



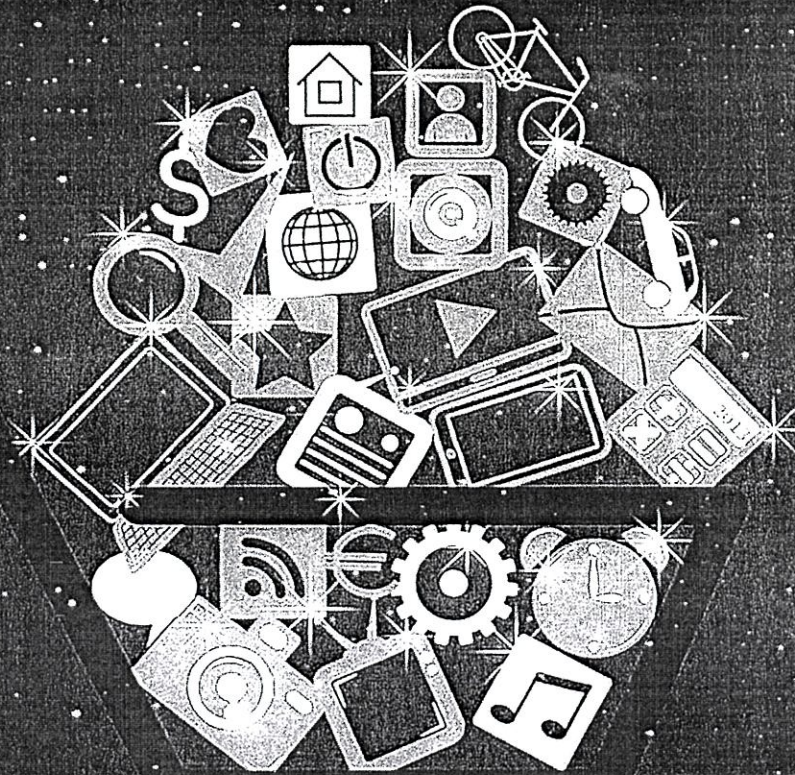
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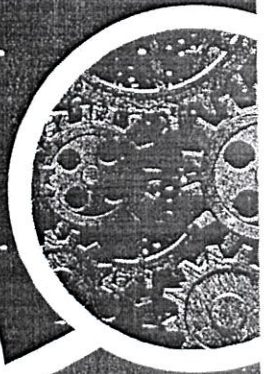
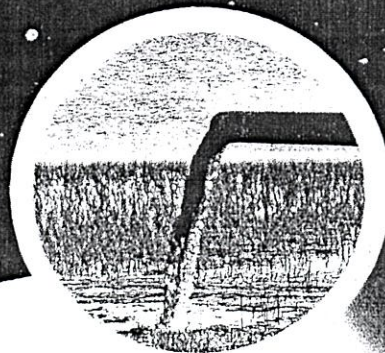
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## 13. Social Transformation through Education in Rural Areas of Dahanu: A Case Study

**Prof. Steven Lobo**

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### **Abstract**

Rural India has always been at the receiving end. They have had their undue share of sufferings whether social, economic or political. They seem like an unwanted lot who have nothing to contribute to society. They have always felt being given a step-motherly treatment when it comes to receiving the goodies that any government doles out. Their hardships are enormous and their livelihood meagre. It is through social transformation that the rural poor can feel uplifted from their miseries. And it is education that can help this social transformation come into being. This researcher has made an attempt to document information in this paper of a philanthropic group of individuals who take time out every month and visit some villages of Dahanu Taluka by personal funding, supervising and being the bridge between the people and corporates so that CSR initiatives can reach them.

### **Introduction**

Rural India is identified as 'Bharat' and urban India is identified as 'India'. Those living in the rural areas have had to pay many a price for the gains of the urban areas. Hence, many in rural India feel that 'Bharat' has been exploited by 'India'. Whether it is the tribals or the farmers, they have always suffered at the hands of their respective situations. If they have to be brought out of this quagmire they must be exposed to development, which in turn can be brought about by a transformation that is long lasting. Several attempts have been made, be it the government, NGOs, groups of people or individuals, to help alleviate the conditions of the people in rural areas.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to understand rural transformation through education and civil society initiatives. There is a group of people who are working very dedicatedly to bring change in their own way and is leaving its mark in certain areas of Dahanu Taluka. The

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researcher would like to document this work done by such philanthropists and motivate readers to lend a helping hand to this group.

