

Unit 21

Changing Occupational Structure and Impact of Economic Liberalization

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- explain the changes taking place in post liberalization period of Indian economy
- describe the urban scenario in terms of the changes in occupational structure
- outline the rural scenario in terms of the changes in occupational structure, and finally
- describe some of the new trends in the occupational structure

21.1 Introduction

Consider a few things 'Equity research opportunity for CA's and MBAs', 'Tele-Marketing Executives', 'Required a Technical Writer', 'Needed a Compliance Executive', 'Wanted a Customer Care Executive'. These are a few types of job opportunities published every day in newspapers on all days of the week.

'Every Sunday in newspapers, one finds matrimonial advertisements classified according to occupational categories or in the profiles of bride or groom, job profile is mentioned or highlighted'.

'Everyday morning one crosses any junction (where two or more roads meet) in any city or town; or passes through any size of market place one comes across hordes of people assembled with basic equipments such as spades or bamboo baskets or sickles. At first look this seems like

a fair or mela, but if one spends even half an hour, one realizes that these are 'labour Haats'. Where labour contractors come and hire them for carrying out any kind of sundry jobs'.

How do we describe such instances, does this mean that are we witnessing new kind of occupational structures in new economy? Or has the new economy of India shifted its base from old traditional economy from rural areas to new type of economy which is more urban centric? A closer look at these instances reveals that there are many different issues intertwined and for clearer understanding we need to highlight these issues-

Is there a shift in Indian economy from farm based to non-farm economy?

Does Indian economy has same contribution from the rural areas or is that the urban areas have a bigger contribution to make than the rural areas?

As a corollary, have the above factors led to change in the rural and urban occupational structure?

Finally in the light of new occupations have perceptions of people changed with regard to old occupations.

In the following pages, we will discuss the above issues to understand new emerging occupational structures in new economy.

21.2 New Indian Economy

Since mid-1991, in India wide range of economic reforms were carried out with the aim to liberalize and globalize the economy. Under this both internal and international economic activity were de-regulated and liberalized. Internal liberalization included the dismantling of a complex industrial licensing system, opening up to private investors a number of sectors previously reserved for the state, some divestment of stock in the public sector, decontrol of administered prices, and financial liberalization. External liberalization measure included removal of non-tariff barriers to imports, reduction in import tariffs, incentive for foreign direct investment and technology inflows, allowing Indian firms to borrow from abroad, and the opening up of Indian stock markets to foreign investors. These policy changes evoked a variety of responses, some based on a priori theoretical expectations and others citing the trickle of empirical evidence. Reform minded scholars view globalization as not only quickening growth but also promoting mass well-being. They argue foreign competition and foreign direct

investment will improve allocative and productive efficiency. For them trade liberalization increases the demand for semi-skilled and unskilled workers, increase their wages, and thereby reduce poverty and improve income distribution.

Employment and wages are the major potential channels through which the social impact of increased openness and globalization are felt. One way of measuring total employment in India is to use available figures for the workforce and applying officially available unemployment figures from the formal sector and assuming that there is no open unemployment in the informal sector. Following this approach it appears that while in the 1980s employment generally grew at a rate below population growth, in the 1990s, employment growth was somewhat higher, though much of the increase occurred in 1997.

The sectoral distribution of the workforce also reveals some surprises. The share of agriculture and allied sectors in total employment declined sharply from 63.9% in 1993-94 to 59.8% in 1999-2000 with absolute employment declining for the first time since independence. This trend out of agriculture, which had been observed during the 1980s also, had been stalled between 1987-88 and 1993-94, mostly during early years of the reforms. Employment in manufacturing has risen only slightly from 10.7% of the workforce in 1993-94 to 11.1% in 1999-2000 with practically all of the rise concentration in urban areas. The biggest gains in workforce occurred in construction and in trade, hotels and restaurants, the compound rate of growth in both sectors exceeding 6% per annum. The latter sector now rivals manufacturing in the size of the labour force it employs.

An analysis of the unemployment reveals that for both rural men and women in the labour force, the rate of unemployment rose sharply. Urban male unemployment rose a little while urban unemployment actually fell. Overall, then, the unemployment situation has worsened during the 1990s especially in rural areas. There has also been rising casualization of the workforce in the aftermath of reforms and a decline in the share of self-employment. The share of casual labour in employment rose from 31.2% in 1988 to 37% in 1998. While growing casualization is certainly in keeping with services accounting for the major share of the

workforce increments, even in the sectors of regular employment, retrenchment, closures and lockouts have risen.

