



# **Necessities of Social Vulnerability and Gender-related Development Policies in Post COVID-19 India: A Theoretical Study of Purulia District, West Bengal**

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

In India, the poorest of the poor are mostly found in rural areas. They were made up of marginal households, landless wage laborers, and the most vulnerable residents of the settlements. Poverty, inequality, illiteracy, women empowerment, and equity are major social issues in my interest area. At many times of the year, public utilities were the least accessible. In the current crisis globe, issues such as livelihood crises, fairness, food security, malnutrition, and the right to life are being debated. This study area, with a maximum of STs, populated the land area of WB, specifically Purulia, a section of the Chotanagpur Plateau. The topography of the whole district is rough, Basaltic, undulating, and dry. Employment opportunity in cultivation is shrinking seasonally, even day by day. It lost the attractiveness of 'Bhumiputra'. Because excessive land dependency is one of the prevalent causes of poverty. The primary focus was how a lack of extension facilities forced them to find alternative occupations. While feminization of agriculture is a recent trend for

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sustenance. To enquire about the role of existing policies and administration in coping with current challenges. Excessive pressure on land, plot partition, tiny patch, crop failure, and market failure caused the male in towns to escape. The gradual male emigration leads to the feminization of agriculture. I followed some reports, gazetteers, and articles intensively to study both the economic and social consequences of COVID-19 on this most underprivileged pocket of rural WB. Women played a vital role in this famine phase of societal development. Gender-related development for the up-gradation of post-COVID rural India is strategically badly needed.

*Keywords: Marginal households; inequality; empowerment; poverty; gender; livelihood.*

## ABBREVIATIONS

STs : Scheduled Tribe  
WB : West Bengal  
IS : Informal Sector  
PDS : Public Distribution System

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India has a diverse natural character. She has physiographic sites that are opposed from North to South and East to West. A total of nearly 66.6% of our Indian population resides in rural areas. The current understanding is of rural India post-COVID-19. A significant portion, 60% of the Indian population, depends on agriculture. Unequal distribution of natural resources and inter-regional differences in means of occupation are responsible for chronic poverty in the study area. The geographical location of the concerned study area is 23°42' 00" N to 22°43' 00" N and 86°54' 00" E to 85°49' 00" E. The density of the population is 468/ sq.km. It signifies the extreme southwestern, undulating terrain part of WB. The area is the storehouse of many precious ores like Bauxite, Manganese, Copper, etc. But, due to a lack of exploration and investment, it is the most underdeveloped district in WB, one of the backward districts in India. STs are the largest among, almost 56% of the district's total inhabited people. Rice is the main crop cultivated here based on a traditional technique. Rare extension services, and dry area cropping training programmed, they became underprivileged and underdeveloped. As concern from the World Bank (2011), Adivasis—about 44.7%—live below a very meager poverty line of ₹816 (£8.32/\$12.75) per month for rural households. They are also among the most precarious and vulnerable workers in India's fast-growing economy [1]. However, women lead households in the absence of male members. They take of dependents along with being involved in daily wagers [2].

The total number of international migrants today has increased by more than 40 percent

compared to 2000, and it is expected to reach more than 400 million by 2050. 62% of the total inhabitant engaged in marginal work of the area. The leaders of the Indian democratic country were preoccupied with making our state so strong in defence, but they were concerned about the people on the ground. Humanitarian altruist honorable leaders were busy purchasing weapons in different years to keep an impression. Though they arranged some relief funds to feed people experiencing poverty. However, it needed to be more adequate and many times mismanaged. Though they built our houses, roads, rail lines every item to give us a comfortable life. However, what they got in return! They were always with the nation- during Dandi March, former prime minister Manmohan Singh achieved 8.5% GDP growth and the present-day 'Smart City Mission Campaign'. Where are the rights of democracy? Intelligentsia became silent! The discriminatory role of government in this crisis phase is shameful for a nation.

In the context of the outbreak of infectious Corona Virus governments had a significant role to play. Though they took measures in time to protect citizens. But, the planning, policies were negligible to migrant laborers least to support their families. Here, in the very context where is the right of people, what is democracy? These queries come to mind. People always suffer because they do not know how to protest. Many people directly depend on the forest for their livelihood. As the market is closed for uncertain days these people starved [3].

