Role of Technology in Rural Development: Some Issues

Mrs. Saher Hussain

Associate Professor, Dept. of Sociology,
Karamat Husain Muslim Girls'and
Research Scholar in the Lucknow University, Lucknow.
Email: saherhussain36678@gmail.com

Abstract

The impact of processes of social change like industrialization , technological advancement, urbanization, and modernization on age-old traditions and customs of villagers their attitude, and lifestyle are the main thrust of the present paper. Although the two major objectives looked into in this paper are the type of technology used in villages in present times and it impacts on the lives of the village of Baqinagar and Rahimabad(two villages of gram panchayat Jindal,block Malihabad, district Lucknow). The analysis is based on various case studies collected . Out of the twenty-two cases studies analyzed here I will be describing only four which concentrated specifically on the role of technology in villages

Keywords*: Change in structure, Technological advancement Management Information technology Idea of continuity.*

Introduction

India's villages have been very popular for its unique culture and way of life. The age-old traditions which include customs food habits, religious rituals, life cycled rituals, dress patterns and style of housing-have still found continuity with some changes (Atal 2007).There are many processes of change such as urbanization, industrialization , Sanskritisation , westernization, and globalization, they have all affected in some way or the other the rural India . The process of urbanization has been very slow in India. In the sense, in 1950 the urban population was 17.5 percent whereas in 2001 it only becomes 27.5 percent. Thus in five decades, there was only ten percent growth in the urban population. Even today in 2020 Urban population is estimated to be 32 percent.

In this manner, the past two decades saw about 5 percent growth in the urban population. However , the rural population with a mammoth 68 percent of the Indian population dominates the country's economy . Agriculture has been the mainstay of the Indian rural economy and it has been improvised continuously from crude methods to sophisticated ones. Today people use tractors, thrashers, and other technologically improved instruments, which were never used earlier. Under this backdrop the present paper[1] has mainly two objectives : (a) to understand the type of technology implemented and (b) to find out the impact of the above technology on the lives of villagers. Standardized sociological methods and techniques were used to collect data from two villages namely Baqinagar and Rahimabad of Jindal panchayat District Lucknow.

In this paper, I will be only using the data collected through qualitative methods , i.e, case study method. Here I will be describing about four case studies based on which the analysis has been done. The theoretical perspective used in this work is structural functionalism , social organization, and change . The main ideas in these theories are that society has a social structure that is uniform throughout the society. Structure is taken as ideal by the people. Hence they do not want to have any change in their structure however all the elements of the ideal structure are not available all the time. Therefore people use 'choices' and 'alternatives' (Firth 1955). In this manner, it becomes 'change in structure' instead of 'change of structure'(Leach 1954).

Change in the village due to technology and urbanization has been very well analyzed by many sociologists , for many years for example M.S.A. Rao, M.N. Srinivas , and others have studied such changes . M.S.A. Rao (1955) has studied the impact of urbanization and technology on a village named Jadavpur (7 miles from Delhi railway junction). It was a well-connected village. In 1920 the peasant of the

village started to market their fruits and flowers in the city. Selling their gardening products in the city, earned them a lot of profit. Few of them started doing jobs in Delhi as well. Later on , the Delhi administration acquired land for establishing an industrial estate in the area. Finally, in 1958, the village was incorporated into the Delhi Municipal Corporation hence it became the part of the city. Village situated near industrial towns had a different impact mainly in terms of employment to the villagers. The Bhilai steel plant was established in the 1950s, when many villages were uprooted the villagers were given some compensation and were rehabilitated elsewhere most of the villagers became an unskilled laborer in the plant.

