

The background of the image is a dark blue and purple night sky filled with numerous white stars of varying sizes. In the foreground, there is a silhouette of a forest of evergreen trees. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

JUNE'19 (06 to 12 Jun)

Agrarian Crisis A Major Problem in India

What is poverty?

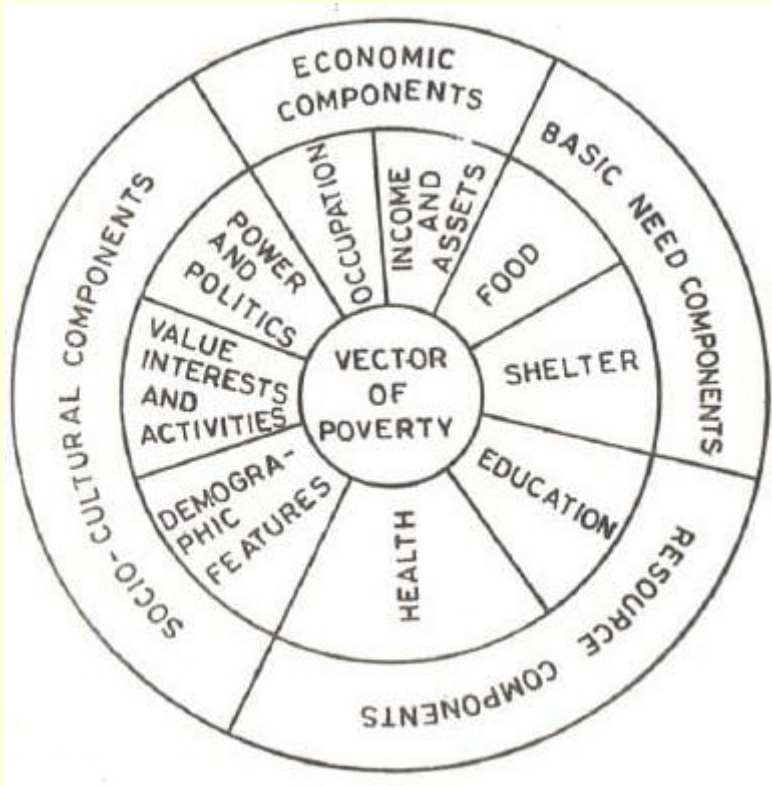
The answer to this question is “**Poverty is described as lack of the income needed to acquire the minimum necessities of life.**” Rowntree was the first investigator to attempt a rigorous definition of poverty in subsistence terms. In his classic study of poverty in the city of New York. He writes “My primary poverty line represented the minimum sum on which physical efficiency could be maintained. It was a standard of bare subsistence rather than living.” Thus the term “Poverty” refers to “the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support.” or “to a condition of being in want of something that is needed, desired or generally recognized as having value.” India is second most populous country in the world and is also known to house over one – third of the world’s poor. Though India is witnessing a rapid urbanization still a very large proportion lives in rural areas. Agriculture and related activities in rural India contribute to 33% of the Gross Domestic Product, and is responsible for the employment of over 60% of the workforce.

New agricultural methods incorporating the use of genetically improved seeds, double cropping and expansion of farming land brought about national self-sufficiency in grain production. Constant innovations in farming techniques continue to increase unit output, but this remarkable success has not yet fully insulated the country from the impact of drought and declining water sources. Nor has the contribution of the rural sector to the nation's economic prosperity brought about the desired improvement in the lives of the 300 million poor who mostly live in the villages. Indian poverty is predominantly rural, where landless laborers and casual workers are the worst off economic group. Scheduled Castes and Tribes, women and female-headed families, old people, and female children face more deprivation than others. The rural poor are primarily those with limited ownership of assets— including land. The vast majority of the rural poor in India are engaged in agriculture (including fishery and livestock), either as agricultural wage laborers or marginal farmers. There are several important characteristics of the rural poor. First, almost 42% of the rural poor fall into the most economically disadvantaged group of agricultural labour. Furthermore, more than half of this group consists of

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs and STs). Overall, SCs and STs constitute about 25% of the rural population but account for more than 42% of the poor.

Components of Rural Poverty:

Rural poor are identified on the basis of following nine vectors of poverty.



