



Study About New Trends in Rural Social Structure & Social Change

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Abstract- As we know that India is a village rooted country. Therefore, it is necessary to study the social structure of rural life and the social change occurring within it. Rural social structure is constantly changing at a rapid pace and changes driven by modernization, technology, and economic shifts. Due to which, significant changes are also being seen in traditional farming system. People from rural communities are now entering into other businesses than agriculture. They are now working in non-farm jobs like transport, retail, and construction. We can say changes in the structure of rural life are responsible for social change. Small businesses and local entrepreneurship are increasing, allowing villages to become more self-reliant. Traditional joint family systems are breaking down into smaller, nuclear family units.. Education and new job opportunities are helping to create more equality and remove caste-biasness. A significant change is being observed in the field of women in this era of transition. Now women are becoming more active in the workforce, education, and local politics leading to higher status and independence. Women are also taking on larger roles in farming. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are empowering women financially and socially. Rise of "Lakhpati Didis" women-led collectives are central to rural transformation, with 10.05 crore women mobilized into 90.09 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHGs) by early 2026. Apart from this, presently a global transformation in digital infrastructure is also being seen. Digital infrastructure is now near-universal, with 398.35 million rural internet subscribers as of March 2024, rapidly expanding by 2026. Drones, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, and apps for weather/soil health are being adopted to increase yields, though this sometimes creates inequalities favoring wealthier, more tech-savvy farmers. Although new trend have brought considerable positive changes in the rural social structure and social transformation, but still, these changes are somehow bound by their limitations, which leave a negative impact on rural life. Hence, the digital era has reduced the quality of human resources.

Keywords- New Trend, Rural, Social, Structure, Change, Social Structure, Social Change.

I. Introduction

Sociological research has long focused on rural society, especially in developing nations like India. Agriculture-based livelihoods, joint family systems, caste-based stratification, and strong social cohesion have historically defined rural communities. However, rural areas have seen significant changes in recent decades.

Significant changes in institutions, relationships, cultural norms, and social structure over time are referred to as social change. Numerous factors, including economic development, migration, globalization, technological advancements, and government policies, have an impact on these changes in rural contexts.



Urbanization and globalization are two of the most potent factors changing rural life, according to Junaedi et. al. (2023). According to studies, these processes have changed rural communities' values, ways of living, and social interactions, resulting in a transition from agrarian to semi-urban social structures.

Scholars contend that significant socioeconomic changes have resulted from rural India's increasing integration with urban and global systems rather than its isolation. A thorough examination of new developments in rural social structure is required due to this change (Ganapathi, H. B., 2024).

The purpose of this essay is to examine recent developments in rural social structures and to assess the type and course of social change.

II. Concept Of Social Change In Rural India

In rural India, caste, family, and landownership are examples of traditional social structures, values, and institutions that are constantly changing due to both planned government interventions and unforeseen international forces.

Social change includes changes to economic structures (from agriculture to non-farm sectors), social institutions (family, caste, and religion), cultural norms and values, and power dynamics.

Since independence, both internal and external factors have been constantly changing rural India (IIS University, Rural Sociology Course Material).

III. Traditional Rural Social Structure

Kinship, land ownership, and unofficial social control are typically the foundations of traditional rural societies. Here's the breakdown of how they typically function:

- **Family & Kinship:** The main unit is the joint or extended family. Elders frequently make decisions, and your status in the community is determined by the reputation (and ancestry) of your family.
- **Agrarian Economy:** The land is the center of life. Owning land has a direct impact on one's social standing compared to those who perform manual labor or artisanal services.
- **Social Stratification:** Rigid hierarchies, like caste systems in South Asia or rigid class divisions based on wealth and heritage, are common in societies.
- **Collective Identity:** Rural life places more emphasis on the group than urban individualism. Survival requires cooperation and mutual aid, but this also puts a lot of pressure on people to fit in.
- **Informal Governance:** Instead of formal legal systems, local councils or village elders (like a Panchayat) frequently resolve disputes. The main "rulebook" is found in religious and cultural customs (Stanish, C., 2017).



