

Decline of villages in India leads to a decline of India

*Villages play a crucial role in the development of our Republic, as they represent the backbone of our nation. However, over time, the village structure has been weakened, and this has had a negative impact on the overall development of the country. What went wrong is that many of our villages have been neglected and left behind in terms of development. What are the ways and means to rejuvenate our little republics explains **Dr N. Bhaskara Rao**, the author of several books, scholar, social scientist who has been studying various social and development issues including governance, electoral process; in conversation with **Dr. Vasanti Rao***

Question: Can you explain to us what is this concept of the ‘Little Republic of India’ why is it important when we talk about new India?

Answer - I am happy that the little republic of India is being remembered and discussed in this conversation. India used to be known for its villages around 75 years ago, and it's noteworthy how these villages played a crucial role in sustaining India's growth model. India's village culture and the self-sustaining process of its villages have indeed been a unique model in the world's governance pattern.

Back then people used to talk about little republics not because there were 5.60 lakh villages in India but they were little republics within the larger republic of India and played a crucial role in sustaining India's growth model.

These characteristics distinguished India very uniquely. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, and Raja Ram Mohan Roy all early Pioneers who devised or who pursued Modern India, thought about India from a village perspective in terms of how they are administered and how they can become productive. From the process of governance to agriculture and self-sustaining, India's villages had it all.



Dr. Rao in discussion with Dr. Vasanti Rao

Not only this whenever any international dignitary visited India, these villages were shown to them as unique models of Indian democratic system. When Eisenhower, (an American military officer and statesman who served as the 34th president of the United States from 1953 to 1961) came to India in 1951 we took pride in taking him to the village and showing him how great our villages are and when 10 years later in 1961 Mr. John Kennedy came to India he also visited a few villages, Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev from the Soviet Union was also shown that how the Indian rural community was unique as compared to Soviet Union models.

The decline of rural India is a serious issue that requires immediate attention. The decline of villages in India leads to a decline of India, the republic. We need to introspect and take corrective measures to rejuvenate these little republics of India. By nurturing and watching rural areas carefully, we can rectify our lapses and ensure that our republic India survives even after 2050. We have still 25 years to rectify our lapses that are responsible for deteriorating the condition of our villages.

Question: We don't talk much about our villages nowadays, we talk about rural India, however rural India over the years in our 75 years of Independence has been getting lots of importance in terms lots of schemes and programs, especially about farmers and many more programs for rural India how still villages are neglected?

Answer - I am looking into these issues especially in past 2 years more deeply and in focused manner. I was known as a village boy in my college and when it comes to a village, I see a village as a viable community. After India became Republic the first National Credit Survey was conducted to find out how to sustain village communities and it was found out that credit to farmers, and weavers of India are the main factors for the survival and sustainability of India. This set the momentum for the sustainability of our villages.

In 1956, Balwant Rai Mehta committee was formed and his committee recommended 3 tier systems of governance in India and rural India was divided into three levels: Village, Mandal and district level. It is necessary for India to strengthen local governance for its development. Bottom to up approach was required to have overall development in the country. I spent last two years in the village, and found that how the image of a village in the minds of people in the cities are totally different.

I wrote 3 books in Telugu in last one year that explains about the subject like 'Why we should take pride in our villages' second one focused on women empowerment and the third book talks about the needs of the children of the villages that focuses in terms of education, mental faculties and upbringing of children of villages.

In the first 25 years of the Republic, many well-educated people from India went abroad and proved themselves by becoming global leaders in different fields. However, it is disheartening to see that the villages, which form the backbone of our country, are languishing. Unfortunately, today's political parties are not very concerned about the cognizance of the process of declining of the most micro unit that is the village in our country.

The decline is happening in the structure of the village community, local resources, and the core value of the family as a unit and culture of the village. Most of the villages aren't as self-reliant as they used to be. Now they started depending upon the doles from the government and political parties.

Nobody is bothered about preserving the diversity and environment of the Indian villages. Trees are being cut, lakes are converted into ponds. The administration of villages is now in multiple hands whereas in the olden days only 3 people used to run the governance now, 33 persons are running it. Local resources haven't been fully utilised.



Dr. Rao

Instead of realizing and regaining the uniqueness of villages, they are imitating urban India. Instead of decentralising we are heading towards centralising the power and the governance.

If we want our little republics to revive and the Republic of India to strive we need to make such efforts that people start going back to villages.

The Indian government is making efforts for villages but those policies are not making any difference because there is a huge rate of migration from rural to urban India, and it concerns so many farmers are now practising labour work or other related works after migrating in the cities.

Question- Share your experiences of staying in the villages and according to your view what could you do to revive the Little Republic of India?

Answer - The village government has changed a lot. In the initial days, Panchayat was supposed to be the smallest unit to govern the village but now political parties are entering villages who have created caste and class based system by distracting from main problems. We need to have party less governance at village level that can bring back the harmony among different communities that is virtue of the village. Therefore, it is imperative that we take steps to revive the villages of India. This includes improving agriculture practices, providing better infrastructure, and creating job opportunities.

The concept of the little republic is an altogether different pride that need to revive and rejuvenate then only our Republic of India will thrive and strive what our constitution wanted to achieve. We must take steps to revive the villages and ensure their sustainable development for the overall progress of our nation.

This interview can be viewed on following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cu1nQDkw254>

*This interview is the first part of the series on
Rejuvenating the Republic of India: Mission 2050*