### Methodology

This paper depends on primary and secondary sources. The primary source is CA Diren Dalal, who has given an interview and also taken this researcher along to understand the work being done by him and his companions. The secondary sources are books and journals which have helped in having a comprehensive view of rural transformation.

### Review of Literature

Rural development means all round development of the rural areas. There are several objectives that have to be met (Sreedhar & Rajasekhar, 2014). Systemic changes have been realized through technology, information and values. There are challenges though for bringing rural transformation through (Reddy, 2005).

Though India's economy has seen newer heights, agriculture hasn't and farmers have been committing suicide (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2013). The government is making efforts through its institutions to formulate and implement programmes through all the three tiers of governance (Sahu, 2003). Voluntary organizations on their part have been doing much work through initiatives which even the government isn't able to (Patil, 2015). The very structure of NGOs helps them in playing a very important and effective role in bringing about this transformation in rural India.

It was Jawaharlal Nehru's dream to end poverty, ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunity (Dev, 2004). He wanted science and technology to help in changing the scenario in modern India (Fernandes, 2007). Over time it has been realized that entrepreneurship, if it is strategically used, can enhance the socio-economic life of the rural poor (Venkatesh, 2009). An important parameter for change is education. The socio-economic conditions in rural India have been a barrier to the progress of primary education. Children have been more of a work force and hence education didn't have any importance (Rao, 2010).

### Objectives of Rural Development

To have development in rural areas, there needs to be an improvement in the living standards of the rural poor, opportunities for the poor for usage of physical and human resources, increased access of poor to capital resources and technology, the benefits of capital and technology should reach the poor, active involvement of the poor in building of institutions and

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in their functioning, and sustainable development that can lead to improvement in the standards of living (Sreedhar & Rajasekhar, 2014).

### Challenges for Rural Transformation

Several challenges have been encountered in the process of obtaining rural transformation:

1. **Economic transformation:** The gap between the urban and rural is very wide. Basic amenities are still not available. Farmers and tribals continue to be exploited and can't sustain themselves.
2. **Social transformation:** Labour is migrating from the rural to urban areas. Patterns of consumption, life style, values, etc. are all changing thereby giving a different look to the rural areas.
3. **Human Resource transformation:** People in the rural areas need to upgrade to newer skills thereby making them capable of newer opportunities and avenues that make themselves available from time to time.
4. **Governance transformation:** Participatory democracy has been made possible by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act. To make it fully effective a proactive roll by the government and the people is a prerequisite.
5. **Institutional transformation:** Educational institutions could bring about the complete makeover required in the rural areas. Civil society initiatives and NGOs too are making efforts to make the changes possible.
6. **Values transformation:** Erosion of values and lack of leadership has left a gaping hole in the rural society. Efforts need to be made to bring these changes into existence (Reddy, 2005).

### Impact of Globalization

The face of the world has changed due to globalization. The rural sector in India could not have remained untouched by this force. Systemic changes have come about through technology, information and values. The market plays a dominant role in development wherein the state becomes the facilitator for change. The needs of the market lead to paradigm shifts thereby changing the rural scenario (Reddy, 2005).

New technologies have been introduced which are focused on capitals as well as knowledge which leads to capability building among the people and bring them into the

mainstream of life. Even information that is readily available has to be converted into knowledge that is suitable as per the need of the hour. However, the concern is that this knowledge is not equally accessible by all leading to a divide. Values are eroded to an extent unimaginable. What is visible is a valueless system. Altruism that is at the heart of rural life is passing away. There is a need to get back on track as a community (Reddy, 2005).

### **Agricultural Downslide**

Since 1991 India's economy has scaled new heights. However, the same cannot be said of the agricultural sector. Farmers still do not get remunerative prices for their produce. The middleman is still in an advantageous position due to illiteracy, lack of knowledge and fatalism that exists among farmers. Farmers are committing suicide in certain areas because they aren't able to cope up with their situation (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2013).

