

# MANAGING THE BUSINESS OF BEING, THROUGH PLANNED DISRUPTIONS: THE CONCEPT OF ‘SMART DISTRICTS’

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It is not a sound Principle of either morality or economic policy or political astuteness or legal equity (Law of Equity refers) -- nor is it sound even for the proper growth of a military-deterrent -- to take away such moneys as could have been utilised for the ‘development’ of Human Resources, Economy & Armed Forces (which defend the Country & all its resources) from those Citizens who work hard, efficiently & smartly, and those who spend wisely & save, and from those who contribute to the National Exchequer; and then squander away their hard-earned moneys upon those who do not contribute (via Direct Taxes) to the Exchequer (because Farm-Income is exempted from Income-Tax) and, thus, neither pay for the Country’s economic development, nor for the maintenance of its Military, nor for its educational infrastructure, nor for its health-care services, etc. And they also fail to run their ‘farms & allied activities’ efficiently as ‘business-entities’, fail to spend wisely even on their household-expenses and, thus, save only a negligible amount -- rather, many of them run into indebtedness and then demand ‘Farm-Loan Waivers’ against their Votes during Elections to the Parliament &/or State Assemblies.

In any case, loans taken by ‘ryots’ -- who actually ‘till’ the lands (owned by others) on the basis of ‘batai’ (crop-sharing) are not waived, though they are the poorest of the poor farmers who need help in case of crop-failure; they fail to get loans from Banks (Commercial & Cooperative) because they do not themselves own any lands that may be furnished as a ‘security’ for Bank-loans, whereas State Governments waive only such loans as are given by the Banks. Hence, the ryots are forced to take loans from private money-lenders at steep interest rates-- it is the ryots &/or very small-and-marginal farmers who commit suicide when their crops fail due to Natural Calamities and are, consequently, unable to repay the loans taken from local ‘loan-sharks’.

Moreso, neither any criteria is applied while waiving the loans -- nor is there any built-in verification against such criteria to check whether the waived off loan was taken as a ‘farm-investment’ or for conspicuous consumption (marriage ceremonies, purchase of motorcycle/ car, house-building, etc); even for purchase of a tractor, it ought to be checked beforehand as to whether such mechanised inputs can be ‘pooled’ at the District/ Block-level?

From 1990 to 2017, Rs.1,93,000 crores of Farm-Loans were waived off; in 2018 several States have declared to waive off Fram-Loans, e.g. Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan & Chhattisgarh. And Punjab, Gujarat, Haryana & Tamil Nadu have also demanded similar waiver.

Thus, the Total Amount to be waived off and the Amount for which demand for waiver is pending exceeds 4,00,000 crores. Hence, since the year 1990 more than Rs.6 lakh crores have already been spent or are being spent or have been demanded -- without creating any visible self-sustaining infrastructure for the Agricultural Sector.

Whereas CAG conducts Audit of Central Government's spending, none Audits the spending by those Farmers whose Loans have been waived off; such loan-waiver is actually ‘Government-Aid’ to Farmers and, hence, must be subjected to the same very Norms to which International Aid to developing countries is generally extended, viz. such aid must be for purposes that create self-sustaining infrastructures.

In fact, this whopping Amount of critical National Financial Resources has been spent or is being spent or is being demanded to be spent for bringing to power certain permutations & combinations of political Parties. Hence, there must be Financial and Social Audits of all political sops (including Free TVs, Laptops, Pressure-Cookers, Mixer-grinders etc) offered by Political Parties for coming to power at the Centre/ States; and these expenses ought to be included in the ‘monetary cap on expenses’ incurred in Elections by the Political Parties.

I had presented a comprehensive *alternative* to ‘farm-land acquisition’ by the Government for ‘industrial/ business purposes’ etc, vide my Paper titled ‘The Urbane Village’ which was read at Wadia College (Pune), and widely published by the Media. And the present Paper supplements the said Paper.

