

CBSE Class-12 Sociology Test Paper-05
Change and Development in Rural Society

General Instruction:

- Question 1-5 carries two marks each.
 - Question 6-8 carries four marks each.
 - Question 9-10 carries six marks each.
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1. Define 'matrix of events'.
2. What was the condition of Indian agriculture at the time of independence?
3. Why is the pattern of farmers' suicides pointing towards the significant crises that the rural areas are experiencing?
4. In many regions in India, the former 'Untouchable' or dalit castes were not allowed to own land. What was the impact of this?
5. Define 'proprietary caste'.
6. Write short note on 'Raiyatwari system'.
7. The pace and spread of change in the rural economy rapidly increased after Independence. Give reasons.
8. Describe the causes that led to the spate of farmers' suicides.
9. What is the impact of liberalisation policy on agriculture and rural society?
10. How have sociologists attempted to explain the phenomenon of farmers' suicides?

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Change and Development in Rural Society

1. When a range of factors coalesce together to form an event, it is referred to as matrix of events. For instance, the phenomenon of farmers' suicides due to drought, crop failures or debt affected many of the marginal farmers who were attempting to increase their productivity, primarily by practising green revolution methods.
2. The situation of Indian agriculture at the time of Independence was dismal. This was marked by low productivity, dependence on imported food grains, and the intense poverty of a large section of the rural population.
3. The pattern of farmers' suicides point to the significant crises that the rural areas are experiencing because agriculture for many is becoming untenable, and state support for agriculture has declined substantially. In addition, agricultural issues are no longer key public issues, and lack of mobilisation means that agriculturists are unable to form powerful pressure groups that can influence policy making in their favour.
4. In many regions in India, the former 'Untouchable' or dalit castes were not allowed to own land. It led to these castes providing most of the agricultural labour for the dominant landowning groups. This also created a labour force that allowed the landowners to cultivate the land intensively and get higher returns.
5. A 'proprietary caste' group owns most of the resources and can command labour to work for them. They also had the best access to land and resources, hence to power privilege.
6. Under the raiyatwari system of land settle, the areas were under direct British rule. Raiyat means cultivator in Telugu.
 - i. In this system, the 'actual cultivators' (who were themselves often landlords and not cultivators) rather than the zamindars were responsible for paying the tax.
 - ii. Because the colonial government dealt directly with the farmers or landlords, rather than through the overlords, the burden of taxation was less and cultivators had more incentive to invest in agriculture.
 - iii. As a result, these areas became relatively more productive and prosperous.
7. The pace, spread of change rapidly increased after Independence. The following were reasons: i) The government promoted modern methods of cultivation and attempted to modernise the rural economy through other strategies. ii) The state invested in the development of rural infrastructure, such as irrigation facilities, roads, and electricity,

and on the provision of agricultural inputs, including credit through banks and cooperatives. iii) The overall outcome of these efforts at 'rural development' was not only to transform the rural economy and agriculture, but also the agrarian structure and rural society itself.

8. The spate of farmers' suicides that has been occurring in the different parts of the country since 1997-98 can be linked to the 'agrarian distress' caused by structural changes in agriculture and changes in economic and agricultural policies. These include:
 - i. The changed pattern of landholdings;
 - ii. Changing cropping patterns especially due to the shift to cash crops;
 - iii. Liberalisation policies that have exposed Indian agriculture to the forces of globalisation;
 - iv. Heavy dependence on high-cost inputs;
 - v. The withdrawal of the state from agricultural extension activities to be replaced by multinational seed and fertiliser companies;
 - vi. Decline in state support for agriculture;
9. The policy of liberalisation that India has been following since the late 1980s have had a very significant impact on agriculture and rural society.

After decades of state support and protected markets, Indian farmers have been exposed to competition from the global market as the policy entails participation in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which aims to bring about a freer international trading system and requires the opening up of Indian markets to imports. For instance, we have all seen imported fruits and other food items on the shelves of our local stores – items that were not available a few years ago because of import barriers.

Recently, India has also decided to import wheat, a controversial decision that reverses the earlier policy of self-reliance in foodgrain. And bring back bitter memories of dependency on American food grain during early years of independence.

The incorporation of agriculture into the larger global market had direct effects on farmers. In some regions such as Punjab and Karnataka, farmers enter into contracts with multinational companies (such as PepsiCo) to grow certain crops (such as tomatoes and potatoes), which the companies then buy from them for processing or export. The farmer is assured of a market because the company guarantees that it will purchase the produce at a predetermined fixed price. While contract farming appears to provide financial security to farmers, it can also lead to greater insecurity as farmers become

dependent on these companies for their livelihoods.

Another impact is the entry of multinationals into agriculture sector as sellers of agricultural inputs such as seeds, pesticides, and fertilisers. Over the last decade or so, the government has scaled down its agricultural development programmes, and 'agricultural extension' agents have been replaced in the villages by agents of seed, fertiliser, and pesticide companies.

Agents from multinational companies become the sole source of information for farmers about new seeds or cultivation practices, and of course they have an interest in selling their products. This has led to the increased dependence of farmers on expensive fertilisers and pesticides, which have reduced their profits, put many farmers into debt, and also created an ecological crisis in rural areas.

10. While farmers in India for centuries have periodically faced distress due to drought, crop failures, or debt, the phenomenon of farmers' suicides appears to be new.

Sociologists have attempted to explain this phenomenon by looking at the structural and social changes that have been occurring in agriculture and agrarian society.

Such suicides have become 'matrix events', that is, a range of factors coalesce together to form an event.

Many of the farmers who have committed suicides were marginal farmers who were attempting to increase their productivity, primarily by practising green revolution methods. However, undertaking such production meant facing several risks due to: - Increase in the cost of production as agricultural subsidies has decreased, - The markets are not stable, - Many farmers borrow heavily in order to invest in expensive inputs and to improve their production. The loss of either the crop (due to spread of disease or pests, excessive rainfall, or drought), and in some cases the lack of an adequate support or market price, means that farmers are unable to bear the debt burden or sustain their families. Such distress is compounded by the changing culture in rural areas in which increased incomes are required for marriages, dowries, and to sustain new activities and expenses such as education and medical care. The pattern of farmers' suicides point to the significant crises that the rural areas are experiencing.

Thus, agriculture for many is becoming untenable, and state support for agriculture has declined substantially. In addition, agricultural issues are no longer key public issues, and lack of mobilisation means that agriculturists are unable to form powerful pressure groups that can influence policy making in their favour.