IV. Major Drivers Of Social Change In Rural India

Urbanization

Rural areas have been impacted by urbanization through exposure to urban lifestyles, infrastructure development, and migration. The distance between villages and cities has decreased as a result, creating a rural-urban continuum (Ganapathi, H. B., 2024).

Migration

The social structure of rural areas has been profoundly changed by migration to urban areas. It leads to: Remittance-based rural economies, labor shortages in agriculture, shifting family dynamics, and migration all contribute to social mobility and demographic imbalance.

Technological Advancement

Rural life has changed as a result of technological advancements like digital services, mobile phones, and the internet. They make markets, education, and information more accessible.

V. Government Policies And Programs

India's rural social structure is changing dramatically in 2026 as a result of a deliberate move away from passive welfare delivery and toward decentralized, participatory partnerships. With the Rural Development budget increasing to ₹2.73 lakh crore for 2026–2027—a 211% increase over the previous ten years—the government has substantially increased its fiscal commitments (Press Information Bureau 2026).

Key Legislative & Employment Reforms

Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 (VB-G RAM G): This historic law replaces MGNREGA, modernizing rural employment.

Enhanced Guarantee: Increases each household's annual legal entitlement to 125 days of unskilled wage employment.

Strategic Verticals: Focuses job creation on four key areas: disaster preparedness, livelihood- related infrastructure, core rural infrastructure, and water security.

Accountability: Eliminates disentanglement clauses and introduces weekly or fortnightly wage disbursements.

Fiscal Decentralization: In order to strengthen local governance, the 16th Finance Commission increased direct fiscal transfers to Panchayats by about 85% (PIB, 2026).

Women-Led Social Transformation

DAY-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM): Positions women as the main forces behind change, having organized more than 10.05 crore women into 90.09 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

- **Lakhpati Didi & SHE-Marts:** The 2026–2027 budget creates SHE-Marts, community-owned retail establishments that help women move from credit-led



activities to sustainable enterprise ownership, in order to support the goal of creating 3 crore "Lakshpati Didis" (women earning over ₹1 lakh annually).

- **Namo Drone Didi:** Provides drones for agricultural services, thereby integrating rural women into the high-tech economy (PIB, 2026-2027).

Infrastructure & Digital Inclusion

- **Housing and Sanitation:** PMAY-Gramin: With nearly 3.70 crore homes already constructed over the course of 11 years, the budgetary allocation for 2026–2027 was increased to ₹54,916.70 crore with the goal of "Housing for All" by 2029.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission:** As of late 2025, 99.6% of rural areas had access to tap water, with a shift in emphasis from pipe construction to service sustainability.

Digital Rights and Connectivity

- **SVAMITVA Scheme:** Uses drone-based mapping to provide legal property rights.
- **Bharatnet:** Increases the availability of broadband in all rural primary health facilities and secondary schools.
- **Bhu-Aadhaar:** Assigned to more than 36 crore land parcels in order to secure and digitize land records.

Vulnerable Groups and Specialized Schemes

- **PM-JANMAN:** Focuses on 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in order to guarantee "saturation" of essential services in their communities, such as telecom, clean water, and housing.
- **Samaveshi Aajeevika Yojana:** Uses asset transfers and coaching as part of the "Ultra-Poor Graduation Approach" to help the most disadvantaged rural households achieve sustainable livelihoods.
- **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):** Allocated ₹9,671 crore for 2026-27 to support over 3 crore elderly, widowed, and disabled beneficiaries with pension and family benefits.

VI. Emerging Trends In Rural Social Structure In India

India's rural social structure is changing dramatically as a more sophisticated, non-farm-based economy replaces traditional agrarian systems. Economic diversification, digital penetration, and shifting labor mobility patterns are the main forces behind this change.