### **Institutional Changes**

Institutions can bring changes in rural India. These are the main and ancillary institutions. Ministries of Rural Development, Agriculture, Commerce & Civil Supplies, etc. perform functions related to rural development. Even the RBI and NABARD have had success in providing finance for development. State level institutions also play an important role for formulation and implementation of developmental programmes. The last level where there is an interface between the administration and the people is District Administration. All governmental programmes are channelized through the District Development Co-ordination Committee (Sahu, 2003).

### **Initiatives by the Government**

The government has taken up umpteen initiatives in the form of development programmes, especially for the disadvantaged groups. Very often this attempt of the government has been in vain. The benefits of both individual and community development schemes have not percolated to the bottom. This is because there is a gap between the recipient and the deliverer. Another reason is that the poor don't demand for services and help from the government. Another factor is the middle men who have thrived like parasites and sapped off most of these benefits and themselves become the beneficiaries (Sreedhar & Rajasekhar, 2014). The government invests largely in 6 subsectors, namely, rural connectivity, rural water security, decentralization, wage employment, self-employment and housing (Tambe, Arrawatia &

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Ganeriwala, 2012). It is through such initiatives that the government aims to bring about transformation by targeted efforts.

As one of its schemes, the government has initiated the MGNREGA project. It has played a characteristic role in creating impacts, namely, women's economic empowerment, social and financial inclusions, sustainable asset creation, support to the disabled, protection against distress migration, rise in money and real wages, increase in reserve price of labour and reduction in gender wage gap. These are clear cut parameters of social transformation in the rural areas.

### **Role of NGOs**

Voluntary organizations play a very important role in the emancipation of the rural sector. Several initiatives can be taken up in various areas and bring about a total revolution in the rural community. Voluntary organizations can do what the government cannot. They can reach the bare grassroots and they are the cutting-edge personnel when it comes to having interface with the rural people (Patil, 2015). The NGOs have come to play a very important role as mediators. They are smaller in size, flexible, innovative and participatory, due to which they are easily able to reach the poor and have more acceptability among them. It is known that NGOs are more effective in their developmental work and therefore, are more advantageous (Sreedhar & Rajasekhar, 2014).

### **Entrepreneurship for Development**

When India got independence Jawaharlal Nehru wanted an end to poverty, ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunity. Today, this objective is still largely unachieved. For him 'dams and laboratories' are the temples of modern India. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is Self-Help Groups, renewable energy, education, etc. that are the media for social, political and economic change, especially in the rural areas. Science has certainly helped bring modernization up to our doorsteps. But for those in the villages even basic education is a far-fetched ideal (Fernandes, 2007). A ray of hope, however, is the entrepreneurship model of development. It is an important force for development in the rural areas. It is a strategy to enhance the social and economic life of the rural poor. It doesn't only push up economic growth but also gives jobs and improves the quality of life, thereby putting them on the road to self-sustenance (Venkatesh, 2009).

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## Role of Education

Rabindranath Tagore believed that it was education, panchayats and cooperation that could help in the upliftment of rural India. Years down the line it can be seen that the emancipation of rural India is taking place due to these very same parameters (Sreedhar & Rajasekhar, 2014).

Twenty two percent of the world's population is in India and 46% of illiterates too. We also possess a very high number of 'out of school' children and youth. A research was conducted on 188 government run primary schools. They found that 59% of schools didn't have drinking water and 89% had no toilets. Often teachers are absent or aren't teaching at all.

Socio-economic conditions in rural India have hampered the process of primary education. Social inequalities of class, caste and gender have been found to be the main reasons for lack of education. A large number of children, especially girls, fail to complete even 5 years of basic education.

Attendance at schools drops because of socio-economic conditions. One reason why they have more number of children is because it adds to the number of working members in the family. When it is the season for harvesting, the children help the family out in different ways. This leads to bunking from school. The lackadaisical approach leads to laxity and some children eventually drop out. If the children do not get educated then the transformation that we are referring to will never take place (Rao, 2010).

This researcher had interviewed several people in certain areas of Dahanu, where the children aren't even going to school. Schools of higher education are quite distant, means of livelihood are meagre, and the question of survival is foremost in their minds. Little do they realize that if their children get educated they will get jobs and won't depend on such turbulent conditions of life. It is in this context that this researcher would like to document this case study by a group of philanthropists who are doing work that is commendable.