In the following section below we will discuss the occupational structure from the point of view of work participation rate (WPR) in early and late reform period. The basis of analysis is data collected during National Family and Health Survey (NFHS)1 and 2. While the NFHS 1 is referred as Early Reform Period as it was conducted in 1992-93 the NFHS 2 is referred as Late Reform Period as it was carried out during 1998-99.

21.3 The Urban Scenario

Box 21.1 The Work Participation Ratio

The Work Participation Ratio (WPR) is defined as the percentage of male and female workers to the corresponding population.

The preliminary analysis shows that the work participation rate (WPR) had declined during the period. The largest decline in WPR is observed in the age group of 45 and above. On the other hand the female work participation rate had increased in prime working age group in urban India. It is found that the mostly practiced employment in urban India is skilled manual which is equally high irrespective of city size. It is 11.2 percent in capital/ large cities, 14 percent in small cities and 12.7 percent in towns. The second most practiced employment is merchants, shopkeepers, wholesale and retail trade which is almost of similar proportion in all the places. The proportion of clerical and related workers are higher in large cities as compared to smaller cities of India. The skilled manual constitutes 10.3 percent of the workforce followed by unskilled workers and labourers. Among other main occupations, 6.5 percent are in administrative, executive and managerial and 2.1 percent are medical professionals. The architect and engineer constitute about 1.3 percent of total working population while that of agriculture and allied activities are less than 1 percent in metropolis of India.

However, the occupational differential by sex, caste and religion is quite distinct. In large cities of India the widely practiced employment among females is domestic workers followed by clerical and related workers. Moreover the work participation among females is more among household belonging to low standard of living. There is differential in occupational pattern by

caste and religion. A large proportion of working population among Schedule Tribe are engaged in low paid jobs as compared to others. On the other hand, it is found that in particular profession like skilled manual merchants, shopkeepers and trade the proportions of Muslims are higher as compared to Hindus irrespective of type of urban locality while the reverse is true in case of administrative, executive, managerial, teachers and clerical and related jobs.

From the analysis it revealed that there is decline in WPR among elder age group (45 and above) in late reform period irrespective of type of urban locality i.e., capital/large city, small city or towns and sex. However the same is not true for younger age group. The differential in WPR by type of urban localities showed that while it has marginally declined/ remained constant in large /capital cities the overall WPR had notices small increase in small cities and town. The female WPR has increased in both ERP and LRP but it is more among illiterate and less educated women. The similar differential is observed with respect to standard of living index of the households. About two fifth of labour force in Urban India are engaged in low paid jobs as compared to less than 10 percent in high paid job. However the proportion of labour force engaged in low paid job is relatively lower in large/capital cities as compared to small cities and towns. Further the sex differential in employment by type of urban localities showed that a higher proportion of working women in metropolis are domestic workers. The most practiced employment among females are skilled manual followed by teachers. The differential in occupational pattern by caste group showed that there is substantial variation in employment by caste group. While a larger proportion of ST and SCs are engaged in low paid jobs as compared to others. Similarly the religion differential in occupation pattern is found in Urban India.

21.4 The Rural Scenario

An analysis of data from National Sample Survey's 55th round for 1999-2000 reveals that there is marked shift in the structure of employment in India. The shift away from agriculture is fairly dramatic. Broadly these shifts can be divided in three categories-

- a) decline in the workforce engaged in crop production is higher than in the agriculture as a whole;
- b) increase in employment based on livestock is high and

c) forestry is not absorbing a large share of workforce.

If we closely analyse, it becomes apparent that since mid 70's there has been diversification in the demand for agro-based commodities. In other words, the pattern has been that the growth in demand for food grains has been around 2.5 percent per annum, while the demand for commercial crops has grown at around 5 percent per annum and that of plantation crops like tea and coffee and non-land based agricultural products like fish has grown at around 7 percent per annum (Alagh 2005). In the decade of 80's only scholars like Alagh (1986) had pointed out that a switch away from agriculture has started in the labour force, which was more pronounced in some regions. Similarly, Bhalla (1983) has shown that the 1970s saw the first fall in the share of agricultural workers in the labour force. Further, this shift, she pointed out, brings the direction of the trend in the employment structure in line with output structures, which may have positive results. And recently Gupta (2003) highlighted that till 1983 there were 12 states where Rural Non-Farm Employment was below 20%, which left only 5 states where Rural Non-Farm Employment was more than 20%. However, in 1999-2000 the situation has inverted i.e., now 12 states have Rural Non-Farm Employment above 20% and only 5 are below that figure.