The nature of rural economy in India is such that it is extensively dependent on agriculture. Most of the people in rural areas are involved in agriculture which in turn is dependent on the vagaries of nature. In India, agriculture is largely reliant on monsoon which is unpredictable and can also get erratic. This often leads to insignificant yield or excess yield of a crop (which cannot be properly consumed). Shortage of irrigation facilities and recurring droughts add to the woes of farmers and they are hard pressed for money throughout the year. Many take loans which they struggle to repay. Sometimes, the situation gets so bad that many farmers end up committing suicide. The effects of abject rural poverty are such that many rural areas are devoid of even basic facilities like sanitation, infrastructure, communication, and education.

A study by a premier social sciences research institute reinforces what policymakers and media have been talking about the past few years—that India is going through a deep agrarian crisis. The Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), based in Delhi, found that given an option majority of farmers in the country would prefer to take up some other work. Poor income, bleak future and stress are the main reasons why they want to give up farming. The survey of 5,000 farm households

across 18 states says that 76 per cent farmers would prefer to do some work other than farming. Sixty-one per cent of these farmers would prefer to be employed in cities because of better education, health and employment avenues there. A high percentage of farmers complained of repeated losses; 70 per cent of respondents said their crops were destroyed because of unseasonal rains, drought, floods and pest attack.

The report says that benefits of government schemes and policies are being mostly given to big farmers having landholding of 10 acres (4.05 hectare) and above. Only 10 per cent of poor and small farmers with average land holding of 1-4 acres (0.4 to 1.6 ha) have benefited from government schemes and subsidies. The farmers blamed the state and Central governments for their present condition as 74 per cent of those interviewed alleged they do not get any farming-related information from officials of the agriculture department. The expert committee set up by the Planning Commission last year under C Rangarajan, former chairperson of Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, has redefined the poverty line. According to the report of the committee, the new poverty line should be Rs 32 in rural areas and Rs 47 in urban areas. The earlier poverty line figure was

Rs 27 for rural India and Rs 33 for Urban India. This raise in the poverty line income bar means 93.7 million more people are now below poverty line (BPL). On 4th June 2019 it came into news that PM Modi's income support scheme will benefit over 8 lakh farmers having landholding size of 10 hectares and more across the country. But unfortunately the number of such big landholders is quite less in India.

There is a big difference between Indian and U.S farmers in terms of various parameters like size, qualification, farming methods and etc. If we talk about farming method, Indian farming is very much labor intensive, and most farmers use traditional methods of farming like plowing with bullocks. U.S. farming is mostly capital intensive with large-scale use of heavy and advanced machinery. The number of farm laborers is very small. Indian farming is still very much dependent on the weather and, consequently, is able to grow only two to three crops in a year, which is restricted to either rice or potatoes. On the other hand, U.S. farms are able to grow multiple crops in one year such as soybeans, beet root, in addition to wheat, etc. U.S. farmers take advantage of scientific and technological innovations and facilities to enhance their production levels. For example, they may

do soil testing in laboratories to know the fertility level of the farmland and the type of crop best suited to grow profitably. Such testing done periodically enables them to take steps to restore the soil fertility. Indian farmers on the whole do not have access to such facilities and do not know about such possibilities. Indian farming is heavily dependent on the vagaries of the monsoon rainfall. Despite massive investment, including the building of huge dams, irrigated lands are still very few in number. Thus, a change in the amount of rainfall has disastrous consequences for Indian farming. In contrast, U.S. farming uses advanced systems of irrigation methods, which allow all-year-round production. Indian farmers are mostly owned by poor families and managed by family members themselves. In contrast, U.S. farms are owned by rich business corporations and managed by specialized manpower.

Farmlands in US brings back great returns to the framers as compared to our Indian Scenario. It will take enough time for us to reach that level. Farmers Are Not Able To Get Real Benefits of Agriculture Innovations. They are Unaware of Technologies and relying on Age Old Practices and Becoming Victims of Distress and leaving Farming and becoming Daily Workers. In India Every Day

34 Farmers Are Committing Suicides and Every Year 12,000 Farmers are Committing Suicides. There are many NGO's who are working for rural problems of India. It's high time to help and think about our Farmers.

For reference:-

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Additional Readings:-

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/28/the-guardian-view-on-europe-change-not-decay>
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