SINGLE WOMEN : PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES
(A Sociological Study)

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SINGLE WOMEN: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

It is an old saying that marriage is a necessary evil as it changes the whole life pattern of a person. Particularly for women, it is a step which alters their social and economic status as well as their complete identity. Even then, marriage is considered to be a necessary step of life and remaining single is still discouraged in our society. This study aims to investigate certain critical issues related to the problems and challenges faced by a single women, i.e. who remain unmarried at least up to the age of 30 in the society.

If we analyse the situation of single women during the Vedic period in India, we find that they enjoyed quite a high status. A girl’s birth was not considered inauspicious and marriage was not considered compulsory—a girl could have waited until she could find the right partner for marriage, failing which she could even decide to remain single. Such a woman enjoyed considerable status and authority. The position of women started declining during the post-Vedic age. Marriage became compulsory and a single woman started to be looked upon. According to Manu, a single women was denied admission into heaven on death and was considered against religion. Marriage was considered so important that marriage ceremonies were performed over corpses of dead girls. It was believed that a virgin could never attain spiritual enlightenment but beyond that life and liberty of a girl was considered equally important and she was not handed over to any unworthy youth. In the medieval period, parents had to pay heavy dowry to marry their daughters and who could not offer dowry kept their daughters unmarried, who were then looked down upon; thus the birth of a girl child was not welcome in the family and singles had no position in the society.
With the advent of British rule in India, certain avenues opened for women to acquire education and employment due to the socio-cultural changes, but position did not change much and single women were doubly exploited, partly due to society which perpetuated their low status and partly because of the reluctance on part of women to reform.

But today, single women in Indian society are not necessarily looked down upon. Though, girls are socialized to centre their decisions around marital and parental roles but some deviate from the cultural norms of compulsory marriage and prefer the strategy of singlehood. The present research describes and investigates the phenomenon of singlehood, its related problems and challenges.

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The phenomenon of singlehood among women is claiming serious attention among social workers, journalists and women activists. Though defining a single woman is a highly debatable cause, as it may vary in time and space. However, the determination of the single status may be done according to the marriageable age in a particular society at a particular point of time. Broadly speaking, “Single women are those women who have crossed the marriageable age and are still unmarried, even though they might have plans to marry.”

In India, the minimum age for marriage of girls prescribed by the law is eighteen years but generally, the urban girls are married by the age of 22-25 years; providing a far margin of four to seven years to the legal sanctions. We, therefore, consider such girls as single women who have remained unmarried upto the age of thirty years and above. Earlier, marriage was the ultimate goal of each and every girl, but now with increasing education, and job opportunities, independence and new ideas
of gender equality, women are acquiring freedom to live their lives according to their own choices and styles. Various studies like those of Hate (1930), Merchant (1935), Kapadia (1954), G. B. Desai (1945), Neera Desai (1945), Tondon (1959), Krishnamurthy (1970) and Tripathi (1967) exhibit the attitudes of educated working women with regard to their own status, marriage and family. Barkas (1980) tells of ‘Singles Explosion’ in America.

The National Committee on the Status of Women (1974) has observed the new life styles of women. Before independence, some women devoted their lives to social service, but in the present scenario, many successful unmarried women enjoy a high status, which encourages them to opt for alternatives to marriage and practice education as a career going in for economic and social independence. But society still regards marriage and motherhood to be the most desirable phenomenon for women; and any deviation from them is not welcomed. A single women is considered to be a failure, odd woman, a dropout, sexually weak or emotionally deprived. Many scholars like Promilla Kapur (1977) and Mrinal Pandey (1977) have opined that single women suffer from insecurity, fear and loneliness and face the double standards of society. On the contrary Barkas (1980) finds happy and contended single women, Ries (1962) says that “Successful unmarried women demonstrate again and again remarkable adaptability of the human beings.... . The amount of hard pioneer work done by unmarried women to improve life for the rest of us can hardly be calculated”. Thus, this type of conflicting issues prompt to investigate the reality of single women in our society—the patterns of their life, the problems and challenges faced by them.

If we seriously think that why are there so many unmarried women, then many contradicting views crop up. Observers like Savitri
Parmar (1974), Nirmala Thakur (1977), Nina Malhotra (1984) provide reasons like ailing father at home, growing younger brothers and sisters, non-availability of the right man, a helpless mother and so on; while some regard such statements as ‘conscious justifications or rationalizations’. Olga Knopf (1932) opines that single girl comes from a home where females are suppressed and males are highlighted while Barkas (1980) holds that happily married parents stress ‘career first, marriage later’ to a child.