Occupational Shift and Economic Diversification

The decrease in reliance on agriculture is the most obvious trend. Previously associated with farming, rural livelihoods are now more closely linked to non-farm industries like construction, retail, and services (Reddy et. al. 2014).

- **Rise of the Non-Farm Sector:** Nowadays, almost two-thirds of the rural Net Domestic Product (NDP) comes from non-agricultural activities.
- **Construction as a Driver:** From a 9% share in 1983 to a 29% share in 2009–2010, the construction industry has become the single largest sector of rural non-farm employment (RNFE).



- **"Census Towns" and "Non-Farm Villages":** Despite not having official urban status, thousands of settlements are being reclassified as urban or operating as "non-farm villages" where more than 75% of the male labor force is employed in non-agricultural jobs (Reddy et al. 2014).

Changing Caste and Class Dynamics

Economic shifts and democratic decentralization are challenging and rearranging traditional hierarchies.

- **Caste-to-Class Transition:** Sociologists note that traditional caste-based jobs are disappearing and that wealth and political power are gradually taking the place of ritual status as indicators of hierarchy.
- **Weakening of Dominant Castes:** As lower castes gain power through education, reservations, and involvement in the Panchayati Raj system, the traditional "dominant caste" (landowning groups) is losing ground.
- **Patronage to Exploitation:** Relationships are changing from communal patronage to market-driven exploitation as "free" wage labor replaces the traditional jajmani system (reciprocal caste-based service relations) (egyankosh).

Transformation in Labor Migration

A more permanent circular pattern has replaced the seasonal survival strategy of migration (Choithani et. al., 2021).

- **Permanent Circular Migration:** In contrast to traditional seasonal migration linked to the crop cycle, contemporary migrants frequently spend the majority of the year working in manufacturing or urban construction while the household stays in the village (Choithani et. al. 2021).
- **International Remittances:** International migration, especially to the Gulf, has disrupted local class structures in places like Bihar by enabling marginalized communities to avoid traditional landed elites through remittances (Choithani et. al. 2021).

Gender and Family Restructuring

Household roles are changing due to the lack of male migrants and the change in economic emphasis (Institution and Political Economy, 2025).

- **Feminisation of Agriculture:** Women are increasingly taking over as the main cultivators and agricultural workers as men migrate for non-farm employment.
- **Nuclearization:** Land fragmentation and individualistic employment opportunities are driving a steady shift away from traditional joint families and toward nuclear family structures (Ministry of Education Government of India).

Digital and Technological Penetration

The "cultural lag" between rural and urban areas is being overcome by technology.

- **Digital Inclusion:** Gram Panchayats are being connected to high-speed internet through programs like BharatNet and Digital India, which are promoting e-governance and rural entrepreneurship.
- **Smart Village Concept:** In order to reduce distress migration and enhance quality of life, modern planning focuses on providing urban-like amenities (sanitation, 24/7 power, digital connectivity) (Narkhede and Ghom, 2018).



VII. Challenges in Rural Social Transformation

- **Persistent Inequality:** Despite progress, caste, class, and gender disparities still exist.
- **Poverty:** Economic instability still affects a large number of rural households.
- **Research indicates** that social networks in rural areas are still divided, particularly based on caste.
- **Environmental Challenges:** Climate change and land degradation affect rural livelihoods.
- **Cultural Conflict:** There is tension between traditional values and modern lifestyles.

Scholars argue that rural India is evolving into a rural-urban continuum, where boundaries between village and city are increasingly blurred.

VIII. Conclusion

Urbanization, migration, globalization, and advances in technology are all having a big impact on rural India. These forces are changing the way society is organized and making new ways for people to live together.

Modernization has raised living standards and opened up new possibilities, but it has also brought problems like inequality, the loss of culture, and the breakdown of society. The changes happening in rural India are not the same everywhere; they are different in different areas and communities.

To promote sustainable development, policies should prioritize inclusive growth, social equity, and the safeguarding of cultural heritage. Rural development strategies ought to seek equilibrium between modernization and traditional values.

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