The bottom line of Lewis' contention was that, although there is 'surplus labor' in such Economically, inadequate availability of wage goods limits employment and output in the industrial sector. by cycling, and walking. After broadcasting this in different media our honorable governments, and ministries arranged buses, and trains. But, the unfortunate people did not have money to arrange tickets. There was

lots of drama in paying the travel cost of migrant people between the state and central government. Where they arranged free travel for enriched family children. However, they can afford transportation costs.

### 1.1 Natural Hindrances of the Study Area

Located in the undulating plateau region. A maximum of 45% of total district land is profoundly forested and directly connected with Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh forests. Two state-important elephant corridors are situated here. The annual range of temperature is very high. In summer, it crossed 45°C and in winter below 8°C. The total yearly rainfall is much less, <50 c.m in a single year.

### 1.2 Research Problems

- i. What are the responsible factors for lagging in this area?
- ii. Why do males migrate to a different location?
- iii. What are the main responsible factors for the year around poverty?
- iv. What role would have to play by the media?
- v. What are the significant demands of the neighbor?
- vi. What role may play by administrative units, NGOs, and clubs?

### 1.3 Theoretical Foundation

**Poverty:** The World Development Report 2000/2001 pointed out that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses the lack of opportunities, lack of empowerment, lack of security, malnutrition, and poor health. "It is not difficult to find that with the deepening of research, poverty not only has the connotation of the shortage of economic factors but also includes missing out on opportunities, lack of access to or exclusion from social services, and other social deprivation."

Amartya Sen opined that poverty goes beyond just the income aspects and has other dimensions. Agricultural laborers are unskilled, migratory in character; their supply is perfectly elastic, and therefore whatever they earn is in nature it transfers earnings. The employer often uses this position to his gain by contracting to pay less than what the market forces would have warranted otherwise.). Many classic theories of poverty or antipoverty have been put forward from different perspectives. Development Economics has made an outstanding contribution to the theory of antipoverty.

Starting with the capital elements, it emphasizes that insufficient capital investment is the root of long-term poverty and advocates that large-scale investment can help to alleviate poverty. The representative theories include the Vicious Circle of Poverty, the Low-level Equilibrium Trap, the Critical Effort, the Circular and accumulative causation, and multidimensional poverty [4-7]. New Institutional Economics links the poverty problem with the system or institutions, arguing that the system is a determinant of economic performance and that an effective system promotes economic growth and vice versa.

Most relevant things to eradicate poverty—"These theories laid a solid foundation for decision making and subsequent studies on poverty. In recent years, the measurement of poverty has evolved from a single element of income/consumption to multidimensional characteristics including income, education, health, nutrition, resources, environment, and location" [8].

The suggested expenditures outlined here on the social infrastructure, aside from cushioning women and children, have the added effect of contributing to the long-run health of the economy by raising productivity. By directing public sector spending at job creation and social safety nets that protect women, governments are in effect financing development for the future, generating increased productive capacity.

### 1.4 The Universe of Study

The present research work is on the Purulia district. The total geographical area is 6259/sq.km permanently settled population in 20 forested blocks was 29.7 lakhs, population density of 470/sq.km. The sex ratio is 955 per 1000 males, and the decadal growth rate is 15.52%. Literacy rate 64.48%. (Census of India, 2011). With poor or non-existent infrastructure, no safe and adequate water supply or proper sanitation, and social ills such as continued caste-and-gender-based discrimination, the impact of the pandemic will be felt intensively by the rural sector, turning the pandemic from a health crisis into a full-scale humanitarian disaster.

### 1.5 The Rationality of the Study

Jangal Mahal is located in the South-Western part of the state, very close to Chhotonagpur Plateau. Some prevalent natural barriers (dry

and lateritic barren soil, undulating topography, water scarcity) lag behind the region. Only three rain-fed rivers- Kansabati, Subarnarekha, and Damodar flow over this area—lack of irrigation facilities. Single crops are cultivated in traditional ways. The total forest-covered area of the Purulia is 42.96% of its total geographical area (Based on December 2015 Satellite data). These people were used as vote banks. The 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) aimed to bring down the existing poverty ratio of 43% to 25.28%. Govt. aims to cover at least 68 lakhs BPL households under MGNREGA. The daily wages increase to Rs. 191 for West Bengal. Total money funded Rs. 60000 Crores in MGNREGA in 2019-20 budgets. A male person generally moves to other states for a secure job. Females involve them in local jobs [9].