Dickinson and Beam (1934) viewed that single women face many physical disorders like pelvic disturbance, indigestion, cynicism and exhibit boredom and negation, while Young (1959) holds that they have limited scope of social interaction. On the contrary, Vijay Agnew (1979) has stressed that Gandhi’s followers like Manibehen Patel, Mridula Sarabhai and Dr. Sushila Nayyar remained unmarried. Subalaxmi Subramaniam and Pandita Romabai remained widows and never thought of re-marrying for the second time.

Lastly, the question arises about the problems and challenges faced by a single women, resulting into the contentment or discontentment among them. Obviously, these issues and questions are to be studied in relation to her family, occupation, educational level, life styles, beliefs and social activities. The proposed research work aims to address to all such issues and questions, which make singlehood among women a highly debatable issue.

2. OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

If we consider the Indian social norms, parents do not expect much out of their daughters but when it is becomes difficult to find suitable matches for them at right age or arrange for dowry, the
expectations change. Familism an earlier form of social organization, unlike individualism, emphasized collectivity (Laslett, 1972; Acker, 1988). The familistic ideology was based on the organization of the household as a corporate entity (Hareven, 1987). The ideal of individualism has gradually come to replace familism in western society. Despite the loss of many functions with regard to work as well as protective, educational and recreational practices, the family is still seen as the provider of psychic well-being and as the matrix for the development of personality (Ackerman, 1972).

The proportion of single women in the US was only half as great in 1970 as it was in 1940, and about three-fifths as great in 1976. Their status was not denigrated and they were doing all-right (Bernard, 1981). As more women remain single, the isolation related with singlehood declines, reinforcing it as an alternative to marriage. Freeman and Klaus (1984) found that after 1870, single females in the UK and US no longer regarded marriage as necessary for financial support or self-respect.

Johnson and Susan (1984) found that single women are better adjusted socially and psychologically as compared to married ones. A few studies indicate that pull for remaining single is a desire to perceive psychological and social autonomy (Adams, 1976, Edwards and Hoover, 1974; Stein, 1976).

Because of the prejudices against unmarried working girls, the term bachelor sounds normal, while spinster sounds quite unpleasant and is regarded to denote a failure (Soni, 1971).

The fact that women can afford an unmarried life itself proves the change that has come about both in their subjective attitude and the social environment (Desai, 1957). In a country like Bangladesh where purdah system is still prevalent, Santi Rozario (1986) found that since
1970's number of unmarried women in Muslims, Hindus and Christian Bengalis have increased.

Socially they face a lot of problems and are not given a high place in the society which makes them feel insecure and experience various mental conflicts and the agony of a lonely life, finding it difficult to live in a society dominated by men (Krishna Kumari, 1987). A study by Salaff (1981) highlighted the problems of single women in Chinese families which show that their life styles differ from their mothers and provide economic assistance to their families. He has listed seven overlapping images of singles. They are seen as following—

a) Deviant or abnormal;

b) Immature or unable to experience life;

c) Sexually deviant;

d) Over-concerned with being free, or unwilling to accept responsibility;

e) Either very happy or very lonely;

f) Affluent, and

g) Devoted to their careers and workaholic.

Some social scientist have empirically examined the phenomenon of singlehood as an emerging life style as an alternative to marriage (Glick, 1969; Stein, 1973 and 1976; Duberman, 1974). These studies based on responses from both males and females, reveal the following positive reasons for remaining single; scope for freedom and enjoyment, opportunities for variety of experiences, sexual availability, self-sufficiency, career opportunities, sustaining friendships, freedom to change and experiment, nobility and availability of supportive groups. As regards the negative reasons, the following can be pointed out:

Suffocating one-to-one relationships, obstacles to self development,
boredom, unhappiness, lack of friends, isolation, loneliness, limitation on mobility and available experience, influence of and participation in women’s movements.

Empirical studies on single women discuss various aspects of their lives. For example, Hutton (1935) discusses single women’s emotional problems and comments that their appearance of strength and responsibility are often only a veneer “Covering often and entirely childish and dependent craving for love and attention, with nothing of giver behind it all.” Harding (1933) pointed out that “such women due to social inhibitions, develop a tendency to lead a secluded life of their own”, touched to so little by other realities that it becomes almost like a dream life lived in an enchanted castle.