Above scenario of employment in terms of Non-Farm Employment (NFE) can be viewed both as cause or effect of some other causes. Nonetheless NFE has certain features which are very significant for understanding the causal relationship. First one to be noted is 'sectoral diversification'. NSS data suggest a process of sectoral diversification in rural areas. There has been an increase in the non-farm sector's share in employment (principal and subsidiary status) during 1973-99. This has been maintained during 1993-99 as well. However, the process of sectoral diversification seems to have occurred only among the male workers during entire period. This shift has not taken place in case of female workers during the same period. Further much of the increase in the share of NFE for males has been contributed to the tertiary sector, while manufacturing sector has almost stagnated during the same period. As far as NFE for females are concerned, there has not been any major shift across sectors over the past decades.

In post-liberalization period, it seems an anomaly to view India as an overwhelmingly agrarian society. The reasons are- contribution on agriculture in Rural Net Domestic Product is down

from 72.4% in 1970-71 to 54.4% in 2002-2003 (Chadha 2003); according to national sample survey (NSS) in 1993-94 the number of rural people working in urban area was double than that of 1987-88 and since 1980 there has been noticed a declining trend in GDP growth of agriculture i.e. 3.5% in 1980 to 2.8% in 1990's. This went further down to 1.3% in 1999-2000 to negative growth of -2% in 2000-01 (Majumdar 2002).

What are the reasons for growing NFE? As mentioned above the scope for employment in agriculture has fallen, however the growth in agricultural production creates many types of post-harvesting activities that relate to trade where high degree of non-farm employment takes place. Further this also hints at refocusing of 'aspirations' of rural poor. There are a group of scholars who view NFE as an instance of 'distress employment'. They argue that NFE has increased at the time when agricultural growth has been stagnant. This means that unemployed take up any type of job that come their way. The counter argument is that NFE is also dependent upon availability of off-farm employment. Further, even though the migrants from villages employed in NFE work for less, still that wage is higher than agricultural wage.

21.5 Some Trends

In this section we will discuss, the apparent trends in occupation, which will highlight the structural features in the new economy. An analysis of 4 villages (2 in north India and 2 in east India) by Gupta (2003) reveals that for non-farm employment the distress theory does not hold ground in north India. That is, even well-off farmers belonging to Jatt caste are engaged in NFE along with SC of the village. Even the range of occupation such as dairy farming, sweet shop, transportation, cable TV operation, beauty parlor and Gymnasium are owned and run by people belonging to people without much consideration of caste status. Though, the famous argument is the enterprising nature of people belonging to Punjab. However, in eastern India even in NFE there caste status does come into play. So Thakurs or Tayagi's are not involved in 'Stud farming' or in 'brick klin'. In all such occupations, it is people mainly belonging to the schedule castes or lower in caste hierarchy are included. Upper caste people are mainly involved in NFE, which are salaried or in transportation.

An important dimension of sectoral diversification and resultant NFE in recent years is the process of casualisation of workforce. The percentage of casual male workers was noted to have gone up from the quinquennial data both in rural and urban areas during 1977-93 (Kundu 1997). A similar increase but of a smaller magnitude, has been observed in case of females. Interestingly, the figures have gone up in rural areas even after 1993-94, both for males and females. The increase in the regular/salaried workers as a percentage of the total number of (usual status) workers seems to be special phenomena for urban females. This has to be interpreted cautiously. It has been noted that in many of the sub-categories of regular workers where female employment has gone up, the jobs are of an informal nature and have a very low wage rate.