Srinivas studied the Rampura village where the found out that in 1948, the leaders of Rampura submitted a petition to a visiting minister requesting the loan of bulldozer and tractors, and asking for electricity in 1952, the village got a bulldozer by 1955, the village was electrified . Two rice mills started in the village in 1950-51, brought a lot of change to the villagers (Srinivas 1962:84). In the present study as said earlier four case studies have been taken examining the socio-cultural status of the people and change occurring due to various processes . Specifically, the changes occurring due to technology have been analyzed. They have been described in the following case studies . **Case – 1** GP a native of Rahimabad village lives in a house that has a small pucca room, and the rest is kulcha. He has a thatched roof outside the house, where male members of the family sit in the morning and evening and gossip with visitors. GP has only one son, his four children at early ages i.e.,6 months, 3 months, one just after birth and 16 months have expired due to reasons not known to him. His only son is doing post-graduation from Lucknow university.

Every day his son sits under the banyan tree in front of his house. He carefully opens the case of his laptop which he got through a scheme of Samajwadi party. He cleans the screen and tries to operate and learn the functioning of his laptop. He is a carefree apolitical person who has recently joined Lucknow University (M.A). He also accepts that earlier he never dreamt of becoming anything more than a village school teacher. But with the use of laptop and internet facility his aspirations have grown and is planning to prepare for civil services examination. He often uses a laptop for his studies and searching for job opportunities. He also plans to go for coaching classes and pursue a computer course run by Lucknow university so that he can use the new and quickest way of acquiring knowledge to its fullest and make the best use of technology. His family had never seen a laptop earlier. He also told that he and his other friends were often envious of their friends from affluent backgrounds who displayed tabs and laptops on the campus. Now he also proudly goes to the campus with his laptop. He has made his grandfather, mother, and father

learn the usage of laptops, who spent their spare time using it. His father and mother watch old movies and news on the laptop. He has also made them learn to play games. His father and grandfather try to search for a better market for their produce, so that they can avoid selling their produce to the middlemen and earn more profit. Thus the use of technology attempts to eradicate the problems of non- availability of market and interference of middlemen.

Case - 2

GP a man full of life experience is living in the village for 75 years. He could well see the changes and continuity in a few things. GP has five children, whose wife died of throat cancer. Three daughters and two sons all married and having their own lives. GP lives alone in his old house having three rooms, a verandah, a kitchen, and two washrooms. His two daughters are married in Saudi Arabia one in Jeddah and younger in Medina and the third one married in Bihar. His both the sons are self-employed in Lucknow, elder one has a bakery shop while younger son is running a readymade garments shop. GP reports that earlier his sons use to visit the village after every 15- 20 days, which came down to once in a month. Now they hardly come twice in a year. Their visit is mostly scheduled in summer during mango season and once in winter vacations.

GP reports that it was mandatory for every Muslim villager where ever he was employed to be in the village on the day of Eid. He told that village buzzed with children on the day of Eid. But as of now people even avoid coming on Eid and blame it on their hectic schedule. For the last many years Eid falls in summer that is also a reason for their absence on the festival as they avoid coming to the village in summers because their children fail to adjust in hot weather. As of now his sons hardly visit the village even at festivals. Technology has also played a major role in it. People stay connected through mobiles. Talking to his sons who were incidentally there for, transfer of property told that it is so easy now to stay connected. They said they make video calls, talk on WhatsApp, and keep in touch with their parents. Essence and importance of rituals and festivals have also decreased with development, urbanization, modernization, and technological growth. He said that with the use of technology boundaries of time and place have been reduced. Technological devices allow individuals to foster familial bonds and relationships by recreating the perpetual ability to connect.

Case – 3

SK 82 years of age lives with his sons, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. He started his conversation by remembering his wife who passed away nine years back. He felt bad while sharing how his wife committed suicide as he was a drunkard

and used to beat his wife and could not earn a livelihood. He told, that year drought had struck the village severely. Besides agriculture, there was nothing much that could be done in the village for livelihood.

But presently, with time things are different. Earlier land was the basic means of livelihood and by the use of their labor power, rural people could produce vegetables such as potato, ladyfinger, carrot, oilseeds, rice, wheat. Although the major part of the village is a mango orchard. But as he was a small farmer he mainly grew wheat in his field, and did not have big mango orchard. In his small mango orchard, he grows organic mangoes and sells them at a good price.