Smith (1951) analysed their problems and patterns of adjustment. Stolk (1981) found that the unmarried women of 30 + are still considered as ‘spinsters’, ‘odd woman’, ‘drop outs’, ‘failures’ etc.

If we consider the present status of research in the field of singlehood among women in India, there have been three bibliographies available new which cover a wide range of material on women’s legal, political, economic, educational and social aspects (SNDT University, 1976; Kalpanadas Gupta, 1976; Harshita Pandit, 1985).

Sources of information about single women can be divided into three categories—

1) Literary references;
2) Essays and articles published in popular magazines and periodicals;
3) Systematic empirical studies on working women.

The plight and frustrations of single women are reflected in the touching short stories by the famous Hindi writers like Shashi Prabha

As regards the journalist sources, these can be classified into two sub-categories—first, those essays published in newspapers and popular magazines which are contemplative and argumentative in nature based on the reflections and the observations of the concerned writer; second, those essays which are based on conversations conducted by the writer with the single women; which are based on some empirical data collected by interview technique.

Paranjpe (1963) has argued that spinsters are not a problem; in fact, society is a problem for them. Promilla Kapur (1977) has shown how the single women suffer from the feelings of insecurity, ambivalence and face numerous problems in their daily life both at home and at work place. Sheela Bhatnagar (1985) pin-points the problems which the single urban women of lower middle class, middle class or upper middle class are facing although they are educated and employed. They are not recognized for the post or authority they have achieved, they have to serve their brothers and sisters at home, their family is not interested in their problems, they have to share their income with the family, they have to face problems of inter-personal adjustment with co-workers and employers. She further says that their salvation lies in their self-sufficiency, capacity to make their own decisions, boldness and ability of controlling emotions.

In the second category of journalist essays based on conversations with single women, mention may be made of the following—Savitri Parmar (1974), Mrinal Pandey (1977), Nirmala Thakur (1977), Pratima Verma (1977), Sushma Verma (1977), Aruna Bali (1980) and Nina Malhotra (1984). In these essays, the writers have asked single women
about their reasons for remaining single and feeling they reflect upon the lives of single women, but they are not based on systematic research techniques. To illustrate this, we consider Aruna Bali’s study who talked to 11 women living and working in Delhi away from their families. 5 of them expressed the feeling of loneliness and regretted their decision of remaining single, 3 of them expressed satisfaction with their single state and said that were very busy with no time for leisure; 1 expressed her decision of marrying soon while remaining 2 have become indifferent and resigned to their lot.

Promilla Kapur (1973) found that marriage still took precedence over work as a career for her sample of Hindu women. In fact, she found that it appears to have become even more popular than a decade ago. Report of Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) opines that the fear of loss of earnings of a daughter is becoming an important factor in deferring marriage of urban middle class women.

It is clear from the overview of literature given above that a serious gap exists in current state of research as regards the social origins, historical background, life styles, problems, adaptive mechanisms and future aspirations of single women in our country. A humble attempt would be made to systematically fill up this gap.

3. **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the proposed study are as under—

1) To explore the socio-economic background of single women;
2) To explain the phenomenon of singlehood among women;
3) To identify the life styles of single women and to measure their level of satisfaction;
4) To identify the problems and challenges faced as well as strategies opted to overcome these problems by single women;
5) To find the future aspirations of single women; and
6) To suggest methods to cope up with the problems of singlehood.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following concepts are to be clearly highlighted in the proposed research theme—

1) **Single women**—She is to be identified as a woman who has reached the age of thirty and is still unmarried. The decision to keep the cut off point as 30 or so is based on the following reasons. On an average, unmarried working women have generally completed education and professional training upto the age of 20-23 yrs. and that too in an unbroken stream which is rare. Getting employed takes still more time and the waiting period for marriage also delays the stage at which women get set in a pattern of singleness and start perceiving themselves as single women with a special status and problems of its own. Hence, the cut off point for minimum age for unmarried women at 30 years appears to be most rational and suitable for the present study.