## 1.6 Research Objectives

In the present study regarding “Needs of Social Vulnerability and Gender-Related Development Policies in Post COVID-19 India: A Study of Purulia District, West Bengal there are some definite objectives written as follows----

- i. To determine the situation of marginal households in the post-COVID-19 time
- ii. To understand the crisis of essential utilities among rural people for Lockdown
- iii. To examine govt. strategies for the survival of indigenous groups
- iv. To justify the role of rural non-farm sector strategies in fighting poverty and unemployment.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

I have followed the procedure to fulfill my study's objectives. For a detailed inquiry into the post-COVID-19 issues, I thoroughly reviewed the latest articles, journals, and news broadcasting. I also studied books, reports, and manuscripts to get a compact idea about the area. Then I went through qualitative techniques for analysis and gave suitable findings.

### 2.1 Review of Literature

South Asian neighbours when it comes to fundamental social development indicators such as the persistence of poverty in the context of India's high-growth economy, reflect escalating inequality: in 2016, 57 billionaires owned as much wealth as the poorest 70% of the country [10]. Moreover, it is pointed out, “India falls

behind its poorer infant mortality rates, life expectancy, mean years of schooling, and female literacy rates”. Poverty and Famines, points out that there are two standards for determining poverty: the consumption norm and the poverty line. It has explicitly emphasized that malnutrition captures only one aspect of poverty. “Adivasis are more rarely landless than is the case with Dalits, but they live in even deeper poverty. In fact, according to the Socio-Economic and Caste Census of 2011, nearly 79% of all Adivasi households are considered to be deprived, compared to 73% of all Dalit households and 61% of all rural households”.

This is why the fusion of demands for dignity and claims for land rights is so essential, as it holds out a distinct possibility for the emergence of what has called "a Dalit– Bahujan oriented left-wing politics." This is a Possibility also for the communist left in India, which for far too long has failed to reckon seriously with the fact that caste-based discrimination and political underrepresentation constitute distinct manifestations of social injustice [11,1]. “First of all, land ownership is profoundly unequal. As few as 7% of India's rural households control 47% of the country's land area, while the remaining 93% do not have land or are relegated to small and marginal holdings” [12]. “Approximately 40% of the agricultural workforce depends entirely on wage labour for their livelihoods, while cultivators have such small holdings that they are compelled to supplement cultivation with wage labour. As agricultural wages are very low and agricultural work intermittent, migration has become a necessity for survival”. Secondly, this socio-economic structure is deeply marked by caste hierarchies [13,10].

“Dalits are vastly over-represented among India's agricultural working class and as many as 71.3% of all Dalit farmers work as wage laborers, and about 45% of Dalit households are landless”. This means that rural India is shot through with exploitative and oppressive class and caste relations that pit large capitalist farmers and dominant caste groups against small and marginal peasants, landless laborers, lower caste groups, and Dalits.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Poverty Alleviation

Agriculture continues to be the most dominant employer. One should remember the Wages and Income of the villagers. Due to the mixed

character of occupations in the rural sector, non-agricultural labour is available for agricultural operations in time. The employment of agricultural labour may either be casual or seasonal. In the case of casual employment, workers work on daily wages and for specified operations of short duration. They are employed during peak agricultural seasons. Seasonal workers attend routine operations all year round and are often employed on oral or written contracts for three or six months or even a year. Thus, seasonal workers have seasonal contracts with the provision that they may work elsewhere when there is no work either on the farm or in the home of the employer. Some employers advance wages to them, understanding that the latter remain in service for a certain period. Wages in the kind form a very insignificant. The third source of deprivation is the exploitative dependence of the poor agricultural workers on the rich. It is observed that this dependence is usually for support in the lean season when enough food is unavailable; for loans in the event of sickness/death or for carrying out social functions such as marriage, death, birth, etc. They pay high interest rates and often get trapped in long-term debt, thus losing mobility and freedom. Agricultural female workers need specific support against the stoppage of income due to maternity and baby care. They also get fewer wages than male laborers. They, therefore, need maternity leave and medical support during maternity as well as crèches and childcare centers. Among the agricultural laborers, some other vulnerable groups are old age people and widows.