This Paper proposes that Farmers should run their farms as *modular* business entities under an *umbrella* Public- Private Partnership Scheme, and there will be no farm-loans, no loan-waivers, no farmers’ suicides, no cause for farmers to throw vegetables on the streets, no demand for Minimum Support Price, etc; this Scheme will either utilise existing

infrastructure or suitably modify the available infrastructure. The Government will provide all inputs (including soil analysis, market-demand analysis, manure, advice on cropping pattern, etc) except land & labour. The farmer will input his land & labour, and also promise to give to State Government a pre-determined amount of produce of a particular type and specified quality -- failure to do so will make the farmer liable to pay a pre-determined amount of compensation which, in case of default, shall be recoverable as "arrears of land-revenue". In return, the State Government shall be obliged to pay to the Farmer a pre-fixed amount of money per acre -- which will equal land-rent & farm-wages for own & hired labour provided by the Farmer; these wages shall not be less than what is being paid under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) -- this will also eliminate the ill effects of artificial rise in the cost of farm-labour caused by the implementation of MGNREGA.

While organising/ re-organising a 'Smart District', the Planners should check its recent geographical & climatic history. For example, whether it is prone to floods or droughts, or both? How can its climate be classified in terms of crop-rotation etc? What is the broad composition of its soil? For which crops is it most suitable climatically, by soil-composition, by irrigational facilities available, and by the degree of its tendency to be hit by floods or droughts, etc -- the Planners should list 10 such crops in descending order of suitability?

What percentage of area in the District is suitable for using agriculture as a 'profitable business'? Is this area fragmented & widely scattered? How much area can be spared for clusters of industry -- to which approach-roads either already exist or can be easily constructed without acquiring fertile agricultural lands? How much residential area will be needed to accommodate the existing population; 75-80 % of the planned jobs for the next, say, 60 years (i.e. roughly two generations of work-force) ought to be locally generated and should be such that the locally available human resources can be suitably educated, trained, skilled & adapted to perform these roles? These measures will also ensure that the number of commuters per work-day are reduced -- thereby, reducing traffic and, hence, the amount of pollution and number of accidents etc.

Only about 20% of jobs may be such for which highly skilled & specialised work-force may be required from outside the District -- for whom Block-wise residential accommodation may be ear-marked during the period of their tenures in such jobs, and not for permanent settlement in that District.

The topography of the Districts must be well-planned Sector-wise, e.g. to ensure ease of access to its various parts, proper ecological balance, schools & colleges (including skill-centres), hospitals, 'mohalla' clinics (proximate health centres), communications-centres, community kitchens, crèches, parks (community kitchens, parks & crèches will be maintained by the elderly persons as a hobby, social service &/or for pocket-money -- moreso, they will get free working-brunch), market-centres, etc. Parks will be used for jogging

& light exercises by all the nearby residents, and also for play by the kids -- adults will be charged Entrance-Fees on a Daily/ Monthly basis, as convenient; parks shall not be used for Marriages, Rallies etc -- which often leave behind lots of litter, and also damage the Parks. Community kitchens will cater to temporary destitutes, e.g. those who have lost their Family's sole bread-winner due to an accident/ illness, or bereaved families who, as a part of religious beliefs, are forbidden to cook meals for a couple of days after a death in the house, etc.

The most fertile & non-fragmented parcels of land in the District must be ear-marked for agriculture, and the least ones for the industry, commercial establishments, public offices, etc.

Each District will be divided into Blocks.

Gradient-Mapping of every District should be undertaken in order to determine suitable locations for artificial lakes -- as reservoirs of rain-water/ flood-water and also to meet human & agricultural needs; this will prevent the probable losses due to floods & droughts. And reserves of potable water may be created by rain-water harvesting, too.