2) **Life styles**—This concept refers to the study of the living patterns and adaptability to various modes of life. Binlove (1982) points out that life style is a sociological category and is all the more important as it reflects socio-typical aspects of human behaviour and forms the social activity. It exhibits the way of life of an individual with reference to his work, confidence in future, identification of the self and its relation to collectivity and the realization of creative possibilities. This concept will include the ways in which she brings together all aspects of her life like her daily routine, time devoted to specific activities, her value orientations and behavioural patterns in situations of work, home and society.
3) **Problems**—Problems would reflect those situations which the single women perceive to be causing stress and strain in their life and threatening their physical and mental well-being, provided that they think they can identify the causes responsible for such situation and believe that they can overcome them.

4) **Challenges**—Challenges would reflect the critical situations which will be overthrown on them by the family and society which they have to face with extreme boldness and overcome them successfully.

5. **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The proposed study is addressed to the following six questions—

1) What is the socio-economic background of the single women?
2) What is the reason of singlehood among women—some choice or chance?
3) What is the life styles and satisfaction of single women?
4) What problems and challenges single women encounter with and which strategies do they opt to overcome them?
5) What are the future aspirations of single women?
6) What methods can be suggested to cope up with the problems of singlehood?

6. **LOCALE / COVERAGE OF STUDY**

The coverage of the proposed study would be as under—

1) **Universe of study**—The universe of the proposed study would consist of unmarried women, i.e. those women who have reached the age of thirty and are still unmarried living in Meerut and Delhi.

2) **Sampling frame**—Around 150 unmarried women would be selected through purposive and snow ball sampling having different socio-economic background. In case, any list of such
women is available or can be made, the attempt would be to go for random sampling.

3) Units of study—Units of study will be sampled single women.

7. DATA COLLECTION

To reconstruct the position of single women through the ages, both in India and outside, secondary data are to be collected. The source of such data would be the standard books and articles published in different journals.

Primary data would be collected in two phases—First, a structured questionnaire will be prepared to collect factual data regarding the identity, family background, occupation, religion and other aspects of single women’s life. Second, indepth informal interview of one-fourth respondents each from Meerut and Delhi is proposed to be undertaken. The selection of such respondents is to be based on the responses exhibited in their filled up questionnaires. Those who are judged to be most sensitive and expressive would constitute the sample for indepth interview.

8. DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The data collected through questionnaire would be computerized where as data collected through indepth informal interview will be handled manually. The aim of qualitative analysis through interview is to prepare around 30 case studies.

The processed data will be analyzed with a view to develop a typology of single women, if possible and to find out correlates of their behavioural patterns. The findings are to be interpreted both in the light of available research work in the field and on the basis of logical and statistical reasoning.
9. **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of the study may be judged by the contribution which the proposed study is likely to make. On the level of theory, the proposed study is expected to contribute—

1) It would fill the gap which exists in sociological literature on marriage and family.

2) It would add to the knowledge of the behavioural patterns which are likely to follow as a consequence of singlehood in Indian situation.

3) It would highlight some shortcomings of the existing trend which indicate the marital state as the only aim for women.

4) It would discuss the problems and challenges faced by single women in the present scenario.

5) It would throw light on the changing status of unmarried women in India and their aspirations and needs.

On the plane of methodology, it is expected to develop a research strategy which would help in investigating the particular sub-groups of working single women in urban areas.

As regards its practical value, the proposed study is likely to suggest the ways and means to make the lives of single women socially useful. In case of enforced singles like widows and divorcees, it is all the more important. It aims at finding out the institutional support to be provided to single women. In a nut shell, the proposed research would suggest guidelines for making the singleness an acceptable social status in society and providing them with specific institutional means so that they may lead a meaningful, purposeful and socially useful complete social life.

The proposed study also has a national significance as it may offer measures as to how the potentials of these free, independent and
competent women may be utilized for the cause of nation building. It may also help in the fulfilment of the directive principle of state policy laid down in our constitution that every Indian would be provided full opportunities for the development of his inner potentialities irrespective of his or her sex, caste, colour or creed and nobody shall be allowed to be discriminated on the basis of birth, body or status.