This is directly related to India spending only 7.5% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on social protection in healthcare and education. Hence, even after 70 years of independence, Indian democracy has failed to serve as an arena for advancing redistributive reforms in favour of marginalized groups.

The new deal India needs' the writers work with the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS).<sup>1</sup> Betrayal By Elected Govts': Activist Aruna Roy On Suspension Of Labour Laws, 09 May 2020.

### **3.2 What must the Government do to Protect the Laborers and Farmers, those who are most Vulnerable Economically?**

A minimal level of livelihood and income security will have to be guaranteed to labour, farmers,

and workers in the IS. One cannot fight the spread of the virus by wishing away a massive humanitarian crisis. This mandate can be met with an expanded Employment Guarantee Act as a human response to this pandemic. There is no alternative to ensuring regular cash flow for all those affected. The Employment Guarantee Act would provide workers with dignity, and be the most inexpensive way to rebuild a shattered economy. Apart from the regular public works which must continue with sufficient safety measures, home-based activities must be permitted in the expanded employment guarantee program to enable "work from home" for this class of workers [14].

### **3.3 Can Economic Crises Warrant Impinging on the Rights of Workers?**

The trend of substantial uncountable migrant laborers moving out of their birthplace had started since immemorial. All of them belonged to the marginal community. The tragedy, millions of migrant laborers have tried to return home because they are unfed, unsheltered, and jobless. They have no safety when they move for job security and a better life. So, the innocent guys tried to reach home anyhow like commodities. The advice given by eminent Indian (and global) economists to handle this economic crisis nowhere mentions such draconian measures of suspending labour rights. Economists across the spectrum of ideology have emphasized the need to protect the socio-economic classes that will be the worst hit by the lockdown and Covid-19 crisis. In the neoliberal rush for economic growth, we have always short-changed the rights of the labourer and worker. However, before this period, there was space for dissent and protest, and workers' rights were won through collective mobilization and struggle. The suspension of fundamental rights, egregious and unconstitutional in itself, but especially in the absence of normal modes of dissent and legal recourse, is entirely immoral.

### **3.4 What must the Government do to Protect the Laborers and Farmers, those who are most Vulnerable Economically?**

A minimal level of livelihood and income security will have to be guaranteed to labour, farmers, and workers in the informal sector. One cannot fight the spread of the virus by wishing away a massive humanitarian crisis.

### 3.4.1 There is a looming economic crisis

The scale of economic recession will have an impact on the global South. Incomes will fall even for those who do not get sick with COVID-19. The board of directors of all private sector running companies decided not to give a full salary to employees during the lockdown days. As they did not produce and sell goods. Many countries in the global South need an adequate program to address emergency needs. (Diana Mitlin, 27 March 2020). One girl aged 19 years, a Polytechnic student begged for a job to support her family. As her father was employed in an unorganized sector in Tamilnadu.

“He was the family's only bread earner, becoming jobless during Lockdown. (May 6, 2020, Patrasayar, Sangbad Pratidin). Growth and expansion of human civilization throughout the world have often occurred at the expense of the destruction of natural green cover. Destruction of the virgin forest through human intervention now becomes a significant global environmental issue. 50% of the world's original forests have vanished by 2011, the majority being in the last 50 years.” “The reason is many negative factors: imperfect legislative framework, corruption, the economic instability of the country, military conflict in the east of the country, insufficient financing of agriculture, low level of credit to the sector, etc. Using a systematic and integrated method, a model for the formation of investment support for sustainable rural development has been developed. To activate the sustainable development of rural territories, the model will help streamline and allocate financial and investment resources and improve rural investment activities” [15].

### 3.4.2 Research gap

There are some acute problems in the concerned area. Hence, after thorough literature, I find out some particular spaces of research where the primary emphasis is badly needed. Education-training camp, ITI, Technical college; Drought resistant crop production, rainwater preservation system; investment- microfinance institution, Eco-friendly forest-based industry; tourism industry development, etc. so that male migration should be protected. Moreover, to minimize the vulnerable condition of the migrant, daily wages government has to provide liquid funds, supplying basic needs.

