Chapter 6 – Summary and Conclusion

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Chapter 6 – Summary and Conclusion

6.1 The salient features of poverty in India -

6.1.1 The above narration has brought out the following factors as impinging upon the successful implementation of the poverty alleviation effort –

a) Poverty has a strong linkage with other factors, such as the population growth rate, the level of literacy and the availability of and access to educational and health facilities.

b) In India, in general, high population growth rate is accompanied by low literacy, poor educational and health facilities and low per capita income.

c) Low literacy is a result of poor educational infrastructure, lack of awareness and an inhospitable environment for education and learning.

d) Poor health facilities occur owing to lack of hospitals and health centres/clinics, inadequate supply of medicines and lack of awareness among the people.

e) The Per Capita Income is low because of the lack of the required capabilities, which again are a result of poor educational and health facilities.

f) The rural economy’s backwardness is in no small measure the result of poor infrastructure, lack of marketing network, low purchasing power and highly inefficient management of resources.

g) The fast degradation of the environment and forests, due their being constantly ravaged in the name of development, is adversely affecting the access of the poor to fuel, fodder and even some food-crops. This has accentuated the poverty of the people who inhabit those areas.
h) There is hardly any peoples’ participation in the planning and implementation of programmes.

i) The delivery system is weak and fraught with a number of infirmities. This has led to poor results from the programmes.

j) The capabilities of the PRIs are very limited. Further, they have also not been provided with the required human and financial resources to properly discharge their duties.

6.2 Possible solutions -

6.2.1 In this background, the following recommendations have been made –

a) There must be a complete integration of all the efforts at rural development and poverty alleviation both at the planning and implementation stages. Only with this integration and the evolution of a comprehensive policy can there be the desired impact in the rural areas.

b) It is imperative that a delivery system is set up, which is effective, decentralized and is capable of translating the goals set by the planners into reality.

c) Programmes such as population control, social and economic infrastructural development, human resource development and ecological management will have to be dove-tailed into the development effort.

d) The delivery system should be strengthened with emphasis on additional factors such as the planning framework, manpower support, logistics, systems for Monitoring and Evaluation, Accounts and Audit and a Feedback all of which are concurrent, and an efficient Management Information System.
e) Natural Resources Management, Land Reforms, Developing Indigenous Technologies and Knowledge, Promoting Appropriate Technologies, Developing Communications and Marketing Networks, Streamlining Credit Facilities, Creating an environment where there is awareness of and easy access to the many opportunities that are available to the rural people.

f) A definite shift from the present top-down approach to a bottom-up approach. The entire effort must emphasize upon “putting people first” and certainly not on inflexible and impractical rules, procedures and regulations and guidelines.

g) There must be a close association with NGOs. In fact, Government should be willing to go to the extent of treating them as equal partners and even request some of the leading NGOs, which have great credibility in the rural areas to lead the campaign against poverty.

h) NGOs are best positioned, in the present context, to undertake activities, such as –

- Rapport building programmes,
- Awareness building programmes,
- Strengthening Community Based Organizations,
- Taking up Entry Point Activities,
- Widening Human Resources base at the village level,
- Forming Resource Groups,
- Setting up Self Help Groups and other Affinity and Informal Groups,
- Establishing Micro Credit Groups to take care of at least a portion of the credit needs of the villagers locally,
- Building Groups and Institutions at the village level which can work along with the PRIs and agencies of Government in the development effort.

i) There must be a complete re-examination of the age-old employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes. Perhaps, there is a need to shift from the individual beneficiary or family as a beneficiary approach to a new approach where the focus is on an entire village or a community.

j) Where the programme is village or community centric, an ideal programme would be to develop the entire village on a watershed basis. This concept would involve treating all aspects of the village. A watershed development plan would provide for treatment of all kinds of lands. It would also have action plans for the weaker sections, the landless and the livestock in the village.

6.3 Conclusion -

6.3.1 As the author has stated very clearly, at the start of this study, there is one basic hypothesis on which this study is based. That is that Government still has to play a very important in alleviating poverty and ensuring development of the rural areas. However, the role of Government will also have to undergo a radical change. It will now become a facilitator, a co-ordinator and work alongside the NGOs.

6.3.2 In the changed scenario, the NGOs will play the lead role while the role of Government will be a supporting one. Governmental Agencies will assist the NGO in mobilizing the people, ascertaining their wants, lending
technical support in developing their ideas to form a vision for each village and, then finally assisting the Peoples' Groups while they undertake the task of implementing the programmes that have been prepared by the villagers themselves.

6.3.3 The role of Government will no doubt be greatly reduced in the strategy that has been outlined above. However, it is clear that this role is still very important in view of the overwhelming influence and control that is vested in Government by the massive financial powers, quite apart from the various laws, rules and regulations.

6.3.4 It will be amply clear from the above narration that there is no other organization that can take over the role of Government. In spite of this fact, it is highly essential that the implementing machinery improves its functioning and learns to work along with the NGOs, after overcoming their reservations about them. Only then, will the very laudable objectives that are spelt out in each Plan document get translated into reality.

6.3.5 The author has the confidence that the steps that have been recommended in the preceding paragraphs are quite practical. In fact, there are instances of such measures having been adopted with great success in many parts of the country. However, what has been done is to treat this approach as being confined to one particular project or programme. Hence, this approach has now been accepted as a policy, which would then cover all programmes which have poverty alleviation as a primary objective.
6.3.6 Earlier, the study had set out certain objectives that were expected to be fulfilled. The survey of the literature had also pointed out the gaps which would be filled by this study. A number of recommendations have been made in the previous chapters. These have been done after considering them from the stand-point of the administrative machinery.

6.3.7 In very simple terms, the basic recommendation is that Government must give up the approach of doing everything “departmentally” in the case of poverty alleviation programmes. There must be a much larger role for Non-Governmental Organizations to play in the process. This must be recognized and enshrined in the policy of Government in respect of poverty alleviation programmes.

6.3.8 The author firmly believes that this must be done. Further, it will not suffice if an order is issued to the Governmental machinery to co-operate with the Non-Governmental Organizations. There must be a series of programmes of training and capacity building to change the mind-set of the machinery and also equip them to work with the Non-Governmental Organizations in an effective manner.

6.3.9 Only if all these measures are taken, in a wholehearted manner, with the complete support of all the stakeholders, can there be satisfactory progress in the war on poverty in India.
6.4 Summary of the chapter -

6.4.1 The main aspects of poverty in India are spelt out in this chapter. This is by way of summarizing the detailed narration in the earlier chapters. The important issues in respect of the problem of poverty are also highlighted.

6.4.2 While discussing the various strategies, programmes and approaches that have been tried out in India in a period of over five decades, some suggestions are given regarding the possible approaches for the future.

6.4.3 The author continues to have the confidence that Government will have to play a very important role if there is to be any change in the quality of life that the persons below the poverty line are leading in India. However, the time has come for Government to give up its overwhelming dominance over the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. It is essential that other stake-holders are also closely associated with the campaign against poverty and allowed to contribute in an effective manner without any problem being posed by the Governmental machinery.

6.4.4 The study concludes with a review of the objectives that were set before the author. The extent to which these have been realized, the gaps in the writings on poverty that are expected to be filled by this study are described. Finally, the gaps that remain unfilled and the possible areas for further research are also narrated at the conclusion of the study.
6.5 References –