

Venturing through PURA in a cluster of villages surrounding Nagda town of Ujjain district, Madhya Pradesh

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Introduction

To lead an urban lifestyle is now considered to be an important part of people's vision whether they live in countryside or in developed urban cities of the world. Even a country like India, which predominantly had agrarian societies, is fast changing and attracting the world of consumerism and advancement. In fact, present-day society views modernisation as the key tool of development; those bereft are considered under-developed and backward.

This trend of development of the societies, particularly in India, cannot be considered as an exaggeration because it is gaining importance and is, in fact, the much needed requirement of the people. Therefore, the concept of Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA), as originated by Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India, is a prerequisite to fulfill the mission of development. The idea as conceived is a corollary to the idea as enshrined in Rigveda "Let all the abundance of the universe be in our villages".

PURA concept is strengthening of settlement development by way of infrastructural support to have equitable distribution of infrastructure and rural-urban continuum so that there is accelerated social and economic growth, retardation of migration from rural to urban areas and enhancement of rural productivity with the use of urban markets.

PURA is needed because rural areas of the country still have a higher proportion of population that has neither assets nor skills to respond to competitive world of market forces. Lack of infrastructure, physical, social and economical and inadequacy of desired services related to power supply, roads, water, sanitation, transport, hygiene, health, education, employment, etc., are adding to the miseries of the rural people.

Apart from lack of infrastructure and inadequate access to desired services rural areas of the country are experiencing growing problems mainly on two counts - population explosion and marginalisation of holdings. The urban areas are also having tremendous pressure on urban basic services as a result of urbanisation. The situation would reach an alarming proportion; a study of Makenzi Global Institute (MGI) states that 40 per cent of Indian population will be in urban towns by the year 2030. Even today, as pointed out by Census of India, 2001, metropolitan cities (UA) with a population of more than 10 lakhs are 35 as compared to 23 in 1991. These facts are indicative of the severity of problems, especially those related to urban basic services, in coming times.

Although 11th Five Year Plan emphasised inclusive growth, the task is still awaited with growing problems of rural-urban divide, regional divide and rich-poor divide. Performance of GDP in the last 5 years may bring a solace to the policies of economic reforms of the Government of India. Study increase in per capita income to reach a level of Rs. 44,345/

- in the year 2010 to register India as fast coming up in the eyes of world in the list of economically well performing countries. With all these external achievements but inherent inequality, so obvious, for its majority of people GDP or per capita income is not a true measure of social and economic welfare. Therefore, Indian planners have to work not merely on compassionate grounds or on whims and fancies of their will but on the basis of focused intervention as being the concept of PURA to achieve desired results.

Sharing of a plan to implement PURA at village level

A cluster of 14 villages (Figure 1) surrounding Nagda town of Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh is being selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- The villages abutting existing regional roads.
- The villages which are contiguous to the abutting villages.
- The availability of various other existing services considered as a priority to give additional facility.

The selected clusters are located at a distance of 3 to 5 km from Nagda town, with only one village at a distance of 16 km from Nagda. Nagda town is an industrial town in Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. It is an important railway junction on the main western railway line between Mumbai and Delhi. Being an industrial town, Grasim of Birla group at Nagda town is the largest fiber-producing unit in Asia. The population of Nagda is nearly one lakh and it is also a Block and Tehsil Headquarter. The structure of Nagda town and its agglomeration are influenced by the alignment of railway lines. Nagda has health facilities - government hospital, ESI hospital and well-equipped hospital of Gwalior rayon (Grasim), and educational facilities - college, higher secondary school, etc., which serves as social infrastructure to Nagda and nearby villages. In Nagda town and its surrounding villages the land is fertile and agriculturally rich.

