the bottom, that is, rural India. Secondly, urban development in a country like India has to dovetail with rural development. Otherwise, rural out migration will upset the applecart.

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