The above mentioned fact - 'Everyday morning one crosses any junction (where two or more roads meets) in any city or town; or passes through any size of market place one comes across hordes of people assembled with basic equipments such as spades or bamboo baskets or sickles. At first look this seems like a fair or *mela*, but if one spends even half an hour, one realizes that these are 'labour Haats'. Where labour contractors come and hire them for carrying out any kind of sundry jobs', can be observed at any city, town or urban conglomeration. For instance in Delhi such places are Munirka, Kotla Mubarkpur, Neb Sarai and Khanpur. At all these places if one spends an hour or two one realizes that most of the workers present there are from nearby rural areas. This one can judge from their clothing and language in which they speak. The author of this unit, in the course of collecting information for this paper had the opportunity to interact with a few workers. Given below is the summary of their discussion in Box 21.2.

Box 21.2 interaction with Daily Wagers

My name is Ramesh. I belong to a village called 'Bhowapur' in Ghaziabad district. I am married and have two kids. At my village home I have three brothers and parents. My father is farmer, who owns 3 acres of land. All my brothers and parents are engaged in agriculture. I was also engaged in agriculture till last year. But as we grew up, we realized that income from family is not sufficient to meet the needs of the family. Thereupon I decided to come to Delhi to search for jobs to support the family. Since then every day I came to work in this city. Earlier I was not sure that what kind of job I will get. But now I am confident of carrying out any kind

of job. My routine is that everyday morning wife prepares some lunch and packs in the tiffin box. I start from my home in my village at 6 o'clock in the morning. Once I reach Delhi, based upon chance of getting work, I decide to go that 'labour market'. Though Now I know a few contractors, but one is not lucky everyday. Hence if I don't get work in one market, I have to rush to another market. Every day morning before I start the journey, I pray to god that when I go back home in the evening, I should at least have Rs 100 for the family. About work I have done all kinds of work over the last year. I have been helper to mason, painter and caterer. I have also worked as casual labour for lawn mowing, digging pits for laying cable. Now I can say that I know almost all kinds of work. However, now I realize that I am not called master of trade. I am only a helper. Though, when I was in village, being the elder son of my father, I use to take all decision for agriculture. And many of my neighbours and relatives use to call me 'farmer'. They seeked my advise on farming. Now I earn a bit more, but no one seeks my advice.

Reflection and Action 21.1

After reading the Box 21.2 on Interaction with Daily wagers; you plan a minor study of wage labourers in your area. If you live in a city /town you may interview people who arrive from the surrounding villages in search of employment. But if you stay in a village you may find out how many men and women commute daily to the city for jobs.

Write a report of two pages on "Rural-urban Employment Scenario." Compare your report with those of others at your study center.

A careful reading of Ramesh's account reveals that along with casualisation of rural workers, there is a continuous process of breakdown of skill. So a worker who is a farmer or blacksmith or carpenter in rural areas is reduced to a daily wage labourer in urban areas. One is not sure but whether this the result of reduced capacity of agriculture to observe workers or ambition among workers for better life because of better wages in urban areas. This breakdown of traditional skills, has in a way made livelihood of these workers very uncertain, because in the new setup erstwhile skilled but now 'casual' workers don't get work because of their skill but upon chance. The narrative of Ramesh also highlights the fact that in almost all cities there is a

huge chunk of workers who daily migrate to city to work and in the evening they go back to their villages. This in a way has made their identity fluid. That is they are neither villagers nor urbanite, not skilled but casual.

Matrimonial columns are not only useful in finding suitable match for the prospective bride or groom, but also a significant indicator of changing perception of people vis-à-vis changing nature of occupation at least for urban areas. As indicated above that every Sunday in newspapers, one finds matrimonial advertisements classified according to occupational categories or in the profiles of bride or groom, job profile is mentioned or highlighted. Such classified columns in the newspaper highlights the emergence of new occupations. For example in pre-1990s days a doctor or engineer was considered good enough match for prospective bride or groom. But now professionals of so-called 'knowledge economy' are preferred over the traditional ones. Similarly, from such columns in newspaper only one comes to know about the category of people who are known as 'development professional'. If such people are employed in 'international donor organisation', they are much in demand than the traditional ones.

Reflection and Action 21.2

Carefully study about two day's matrimonial advertisements in the local News paper. List the types of brides and grooms advertised for in terms of their occupations, such as, doctors, engineers, etc.

Write a report on "The New Occupational Structure as Reflected in Matrimonial Advertisements" in about one page. Compare your report with those of others in your study center.

