

Whither the Indian Village: Culture and Agriculture in 'Rural' India

Dipankar Gupta

Abstract

The village in India, where life was once portrayed as 'unchanging' and 'idyllic', has in recent decades seen profound changes. The twin shackles that once decided matters for India's villagers, caste and agriculture, no longer exercise their vigorous hold. While a break in caste rigidities has fostered greater fluidity in occupational choices, agricultural stagnation has ensured the constant march, in increasing numbers, of employable people in the villages towards urban areas. At the same time, vote bank politics means that parties and politicians continue to pay lip-service to the cause of villages, chiefly the poor farmer. It is in the light of these changes that the 'culture' surrounding agriculture and the village needs to be understood. While this culture is not altogether a stable one, its state of pronounced flux does hold out certain portents. Whether these are understood by policy-makers and the vast majority of Indians, remains open to question.

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The Functioning of 'Externality' in Primary Education and the Reassessment of the Traditional Per Capita Literacy Measure: An Indian Illustration

Sudeshna Ghosh

Abstract

This paper examines the influence of different forms of externality that may affect the behaviour of primary education. An index-based measure of literacy to evaluate the varying dimensions of externality has been constructed. The need for such an index-based measure rises with the construction of the human development index, which includes basic education as an important component, though in an un-indexed form. The usefulness of the measure has been established with the help of secondary Indian data. The policy implication that follows from such an exercise is that there is an urgent need to identify the exact nature of relations between the non-school (external) and school factors to sustain the process of universalisation of primary education in India.

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States' Fiscal Scenario During Reforms Period: Evidence from Orissa

Mihir Kumar Mahapatra

Abstract

The erosion in the fiscal health of Orissa's state economy during the reforms period is primarily on account of disproportionate growth in non-developmental expenditure as compared to growth in revenue. To meet the growing current consumption, the state government had to resort to borrowing when the prevailing interest rates were very high. This has resulted in a quantum leap in revenue deficit followed by higher fiscal deficit and accumulation of outstanding liabilities. For the present, the major source of concern is how to 'sustain' the growing debt. To put the state finances on a sound footing, efforts must be made to re-prioritize expenditure and mobilize adequate

resources. Added to this, allocation of more resources for development of infrastructure in agriculture, scope for improvement in the bottomline of the PSEs and feasibility of opting for a debt-swap scheme need to be examined.

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India's Housing Needs:Towards Pragmatic Strategies

M. Mahadeva

Abstract

Given the existing inconsistencies and absence of compartmentalized and need-based strategies in housing development, over 151 lakh households are deprived of decent housing in India. Around two-thirds of the households are facing deficient housing; besides, the number of crowded houses and pavement dwellings is increasing. Further, about half the households are deprived of housing amenities. Such deprivation in housing and related services points to the need for a fresh approach to policy making, in order to meet the diverse needs of Indian households. Compartmentalized housing strategies, development of critical inputs, re-organisation of the housing market, an integrated approach and special concerted efforts for the most affected parts of the country are some of the options that this paper considers for effective housing development in the years to come.

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