

In Rural India, Relational Approaches to Poverty: Social, Ecological, and Technical Dynamics

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Abstract: *Nowadays, it is commonly acknowledged that poverty has multiple dimensions, with indicators such as housing, healthcare, and sanitation. However, in policy discourses, relational methods that emphasise political-cultural processes continue to be neglected. We examine a broad spectrum of relational approaches to rural poverty with an emphasis on India. We study new relational methods created in the previous two decades, starting with early approaches that focus on the structural reproduction of class, caste, and to a lesser extent gender inequality. The new methods look at various experiences of poverty and how that influences movements against injustice. They highlight the various definitions of well-being and the ways in which the impoverished articulate their particular forms of deprivation. They also demonstrate how political movements and governance practises are shaped by the intersections of class, caste, and gender inequality. The new relational methods give little consideration to the role that ecologies and technologies play in determining how poverty is experienced, despite these significant contributions. After reviewing research on the Green Revolution and broader agrarian changes in India, we provide an overview of a hybrid relational approach to poverty that integrates ecological and socio-technical factors. We contend that this kind of approach is essential for breaking through the policy silos between (environmentally) sustainable development and poverty alleviation, as well as for challenging limited economicizing discourses on poverty.*

Keywords: Rural poverty; sustainability; green revolution; technological innovation; agrarian change

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