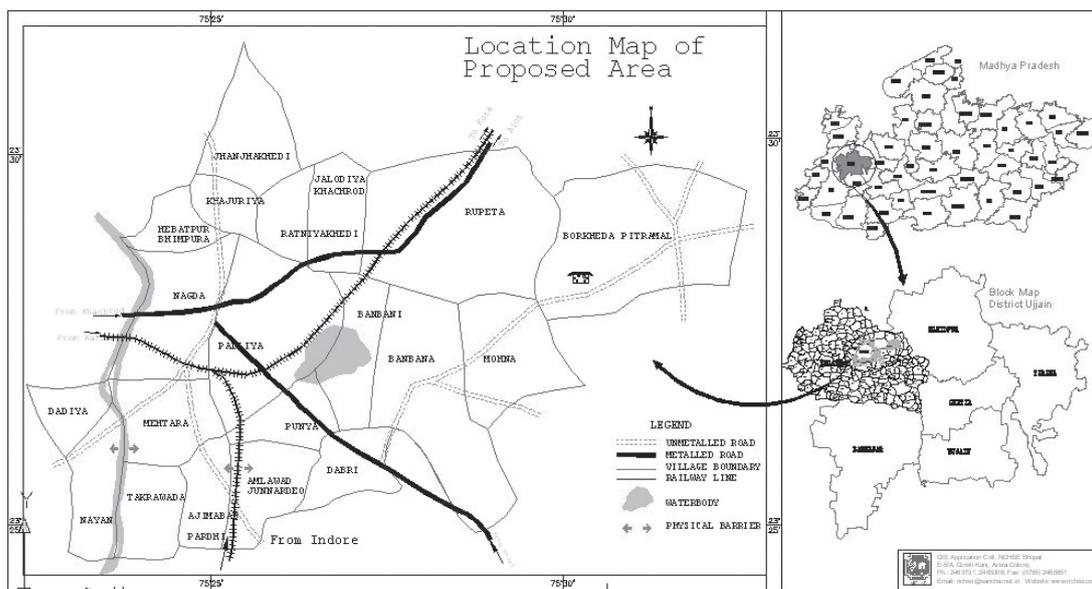


Figure 1. Location of proposed area

An account of village profile in terms of infrastructure support, its population, occupational classification, literacy rates, etc., indicates that the area is deficient in road network, power availability, educational institutions, livelihood support, markets and health support systems. Therefore, the following areas of interest need to be included in PURA cluster of Nagda:

- Road transportation and power connectivity
- Electronic connectivity
- Knowledge connectivity
- Strengthening and creation of income opportunities
- Market connectivity
- Medical amenities

Appraisal of road transportation and infrastructural gaps (Figure 2)

The location of cluster of villages shows that only three villages are abutting regional roads. Three villages are constrained by river whereas two villages are constrained by both railway and river. All 14 villages are not having metalled road; their connectivity is by kachha road from Nagda. The prevailing situation of infrastructural gaps calls for taking up the following:

- Construction of three railway overbridges.
- Construction of overbridge on river.
- Upgradation of existing 57.4-km road.
- Provision of culverts and roadside electrification.

Appraisal of power connectivity and infrastructural gaps

All the villages of the cluster are having electricity connections for domestic, agriculture, industrial and commercial use but the condition of power supply is extremely poor in these villages: not more than 6- to 8-hour supply is available. The condition of power supply in Madhya Pradesh as a whole is not satisfactory as per official claims to provide it at certain levels - village, tehsil and division.

Appraisal of electronic connectivity, telecom and Internet and infrastructural gaps

Only one village has post and telegraph and two villages have Internet facility. Interestingly, all villages have telephone facility as means of communication. The immediate need is to have Internet and post & telegraph services in all villages.

Appraisal of knowledge connectivity and infrastructural gaps

This is another important area, which needs to be taken care of. The villages have schools up to primary level, but only five villages have schools up to middle standard.

