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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**GLOBALIZATION AND FUTURE OF RURAL-AGRARIAN IN 21ST CENTURY INDIA:
CHALLENGES, LESSONS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

23-24 February 2023

CONCEPT NOTE

Uplifting rural areas by bringing people above the poverty line, ensuring their developmental conditions, and providing basic facilities that are needed for a healthy nation has been one of the priority areas of independent Indian state. India has made remarkable progress in this direction. Rural poverty levels have declined significantly in the past seven and half-decades as highlighted in the recently published UNDP report on Multidimensional poverty index. The report highlights that around 415 million people have been lifted above the poverty line in India. However, the levels of rural poverty continue to remain high. Challenges of providing nutritional security to women and children in Rural India continues to remain a major policy challenge. Besides, these challenges are more daunting in case of states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Though economically, rural areas have emerged as hub of newer business and economic activities. Rural areas are not only contributing to the agriculture and allied activities but also to newer informal sector business. Increasing transportation facilities and information and communication technology has facilitated rural-urban economic linkages. Rural continues to remain home of more than half of India's population by agriculture providing employment to more than 50 % population. Globalization, be it economic or cultural have transformed the rural-agrarian society of India in many fundamental ways. The increasing interaction between rural-urban or rural-small towns are one of the strongest connectors of this process. With increasing mobility between the rural and other spatial territorial entities the agrarian sector or other kinds of entrepreneurial activities in the rural has witnessed a qualitative shift. It has not only opened up newer business opportunities for the rural populations but have also exposed them to a new consumerist culture. The traditional occupational boundaries of rural are breaking away paving way for newer income options. Increasing access to information and communication technology has also added to this process of change. Rural society and economy are no more excluded, secluded or alienated territorial space as it used to be considered few decades ago.

However, these business opportunities and agricultural integration with market has also produced newer forms of social as well as economic inequalities. This euphoria of interconnectedness between rural and urban is not a complete story. The new opportunities are not meant for all in equal terms in the rural society. Two major determinants of the success are: first access to seed capital and two required level of education. For most of the communities in rural India both these conditions are the biggest challenges. They are more than the concern for poverty. The traditional social structure doesn't allow people to explore newer business opportunity. On the contrary, lack of education makes them more vulnerable to fraud and cheating which are additional effects of globalization.

Agriculture being the largest employment provider sector has witnessed a massive transformation as a result of globalization of the sector. Farmers are in a position to sell their products in open market more. Besides, the increasing reach of information world has made farmers more informed about the commodities which are in demand, or the price variations and so on. This has also created a new group of farmers who are willing to take risk and invest. However, in this new discussion on open agriculture the marginalized communities like landless cultivators, or landless laborers are not talked about.

Agriculture and its economy centric discourse has put other critical questions like caste and gender at margins in discussions on the rural and agrarian India. The prevailing inequalities in agriculture and allied sectors make women, children and lower caste groups most vulnerable. In drought prone areas like Bundelkhand, Vidarbha, parts of western Rajasthan, Odisha, etc are suffering from dual underdevelopment: a human made problem of climate change and policy negligence of marginalized sections. (Suthar 2018, 2022). It shrinks their opportunities to move out of traditional sector on the one hand but also brings them closer to the new vulnerabilities (liked women trafficking, child trafficking).

Studies also show how the declining possibilities of a quality life in rural India (defined in terms of availability of quality health services, education facilities, drinking water, transportation, employment opportunities, and modes of entertainment), it is adversely impacting the rural youth. Increasing number of suicides, cases of drug addiction, communal violence or caste violence are some of the indicators of increasing mental stress levels in rural India.

Changing nature of agriculture as per the requirements of the global market has also brought in serious environmental complications. The changing climatic conditions is posing newer challenges before India's farming communities. The communities living in the coastal regions face different kinds of climate issues which we may not even be aware of.

The government of India has launched multiple schemes to ensure overall development of the rural India. Recent focus on Mission Antyodaya is a remarkable step to ensure convergence. Besides, there is a special focus on promoting Natural farming, zero budget farming and above all rainfed agriculture. Recent focus on Farmer Producer organization and Cooperatives are two major steps of the current government for the upliftment of farmers. Such collectives can play a crucial role in giving new dimensions to the policy of rural development.

There will be nine sub-themes around which seminar will be organized:

1. Rural-Agrarian India: Questions of Food, livelihood and Employment
2. Changing rural society and rise of aspirational youth
3. Farmer distress, agrarian crisis and challenges
4. Climate change, sustainable agriculture and rural India
5. Issues of economic development, sustainability and supply chain
6. Technology, science and rural society
7. Integrating rural with local and global: strengthening FPOs, Cooperatives and Foreign Trade issues
8. Globalization, rural-agrarian society and policy interventions: Some Global Lessons
9. Politics, policy and farmer mobilization