But as of now SK's two sons who are Xll the and Vlll the pass have occupational options available in the village itself. They are self-employed one of them aged 23 married to a girl from neighboring village Jindaur, works in the field as runs his shoe-shop at the Rahimabad bus station and he respects his wife and involves her in all decisions of the family even in small decisions like deciding the color of the refrigerator, motorcycle or the brand of television, computer, laptops, etc.

Second son owns a shop of electronic gadgets he also recalls that there was a hardly an electronic shop in the village but now there are seven shops. As most of the houses have, refrigerator, television, washing machine mobile computers and laptops iron, etc. He also lives cordially with his wife and his two children aged six and four. His children are studying in a school in Jindaur (Kunwar Asif Ali Degree College).

Recalling the past he tells that there were times when females had issues of health like problems in the eyes and lungs when they used mud school but now mostly all households in the village have smokeless schools and toilets with tap water facilities. SK also recalls how the love for music made her wife sell silver bangles to buy a radio. At that time it was a thing of pride for the family to own a radio.

Today at the age of 84 while sitting under the same Neem tree SK repents why did he not respect his wife, who loved him dearly and brought up his sons well. He blames himself for his wife's death . He loves his sons, and is loved and respected by them. But they hardly involve him in any decision making which he sees as a big change. He remembers how he as a son asked his father for his advice even for the smallest of matters.

Case – 4

SK 42 years of age is graduate from Lucknow University. He lives with his mother and has also done a diploma in computer sciences. While talking about his childhood he recalls that technological development in the village was very low. Few

years back there were hardly any computers in the village. But as of now many houses have laptops, and i-phones that are used for accessing information. Many houses have laptops given by governments (SP) sponsored schemes. He says it is a blessing for girls who can easily access to the internet at home as they are often finding it hard to go to college regularly. Mobility of girls is comparatively restricted in comparison to boys so technology is a boon for them.

He also commented that the distribution of laptops was a publicity stunt of the Samajwadi government, funds were wasted as lots of girls and boys sold their laptops, for various reasons (i) they needed money for some reason (ii) did not have enough money to recharge for the internet.

But he concludes that on the face of it arming youth with the laptop was a good move. It also helped to minimize the rural-urban divide. He said digitally empowered youth can script a modern technologically advance the social structure of villages.

Technological development has given him a chance to pursue his carrier in computers. He has opened a is giving job opportunities to villagers in the village itself. computer training center in the village, which also functions as a shop for sale and resale of mobiles and laptops in the villages. Thus technological advancement

The above discussed four case studies provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of technology on the people of the villages Rahimabad and Baqinagar of block Malihabad, district Lucknow. Majority of the villagers are having mobile phones, and more than seventy percent of them have smartphones. Mobile phones are used for recreational, educational, occupational, and communicative purposes.

Mobile phones, laptops, and computers are used by the people of the village for education (e-learning) and farmers also use for knowing the latest techniques of farming and irrigation . They try to implement the latest techniques of farming and irrigation in the farms. They get connected with the global market. Information about the latest and best quality of seed fertilizers and pesticides etc are also looked up by them. The use of the technique of poly-farming is an example of it. Villagers use You-tube, Google, and other websites. They make their videos and upload them on youtube and tik-tok. Few of them are even earning by it. Smartphones and internet penetration have empowered villages with facilities to verity facts and stories before getting influenced by them .

Affordability of villagers has increased. Economically independent women have their personal smartphones which they use for listening to music, watching videos, and learning new recipes of cooking. They have learned to cook various

international recipes especially Chinese food . They are also into online shopping. Most of the on-line shopping is done during festivals, marriage, and on-line sales.It(online shopping) attracted them because of being convenient and at times cheaper than the local market. It also provided more options and made them feel modern, as on-line shopping is the latest trend in the village . Possessing more than one mobile phone by a family shows their increasing affordability and a sense of privacy which has become important for them. Villagers have got a job option in the form of computer coaching centers, repairing shops for electronic gadgets, shops for the sale of mobile, and recharging net packages for mobiles and laptops. There are photostat shops which also facilitate submission of forms in various colleges and universities and application for jobs in private and government offices.