Agricultural production shall be so planned as to fulfill the maximum needs of the population of that District for perishable & short-shelf-life food products. For this purpose, for their Project-Work the local 2<sup>nd</sup> year students of MBA may be given the task of gathering Primary Data by way of 'field-research' on the *preferred consumption-patterns* of the populace of the District; tabulation of the data collected by these MBA students through Questionnaires (to be filled-in by these field-researchers in their own hands) may be assigned as a Project-Work to MCA students. The analysed Data will then be forwarded to Block-Statistical-Officers (BSOs) who will indicate the crops for which the land in their Block is the most suitable, and electronically transmit the updated-Data to the District-Statistical-Officer -- who will match the overall requirements with the overall resources and assign the types of crops and number of acres for each crop to every Block, by keeping in mind that perishable products should be located nearest to the place of their consumption. This will not only assure that consumers get fresh vegetables etc, but also that the prices of these goods will now reflect a reduced amount of middlemen's profits -- because some of the youths in every Block can join hands to create distribution-channels (as 'start-ups') by procuring the produce directly from the farmers and bringing the same to the doorsteps of local consumer-households.

The above arrangement will reduce Transportation Costs by cutting down the need for long-distance haul of such products and also the costs of their Storage

& Warehousing. Moreso, replacement of large diesel-trucks by smaller delivery-vehicles will reduce emissions-pollutants.

Farmers shall contribute Land & Labour (including their own & hired labour) and the State Government shall provide all other inputs like seeds, manures, cost of electricity for irrigation purposes, crop-insurance, etc -- the wages for hired labour shall be equal to that earned under MGNREGA. Every Farmer shall be liable to give to the State Government the quantity & quality of the product assigned to that Farmer by the BSO -- in case of default, a pre-determined sum of money shall be recoverable as 'arrears of land-revenue'; in return, State Government shall pay to the Farmer a pre-determined rent for the Land and the actual cost of Labour. To facilitate the Transactions between the State Government and the Farmer, every BSO will issue to every Farmer a *printed slip* showing the particulars of Land, Crops assigned, quantity & distribution-schedule for the inputs financed by State Government for each crop on that land, etc -- against this Slip the Distributer of each input will issue the requisite input, obtain the finger-prints of the beneficiary on the point-of-sale electronic gadget, and electronically & instantaneously Bill the Costs thereof to the DSO.

The requisite agricultural machinery (e.g. bore-well pumps, tractors, harvesters etc) may be hired out by the local Cooperative Banks.

The above system will check haphazard (unplanned) cultivation of those Crops which are not demanded by local population, or their production in quantities that far exceed the local demand and, hence, it does away with the occasions to throw the produce on the roads; it also prevents wasteful rural indebtedness and the consequent suicides by Farmers -- irrespective of the 'status' of the Farmer (whether a landlord or 'ryot', or a big farmer or small one, etc). There will be no demand for 'waiver of loans' at every Election, no demonstrations for Minimum Support Prices, etc. The wages will be fixed under MGNREGA -- as per the existing mechanism, and land-rent will be fixed on sound economic principles (not on political basis).

Production of commercial crops like wheat, rice, pulses etc may be similarly planned at a broader State-level.

There should be only one Internet Service & Mobile Service Provider in one District -- this will reduce the number of Cellular Towers and, hence, the health-hazards of radiation. It shall be the Duty of such ISP/MSP to provide adequate number of Mobile Towers in the District so as to eliminate the problem of 'call-drops' and 'non-coverage along Railways & Highways' -- for this purpose, the ISP/MSP should be given land (for erecting Towers) at nominal rent of Re.1 per annum near the office of each Gram Panchayat, with the following provisos:-

- i) The Security Guards-cum-Operators for the Tower shall be locally recruited -- this provision will give employment to at least 3 local youths per Tower;
- ii) It shall provide one Free Internet connection in the office of Gram Panchayat.