In the new economy, as expected, employment growth takes place not only because there is more competition in the market or there are new players in the market. But also because several new sectors come up and scope of any particular sector is also redefined. This in turn gives rise to new kind of occupations. For example, in pre-liberalisation days how many of us were aware about 'Business Process Outsourcing (BPOs) or Retail or Medical Transcription? Not many of us. However now such terminologies are used in common parlance and people involved in such occupations are many. A careful analysis reveals that the term and the sector of economy called

the service sector have been redefined. Traditionally in this sector was included hotel industry, travel and tourism and catering. At present this sector includes all the Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPOs), BPOs, telemarketing, medical tourism, adventure tourism, social auditing and event management. These all new entrants in the service sector have created new kind of occupations which our parents have never heard of. Again the course of collecting material for this paper, I came across a professional who was a social auditor. Below is the summary of discussion in Box 21.4.

Box 21.4 Service Sector Employment

I am Simon jr. I work for (Multinational Company) MNC, which has a sourcing office in India. This company sources lot of goods from India for its stores across the globe. Given the primitive stage of production processes and tradition of unfair labor practices in India, this company has a number of 'Social Compliance Auditors'. I am one among those auditors. My task is to go around factories which produces goods for this company and make sure that they fulfill all legal requirements. In this I not only check the physical working condition in the factory, but also issues related to environment (air, water and noise), safety of workers, wage and benefit. I have to make sure that goods produced in all such factories are not only good in quality but also produced in good condition without compromising the 'best interest of workers' and environment.

If you ask me about education, I am a graduate in humanities. Thereafter I have completed a diploma in Human Resource Management. But none of the things I learnt while studying is of any use in the present job. The skill of social auditing I have learnt on Job and therein I had gone for one week training in ISO-9000. Given the fact that this is a new kind of occupation, till a few years back there was hardly any institute or organization which was providing any course or training. But lately I have come to know of one organization, which trains people as social auditor, but then it is hugely expensive. So those who are employed can be part of the training through company sponsorship.

The account reveals that as mentioned above new sector in the economy is giving rise to new types of occupations. Such occupations have new set of skill requirement. As Simon's account reveals that for such skills there are hardly any courses or institutes available. What is

happening is that people from traditional stream of education are taking up these occupations. And the skill set they learn on job. Further the interesting part is that these new occupations are dismantling the educational barriers. That is earlier a law graduate has only options of joining or becoming a lawyer. But now the same law graduate can be part of a social compliance team or KPOs. So in a way the unidimensional association of education to occupations are gradually getting blurred. This however, has in no way reduced the importance or vice like grip of traditional occupations such as bureaucracy in the hinterland of the country. The reason for this is the 'so-called' power and status associated with such occupations. Also the new emerging economy is largely concentrated in large urban centres, which is spreading to the towns very slowly.

Any discussion of new occupational structure in new economy is incomplete at least in India if there is no discussion of occupations emerging because of rise of the knowledge sector. By Knowledge sector is mainly meant 'information technology' (IT) and 'Information technology enabled services' (ITES). By any rough estimate this sector contributes around 20% (approx. 28 billion USD) of India's total export (around 150 billion USD) and employs around 2 million people. It is estimated that by 2010 this figure will reach 70 billion USD out of 300 billion USD for IT & ITES contribution and total export of India respectively. Further, by any conservative estimate annually 75000 professionals go to US. 90% out of the 75000 professional are IT professionals. Not much information is available about the number of professionals going to other countries. However, what we have information about is that annual remittance is around 22 billion USD in India. Even if out of 22 billion USD only 50% is contributed by the professionals of this sector, the figures become very impressive.

As far as occupations emerging out of this sector is concerned, we have mentioned in the beginning of this chapter that if one scans the job opportunities published in any newspaper, most of the jobs are related to either IT or ITES. This has also changed the hierarchy of disciplines in science, arts or in engineering. Moreover, this has also opened the new opportunity for the people not taking science or engineering stream in the graduation stage. Rather it has in a way reduced the dependency of the people on the govt. jobs. The author had an opportunity to interact with a professional of a software company, who was not exactly involved in programming. Given below is his account in his own word in Box 21.5.