Farmers are using the latest techniques of irrigation and farming like tube-wells, thrashers, tractor, pesticide controller, etc. Technology has encouraged usage of best possible manures and pesticides and also emphasis is laid on organic farming. Technology has also facilitated the storage of agricultural produce from rains, storms, heat, and rodents.

The main problem faced by these hard-working rural people is the unavailability of the proper markets and the presence of middlemen. Both of these factors are dependent on information and understanding. These problems are solved to an extent in the villages (Baqinagar and Rahimabad) by the usage of technology . Villagers have learned to use computers and the internet which connects them to the wider world. Technology has generated opportunities to meet the needs of both the villages at the local level. Farmers have started insuring their crops and have become more confident and are flourishing. Technology is used by them to monitor weather updates and helps them to manage the fieldwork, with a better strategy. They do not spray pesticides if rain is predicted the next day in the weather report. Hence save on money and labor. otherwise, it would be washed-off by rains.

Majority of the villagers are living in pucca houses, furnished with household gadgets like gas-stove, mixer grinder, refrigerator, washing machine, two-wheelers, air conditioners, and few even own four-wheelers. These two villages are not a poor village rather relatively, developed villagers. The socio-economic condition of these two villages has changed due to technological advancement, rapid development in transport, and communications among other things. The changes are reflected in every walk of life. Their lifestyle, attitude, and mindset have somewhat changed. The analysis showed improvement in the economic and social situation of the villages. Due to advancements in technology and another factor the share of income from non-agricultural sources has increased. Earlier people migrated to cities in the hope

of better education and job opportunities. With the advancement in technology, it is seen in these two villages that quite a several people prefer staying back in the village rather than opting to migrate to the city. Although some level of migration for different reasons is inevitable.

Technology has made the health care affordable and accessible to the villagers of Baqinagar and Rahimabad. Medical records and tests are shared by villagers to their concerned doctors by the use of technology. Doctors easily check and evaluate previous visits, tests, and medication is also prescribed online. Devices such as fitness bands , blood pressure checking machines, blood sugar testing kit, oxygen level checkup machine are possed by a few of the villagers of Baqinagar and Rahimabad. It helps them to regularly monitor their health in the comfort of their homes and share important health data to doctor concerned for emergency care as and when required. Thus reducing the need for villagers to travel long distances to the city. It is seen as an important change and facility in both the villages. With the use of technology in both the villages women's health has also seen changes as most of the families have opted for family planning mechanisms in the villages of Baqinagar and Rahimabad. Earlier women delivered several girl children in anticipation of a son. But now people have opted for a family planning mechanism.

In the above discussion, I have tried to fulfill the objective of understanding the type of technology used in the village and its impact on the lives of villagers of Baqinagar and Rahimabad block Malhiabad District Lucknow. Use of technology has become imperative in almost all spheres of life including education , transport , banking , healthcare, and rural development. Technological development and advancement have brought several positive changes in the lives of villagers of Baqinagar and Rahimabad. While studying the impact of technology on these two villages the focus has mainly found to be 'continuity' and 'change'. It is clear that both the villages provided or rather reasserted the idea of continuity and change. Continuity remained the focus but change cannot be ignored.

References

1   eFirth, Raymond 1955. *"Some Principles of Social Organisation"* J R A J 1:85.

2   Leach, Edmund .1954. *Political system of Highland Burma : A Study of Kachin social structure.*

3   Srinivas, M.N.(ed). 1955a. India's Villages.Bombay: Asia Publishing house.

4   Srinivas, M.N. 1955 b *" Introduction"* in M.N.Srinivas . (ed .), India's villages . Bombay : Asia Publishing House .

5   1955c *" The social structure of a Mysore village"* , in M.N. Srinivas (ed .), India's villages. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.