Gram-Panchayat shall employ a local youth (male/ female) who is skilled in handling computers & peripherals, to utilise the said connection for the benefit of the villagers, e.g. accessing online their land-records, the soil-composition of their parcels of land, the aforementioned Slips issued by BSOs [which show the Crop(s) assigned to each Farmer, Terms & Conditions of Assignment, 'arrears' to be paid by the Farmer, details of manures required for his said Crop(s) and the time-schedule for applying these manures, Full Particulars of the Distributer of such inputs as are to be provided by the State Government, etc], important Notifications/ Warnings issued by the local Authorities (e.g. Warnings about Natural Calamities, Outbreaks of Contagious & Infectious Diseases and also the Prevention thereof, etc), Voters-List, Vacancies &c. Printed information may be bought by the Farmer at nominal cost from this Computer-Centre. In addition, these Centres will facilitate instant communication (via email/ chat-message etc) between the villagers and their wards who had already migrated, in search of work, to far off cities.

The above measures will not only generate employment for local youths, but also provide essential information at the doorstep of every village, reduce the problems of 'call-drops' or a mobile being 'outside the coverage area' while travelling, reduce the amount of Cellular-radiation, etc. Portability of Mobile Numbers already exists to facilitate this concept of 'One District One ISP/MSP'.

Every Block shall have 'sulabh shouchalayas' (public conveniences) to prevent open-defecation and to check the habit of emptying one's bladder against a tree or a wall. Sewerage shall not be poured into the rivers flowing through the District -- rather, river-water will be poured, at pre-determined points, into separate 10-feet wide sewers-lines that will be constructed on both sides of the rivers. These rivers can be used as clean waterways, and the water in nullahs may be used for irrigational purposes; it is easier to de-silt & clean a 10-foot wide 'nullah' than, say, a wide-wide river.

A specific day should be fixed, in advance, for burning 'parali' in the fields -- on those days the locals may be advised to ply less number of vehicles between dusk to dawn on that day and during early morning the next day; non-essential trains may not be run the next morning (after advance Notification, as above). Thereafter, the local clouds should be seeded to artificially induce rain -- which will clean up the suspended particles in the air.

Direct-to-Home (DTH) services should be preferred over those channels which involve a labyrinth of crisscrossing cables across poles. Similarly, most of the feeder lines for electricity should be laid underground. As far as possible, all sewerage-lines should be covered. The laying of underground cables, pipelines, sewerage etc should be planned for the next 25-30 years, and well-coordinated -- so as to prevent the need for frequently digging up the streets.

‘Jagrukta Abhiyans’ (Awareness Campaigns) must be taken up at educational institutes and through various Media that are commonly accessed/ viewed by the local people for keeping the District neat, clean & orderly.

Drones should be judiciously used for surveillance against crime, maintenance of Law & Order, for gathering preliminary information on a disaster, etc. For example, drones can reach a crime-scene in real time in order to deter further criminal acts, to record audio/ video proof of the crime, to ascertain the number of police-personnel, equipment & support services required to be despatched or rushed to the scene of crime, etc.

An alternative system for Redressal of petty disputes must be locally established with the involvement of wise & influential elders in order to settle the maximum number of local disputes locally -- without recourse to costly & dilatory courts & other forums.

Inter-District movement may be suitably controlled as & when necessary and to the extent needed -- this will improve security and check crime.

For reorganising the existing districts, additional inputs & institutions may be needed -- because the local population might be emotionally attached to the existing homes, neighbourhood, ‘mohallas’ (colonies) etc and, thus, be reluctant to shift; or they may be temporarily swayed by rumours. To allay their fears & misapprehensions etc, Conciliation & Counseling Centres should be established. Moreso, after drafting the Reorganisation Plan, first the houses should be constructed to move the affected people, then markets should be shifted (till then temporary local kiosks may be established to meet the shifted householders’ routine daily needs), then schools etc should be constructed - - till then proper transportation systems ought to be put in place to carry those students whose homes have been relocated, to their old schools. And so on ....

It is these comprehensive & well-planned ‘smart moves’ that make a district and its people ‘Smart’