### 3.4.3 Possible outcomes and benefits

The main driving forces behind persistent poverty are the lack of natural endowments, poor

geographic conditions, and a fragile ecological environment. Ultimately, we proposed that China implement a scientific, differentiated, sustainable, targeted, and problem-oriented poverty alleviation strategy that can. So, like China, our country should take such necessary initiatives to eradicate poverty. The year around the livelihood crisis is a significant issue in my study area. Males emigrate due to earning, while women support their families. Because the rural marginal people live below the poverty level, they cannot fulfill the minimum needs for sustenance. The government should take initiatives for investment to raise the 'green economy. As there are substantial potential resources in Purulia, the Jangal Mahal

### 3.4.4 Analysis

Dire poverty, absence of stability of employment, lack of formal employer-employee relationship and the seasonal nature of work makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible for agricultural labour to build organizations on trade union lines like its counterpart of the unorganized sector. Poverty based on social exclusion and vulnerability is now becoming very common.

## 4. FINDINGS

The area has a history of deprivation since the British period. The inhabitants were exploited by a zamindar, middleman, and local governments in different phases of development. Social injustice, inequality, and inequity are responsible factors for present marginalization [5]. The underprivileged village society remarkably influences women's economic empowerment, discrimination, and negative externalities.

**Social exclusion:** To cope with the recent hazardous both economic and social crises authoritarian governments would specially treat to eradicate the vulnerability<sup>1</sup>

**The low productivity in agriculture:** Small landholdings, traditional cultivation methods, and lack of capital.

**Under-utilized resources:** Underutilization of limited resources is another primary concern. This happens due to the unavailability of high-end technologies and a skilled workforce.

**Price-rise:** Continuous inflation<sup>2</sup> has eroded the savings of poor people.

**Unemployment and Poverty:** One leads to the other misery.

**Pseudo Unemployment** – Another most challenging issue.

Suggestion for the Development of the context:

**i. Implementation of mechanisms to enforce the rights of Dalits**

**ii. Governance and the social contract are keys-**

**Target group beneficiary schemes ii**

➤ Small-scale and Rural Industries based on local raw materials<sup>3</sup>

➤ Training arrangements<sup>4</sup>

**iii. Monitoring, survey, evaluation, and studies:** The responsible authority should engage administrators in these tasks to give a new shape to rural society. Rural persons are deprived of these advantages.

**iv. Infrastructural facilities:** Organized industrial estates and other facilities are available through various state-sponsored organizations to small-scale industries. Like Institutional finance<sup>5</sup>.

**v. Pressure groups:** Various horizontal and vertical pressure groups exist in the small-scale sector to attend to their members' various problems.

**vi. Women's Health Issues:** If people experiencing poverty have become the collateral damage in this pandemic, the lives of poor women have been forever and profoundly altered. Unprotected female workers are at a greater risk than most men.

**vii. Research and development and technology transfer:** Specialized institutions are committed to this activity in the case of small industries. In the case of village industries hardly any organized efforts have been made to support people experiencing poverty and minimize migration.

**viii. Efficient PDS:** India's food security policy has an important objective to ensure the availability of food grains to familiar and poor people at an affordable price.

- Vulnerability is determined by the options available to different communities for finding alternative living regarding assets, education, health, and job opportunities.
- They are left with minimal earnings for their survival. Daily wage earners are the hardest hit by this. They are left with no extra disposable income to spend on qualitative improvement of their family's lives.
- Small-scale industries have assured the supply of raw materials from different institutions and organizations; rural industries have to look for their sources of supplies.
- There are various types of institutions and well-established practices for giving training on various aspects connected with small-scale industries.
- Institutional finance mainly caters to small-scale industries; there needs to be provision even in the annual action plans of the banks for rural industries.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Instead of suspending fundamental rights, the shock of the lockdown and the loss of employment will be countered only with guaranteed tenure and security of income to help persuade workers to return to their former places of work. As the industry revamps and struggles to restart, many casual and even regular workers in various industries need fallback employment. Lakhs of people are hopeless in the famine state. The government should take care of them by giving them immediate funds and quality of life. Moreover, both honourable governments would be more curious about the fixed price for cash crops. Also, make sure investment and extension facilities in agriculture encourage people to cultivate. Women are an integral part and parcel of society every people have to understand it. Without their cordial participation in a household, society, a nation could not progress.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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