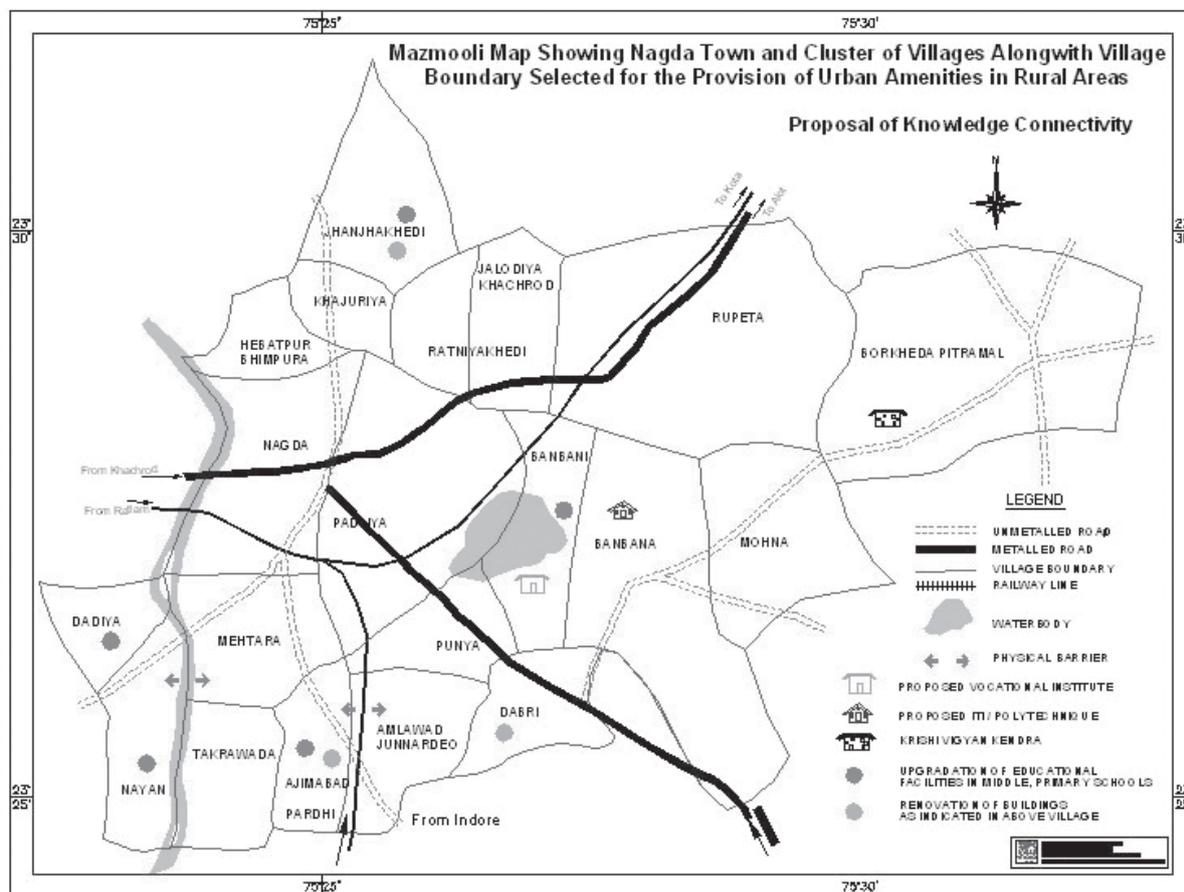


Figure 2. Map showing Nagda town and cluster of village

Strengthening and creation of income opportunities

Whilst the villages lack infrastructural support and adequate delivery of services, the income opportunities are also at a lower scale. This calls for taking up income opportunities. The following services have scope in these villages:

- Farm-based initiatives - (i) increase in irrigation facilities through renovation and newly constructed water bodies, tube wells, dug wells and lift irrigation schemes on the watershed approach; (ii) promotion of horticulture, floriculture, progressive farming, organic farming, vegetable cultivation, nursery, agro-forestry, etc. Introduction of producer companies to facilitate PPP as sustainable initiative of livelihood opportunities to boost activities related to seeds and seed production program, fertilisers, pesticides, organic manures, agricultural equipments, marketing linkages, technical guidance and distribution of dividends.

- Promotion of dairy, goatry and fishery
- Establishment of trading activities - grocery, clothes, cosmetics, shoes, cement, fertilisers, auto parts, etc.
- Carrying out of rental services through tent house, thresher, mixture, jeep, auto, centreing, seed drill and tractor, cold storages, warehouse, chilling plant, etc.
- Utility services - band, welding, bicycle repair, photocopy, hotel, tea stall, STD-PCO, saloon, tailoring, light decoration, soil excavation, boring machine, etc.
- Value addition - Flour mill, moti manka, terracotta, bamboo craft, pulse mill, speller, fabrication, agarbatti making, bag making, readymade, handloom and handicraft items, small-scale industries, etc.

Appraisal of market connectivity and infrastructural gaps

Not even a single village has weekly haat, which can provide outlets to the farmers' produce and a source of strength to their efforts in economic matters. Therefore, there is a need to establish haat in every village and establish sub mandi in one of the cluster villages.

Appraisal of medical amenities and infrastructural gaps

The condition of health facility is deplorable; to begin with the following initiatives should be taken up:

- Proposal of construction of three sub health centres
- Proposal of providing mobile dispensary to all villages
- Augmentation of District Hospital.

Proposed Action Plan

Based on the assessment of the needs of the local area and its people, the following action plan would substantiate PURA concept:

Action Plans		
1.	Road transportation	Construction of three railway overbridges Construction of overbridge on river Upgradation of existing 57.4-km roads Provision of culverts and roadside electrification
2.	Power connectivity	Strengthening the distribution works Provision of alternate power generation source generators
3.	Electronic connectivity	Provision of Internet in 12 villages Provision of post and telegraph in 12 villages Provide cell phone facility to all 14 villages
4.	Knowledge connectivity	Provision of vocational schools with hostels Provision of polytechnic/IT with hostels Renovation of five primary schools Provision of KVK
5.	Strengthening and creation of income opportunities	Farm based initiatives Introduction of producer companies Promotion of dairy, goatry and fishery Establishment of trading activities Carrying out of rental services Utility services Value addition
6.	Market connectivity	Proposals to establish Haat in every village Establishment of sub mandi
7.	Medical amenities	Proposal of construction of three sub health centres Proposals of providing mobile dispensary to all villages Augmentation of hospital at Nagda

Transformation of PURA complex into a dynamic rural complex

The proposed action plan would significantly contribute to a dynamic rural complex by way of:

- Spread of knowledge, technical know-how, service delivery through e-governance
- Health consciousness amongst rural masses and an increased access to health services

- Replenishment of receding water level through NRM
- An improvement in hygiene, sanitation and water availability
- Strengthening of the capacities of workforce and youths through skill upgradation
- Building up of an atmosphere conducive to community participation and good governance
- Increased availability of domestic and other requirements at reasonable prices
- Enlargement of livelihood activities, increase in income levels and poverty reduction
- Attainment of inclusive growth
- Realisation of rural-urban continuum:
 - to achieve accelerated social and economic growth
 - to prevent migration of rural to urban
 - for the use of urban markets to enhance rural productivity
- Paradigm shift to growth and opportunities

Author's Profile

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