10. **TENTATIVE CHAPTER SCHEME**

The proposed study will have the following tentative chapters—

Chapter 1 : The Problem and its Context

Chapter 2 : Socio-economic Background and Life Style of Single Women

Chapter 3 : Explaining the Phenomenon of Singlehood

Chapter 4 : Problems of Single Women and Methods Adopted to Overcome them

Chapter 5 : Challenges and Future Aspirations of Single Women

Chapter 6 : Conclusions

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Rural Development Programmes

in India

Manju Chauhan*

1. Introduction

India has been, and continues to be, a predominantly rural country. According to the 2001 census, 72.2 per cent of India’s population of more than 102.8 crore lives in villages. There are over 593,643 villages while there are not more than 2,86,120 cities and towns of different sizes. Though India ranks among the ten most highly industrialized countries in the world, the rural dimensions of its economy are of towering significance. For four out of every five Indians, agriculture is the basis of their livelihood and even the fifth one would find it extremely hard to survive if agriculture were neglected. Besides, the incidence of poverty in India is much more severe in the villages than in towns. Nearly one-third of the rural population is estimated to live below the poverty-line. In any national programme designed to raise the economic level of the people, the welfare of the rural sector thus necessarily has very high priority, more so in a democracy whose very survival depends upon the consensus of these people. This is the reason that the Indian policy-makers have been emphasizing the primary of rural development ever since the planning process was initiated in the economy.

Rural development is an interminable process. It is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of rural development. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless. There are at least three basic elements of rural development—life-sustenance (fulfilment of basic needs); self respect, dignity or honour (denial of this is lack of development); and freedom (political or ideological freedom and freedom from social servitude). Subsequently, to increase the availability and widen the distribution of life-sustaining articles, promoting the socio-economic life of people living in rural areas, and expant the range of economic and social choice to individuals by freeing them from servitude and dependence are said to be the objectives of development.

Rural development is more important in a democratic country like India. The political parties in general and the ruling party in particular have to approach the villagers to seek their votes, and unless there is an appreciable record of work done by the party in power, it is bound to face rejection at their hands. Besides, new markets will have to be developed for what is being produced in the country. Otherwise, there will hardly be any incentive for raising and diversifying production. The
purchasing power of the rural sector must appreciably improve so that the demand for goods and services increases. Roads will have to be constructed and the communication system must be improved so as to link rural areas to commercial and business centres. It is, therefore, in the interest of business and industry itself that rural areas be developed.

2. Programmes of Rural Development

Since independence, many programmes have been initiated for rural development. Among these programmes, the Community Development Programme was the first comprehensive programme started in 1952. It focussed on the economic improvement of the life of villagers by decreasing poverty in rural areas. It was also aimed at increasing popular participation of rural people in rural development. Consequently, a new organization, called the Community Projects Administration, was set up within the Planning Commission. However, with little achievement, the programme failed to register any appreciable increase in agricultural production with the inevitable consequence that India was compelled to import more and more grain to feed its growing population. It also failed to raise the standards of weaker sections substantially.

Another programme initiated for rural development is Panchayati Raj. It is viewed as an instrument for the realization of the ends of community development, and as an organ of the state government to execute community development programmes and other similar schemes which it may entrust to it. This programme, which began with great fanfare, also did not fulfil all the expectations aroused by the planners so far rural development is concerned. One of the reasons for this has been the domination of Panchayati Raj institutions by the socially or economically privileged sections of the local community with
the consequence that the weaker sections were still deprived of its benefits. Besides, the wide spread corruption in these institutions and increasing factionalism among rural people are also cited the causes of failure of Panchayati Raj.

To boost production in rural areas, Intensive Agricultural District Programme was initiated by the government in 1960. This programme was designed as a pace-setting programme which would demonstrate how to augment production more rapidly and as a path-finding experimental programme which would developed innovations, fresh ideas and procedures for wider adoption in agricultural development. Though this programme boosted production by the use of high-yielding varieties of seed as well as other inputs and demonstrably contributed to a change in the farmer’s attitudes, perceptions and priorities, it failed to give much advantage to the poor.

This aroused a concern for the marginal man and, in the process, the Small Farmers’ Development Agency was born in early 1970’s. Also land reform acquired an urgency, and measures were initiated to reform the relationship between land and men. Small Farmers’ Development Agency (SFDA) and the Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Agency (MFAL) were set up as corporate and autonomous bodies to work at district level. The lack of sufficient credit facilities has been a major constraint on small and marginal farmers in adopting improved agricultural techniques and undertaking economic activities. There was favouritism in selecting ‘small farmers’, ‘marginal farmers’ and ‘agricultural labourers’ with the consequence that the actual beneficiaries were not always those for whom the SFDA and the MFAL were intended. Even sizeable number of members of the target groups
were not even aware of these programmes. Besides, the procedure prescribed for giving of subsidies was complicated and time-consuming.

The Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) was also initiated in 1972-73. Its main objectives were reducing the severity of the impact of drought; stabilizing the income of the people, particularly of the weaker sections of society; and restoring the ecological balance. In operational terms, the programme covered minor irrigation, soil conservation, afforestation, rural roads, pasture land development, etc. However, due to weak and faulty implementation processes, even DPAP has not been able to deliver goods.

The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), introduced in 1979-80, has a superficial resemblance with the Community Development Programme of the fifties in the sense that both are committed to integrated development. But the single most prominent difference is that the IRDP is aimed at ameliorating the lot of the weaker sections in rural society—indeed, of all those below the poverty line including small farmers, marginal farmer, and agricultural and non-agricultural labourers. While the Community Development Programme was open-ended and did not close its doors to anyone, the IRDP is available only to the rural poor. Yet it is much more comprehensive in its coverage, and marks an improvement of the SFDA and MFAL. The latter programmes were addressed to only two categories and were, moreover, restricted in their activities. But the IRDP is open to all rural poor and has a much wider set of activities.

The strategy of formulating clientele-specific programmes had some obvious advantages. Each agency could pay exclusive attention to the specified target group but such an approach resulted in a proliferation of organizations, each concerned with one particular
programme thereby creating problems of coordination at the ground level. Being uni-functional, there was also the problem of sub-optimisation of results. Besides, each agency lived and worked in its own small world and failed to see its functions in perspective. It is common knowledge that programmes have spill-over effects and require to be viewed in an integrated perspective.

Besides, the target groups’ programmes forced the rural bureaucracy to pay attention to the most critical problem, namely, how to raise the purchasing power of the ‘target’ population, mainly the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, agricultural and non-agricultural labourers, rural artisans, marginal and small farmers and those whose annual income from all sources is below Rs. 3,500 (a figure which determines the poverty line). A family is considered to be the unit for purposes of the IRDP and the identified families are to be given assistance in the form of subsidies and loans to enable them to take up economic activities which would raise their income. Even this programme has not been able to come up to the expectations. Favouritism in selecting the beneficiaries and misuse of subsidies and loans are the main causes for its failure.

For the development to be in consonance with the people’s wishes and aspirations, the emphasis has now shifted towards participation of people in development process through Self-Help Groups and Panchayati Raj Institutions. Gram Sabhas have been assigned important responsibilities to make it a vibrant forum of self-governance. Two main schemes, one for providing wage employment—‘Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana’ (SGRY) and the other for providing self-employment to rural poor—‘Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana’ (SGSY) are under implementation to face the biggest challenge of unemployment in the
rural areas of the country. Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana was launched on 25 September 2000 by merging the on-going schemes of EAS and the JGSY with the objective of providing additional wage employment in the rural areas as also food security, alongside the creation of durable community assets in the rural areas. This programme is implemented by all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana is a major ongoing integrated programme for self-employment of rural poor.

Besides the above programmes, National Food for Work Programme, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Rural Housing, Watershed Development Programmes, Rural Water Supply Programme, Central Rural Sanitation Programme are also contributing towards the development of rural society in India. Land Reforms Division in the Department of Land Resources is also accelerating land reforms by computerization of land records and strengthening of revenue administration and updating of land records.

3. Conclusion

The Ministry of Rural Development is actively engaged in bringing about rapid and sustainable development and socio-economic transformation in rural India. During the last few years foremost priority has been accorded to development in rural areas. Number of initiatives have been taken by this Ministry in the form of launch of new programmes, restructuring of earlier programmes to make them more effective and promoting the participation of people in development process.

To match with globalization, economic liberalization and structural adjustments and to provide for safety net, especially for rural poor, top priority has also been accorded to rural development in terms of
progressively increasing the allocation of resources for the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. For the Tenth Five Year Plan, the allocation of funds for rural development programmes has enhanced to Rs. 76,774 crore as against Rs. 42,874 crore during Ninth Five Year Plan.

However, the pace of rural development has not been to the expectations of either the government, the planners or the rural people. All the programmes, of course, are devised for rural development, but the implementation machinery has not been able to do its job. There is urgent need for more effective implementation and making rural programmes more useful for the weaker sections of Indian society.