Box 21.5 Personal Account of a Software Company Professional

Passing out of college in the 1990s was no fun, especially if you had a poor BA. Passing out of college in the steel town of Rourkela was even less fun because the town was geared towards Engineering and Medical students and had no place or idea about what an Arts degree could do for someone. Still my heart beckoned for literature, so in spite of fierce criticism and prompts by neighbours to do a course in data entry, I left for Hyderabad to do an MA in English literature in 1994. My belief was that if it is an MA I want to do then let me do it from the best possible place -- University of Hyderabad. After the MA the old questions came up again and still I was as clueless about what to do in life as I was when I had joined the masters programme. I wasn't good enough to pass the UGC NET, or to apply for the minuscule openings for college teachers, school teaching didn't pay much, I was not inclined to spend more of my parents money on attempts to clear the UPSC, and couldn't see myself crunching numbers in some bank job. The choice was between becoming a peon and a journalist. It was a no brainer. In 1997 I chose journalism and I chose Bangalore.

The job at The Economic Times was good (1997-1999). I learnt a lot, especially about how to manage my time and resources and how not to buckle under pressure. Yet, the pay was bad. Actually the pay was fine by other standards: other news papers, other jobs like selling or managing shops. Yet, this wasn't a pay on which one could survive long enough especially when one needs to earn more and take care of his own life, spouse, parents, and so on. The other problem, and a larger one, was that I was disappointed with journalism. When we are younger we dream of changing the world and look for avenues where we can spend our might to achieve our dreams. Journalism seems like an ideal place for it is supposed to be the watchdog of society. However, I realised that the watchdog was often drugged and I had to look the other way while the world carried out its underhand activities. The realisation that I had to remain subservient to the powers and still put up a face of justice to the needy pushed me to change my mind. In that period I remembered something small I had done while I was an MA student. I had helped computer science students write their reports and had realised that, in general, the language skills of the science students are in need of help. At the same time the

Information Technology industry was growing in Bangalore and there were faint voices about the need for Technical Writers. I decided to apply.

I found a place with Novell Software as they were willing to take on experienced people who were freshers to the field. Novell wanted the joiners to have the experience of working in the corporate sector, though not necessarily as technical writers. In fact, they were prepared to show me the ropes. I learnt well and went on to finish five and a half years at Novell. In these years I moved from being a rookie technical writer to managing and leading the team of technical writers at the Bangalore centre. The job involves learning:

- What makes for a good technical writer: understanding of customers
- How to organise information
- How to use the tools to create the information
- How to manage the inputs provided by engineers and support staff
- How to plan and execute work on time
- How to keep internal and external customers satisfied
- Hiring and mentoring new writers
- Evangelising the role within companies and outside

The best part is that I do not have an ethical problem with the work. My work benefits customers and I sleep an honest sleep every night. Novell was a networking company, after leaving Novell I took a six month break to travel around the country. It was not hard to do that because I knew I would still be in demand when I came back. Now I work for Oracle Pharmaceuticals Applications which is where we make software for testing of drugs.

As mentioned above the account of the professional, corroborates the findings. Further it has blurred the disciplinary distinction vis-à-vis job market. So, one can find an MBBS being involved in the software programming and an MBA being the CEO of a big hospital.

The other new types of occupations are the ones which are hybrid in nature such as Bio-technology, Bio-chemistry, Environmental engineering, population geography and others.

These will fields are certainly giving rise to new type of occupations. Associated with this is the phases in which particular occupation and related study is at the forefront. For example, in later part of 90s we had everybody going for software, then came era of MBA and finally now people are saying it is now Genome technology.

21.6 Conclusion

In this unit you learnt about the changing occupational structure in the new economy in post liberalization period, that is, since the mid 1991. You learnt that in India wide range of economic reforms were carried out with the aim of liberalizing and globalizing the economy. Amongst all the other changes, the changes in employment and wages are the major potential channels through which the social impact of increased openness and globalization are felt.

You read about the rate of unemployment of both rural men and women and urban men and women. The analysis of the unemployment reveals that for both rural men and women in the labour force, the rate of unemployment has risen sharply. Urban male unemployment has risen sharply. Urban male unemployment also ride a little but urban unemployment in total actually fell. There has been rising casualization of the workforce which has been explained through case studies. An analysis of NSS data, 55th round for 1999-2000 reveals that there is marked shift in the structure of employment in India. The shift is away from agriculture.

21.7 Further Reading

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