## Case Study

'Lend A Hand' is a group of like-minded friends who have a high social inclination to pay back to society. The informal group consists of CAs and businessmen who work in the economic backward area in Dahanu taluka of Palghar district, which is just 2 1/2 hours away from Mumbai. The group works and helps 5 Ashram schools in the villages - Aagwan, Ranshet,

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Ganjad, Dhundhalwadi and Vangaon. The group is also associated with, and helps schools in Kasa and Dapchari.

It all started with construction of a tube well and water storage tank in Aagwan. The group has given uniforms, text books, note books, stationery items and slippers in the early years. Later on, they decided to create an asset and spend on infrastructure as the government grant was inadequate to support the infrastructure which was very old and required major repairs or to even construct new classrooms. Hence, the group constructed classrooms, toilet blocks, science laboratories and have also given computers.

In the initial years, it was contributions from the group. Subsequently the group believed in partnership and it was in the ratio of 60:40 wherein the group would contribute 60 % of the total cost and the balance 40% was to be raised by the school / Trust from their savings and with the help of their alumni.

Apart from the construction of classrooms and toilet blocks, the group also sponsors Annual Sports competition in traditional sports like Kabaddi and Kholhi as well as modern athletics like running / long jump / shotput events.

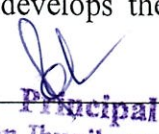
In the recent past, with the efforts of the group, two big Corporates have started spending their CSR amount in sponsoring computers and providing a tutor for the students, and they are undertaking major repairs at the school.

The group visits Dahanu at least once a month, to supervise / monitor the status of various projects. It also believes in emotional involvement and attachment with the students and beneficiaries. In the process, due diligence is also done and the donors feel happy and satisfied that their contribution is not treated as a donation, but an investment, which gives returns to the society.

The group is unique in nature as it is an informal group and hence there are no officer bearers. All decisions are quick and unanimous. The group does not have any overhead expenses and all administrative and travelling expenses are borne by them. The School / Trust gets 100 % contribution from donors and the entire amount is actually spent towards the object for which it is raised.

The group also sponsors Karate training to girl students in 3 schools and in the coming years wants to cover the remaining schools. There are multiple advantages in being a sports event, it has entertainment value, increases self-confidence and develops the personality. A

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physically strong girl having passed the 12th examination easily gets a job under reservation in the state police department. This initiative of the group was appreciated well by an IPS Officer in the Annual Day function of the school.

The group also sponsors the fees of needy students of class 11th and 12th and has given an open offer to sponsor higher studies. In fact it takes a lot of pride that it has helped a student who had limited financial resources in becoming a doctor who is pursuing 3rd year MD in Nasik Medical college.

In the coming year, the group wants to spend 50 % in construction and the balance 50 % is to be spent directly on the activities which are going to directly benefit the students. The group intends to spend on counselling, creating libraries, organizing field trips etc. as these students suffer from inferiority complex. They have no reading habits, nothing to do in monsoon and have never even visited Mumbai.

The group had organized a medical camp in a few schools a few years ago. It was observed that these students are malnourished, suffer from skin diseases and quite a few of the students require spectacles to read. It plans to hold medical camps, if it gets the support of the Doctors who are ready to travel to this place and work on Sundays.

The group is also trying to promote traditional Warli painting and craft work associated with the community. Due to the effort of the group, one of the reputed schools in Mumbai had an exchange program with the tribal schools whereby the students from a school in Mumbai visited the tribal schools in Dahanu and the tribal students visited the school in Mumbai and participated in sports and performed their cultural Lezim dance. This move was very well liked by the parents.

The group needs volunteers apart from financial support to spread its work for the benefit of the community that is deprived of many things in life. This will also help society in general, as in the long run, it wants to reduce inequality in society.

### Conclusion

The government has several schemes in place. The NGOS and civil society is working with the best foot forward to ensure that rural transformation is taking place. However, each and every one of us has a responsibility in walking the extra mile and lending a helping hand to bring this transformation to fulfilment in our own small ways. 'Lend a Helping Hand' is doing just this wherein children in the villages of Dahanu have been benefiting for some time now. Today

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they are well ahead in achieving their goal and feel the sense of satisfaction like that of Abraham Maslow's 'self-actualization'.

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