

Resource Utilisation and Social Planning

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Abstract : Resource is an integrated concept. Its utilisation in society is culture-specific. The components of culture are not unrelated. These are interwoven and go to form institutions which are further related among themselves so as to emerge as total cultural systems.

The felt need for innovation is determined, also, culturally. The purpose of innovation is either to substitute or to supplement cultural patterns existing in society. Induced measures for innovation confront with two situations — in one case, the measures adapt the existing cultural patterning, in the other situation, the cultural patterning, accommodates innovation. Different cultures are patterned differently. The substitution or supplementation of components of one culture by components of another culture is determined, respectively, either in terms of closeness of innovation to all / most of the relationships of the old components, or in terms of harmonic-fit with the rest of the cultural system.

Also, the acceptance of innovation does not necessarily follow the argument put forth by change-agents. Acceptance of innovation fulfils the cultural needs of a society. Resource utilisation, is therefore, oriented. However, the question before us is : can techno-economic perspective of resource utilisation reduce disparity between different sections of the Indian society ?

Every country needs planning for her national development. This could be attained by using the resources at its disposal effectively toward that end. The sustained efforts to maintain the continuity of this trend in development is imperative. Experiences suggest that in spite of efforts for effective use of available resources the people of some societies have had a greater pace of technological progress than others (Hagen, 1962). The opinions as to the reasons for progress in some situations, as opposed to less positive achievements in others, have been sharply divided within the academic community. Some consider that until 1945 the western economists ignored the poor countries (Bhagwati et al, 1972). Williamson (1952) observed that 'Economists generally have been too much concerned with static models and too culturally bound by a Western European framework of institutions to make the contribution to the subject of the economics of growth...'. The

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economic determinists of late fifties and later assumed that the process of economic development would ultimately take care of the social obstacles (UN, 1964). Other social scientists, however, realised that the economic obstacles played, but only in minor degree, to these differences (Hagen, 1962). The huddles lie with the socio-cultural conditions and human behaviour of people which affected the resource utilisation and growth. The World Bank also recognised the importance of the social dimension of the development process. The two-fold objectives of accelerated growth and social balance necessitated the Bank to search for proper policy measures, so that the distribution of gains of development are reasonably equitable among income groups, regions and sectors (Aldar, 1972). We shall attempt here an examination from some of the published sources of the effects of socio-cultural milieu in India's national plans.

The following randomly chosen illustrative statements (not exhaustive) indicate some of the major reactions to the nature of our resource utilisation in the background of the national growth plans: 1) The effect of economic opportunities on social institutions suggests that money is a powerful institutional solvent (Epstein, 1962); 2) The formula evolved... to deal with the tribal problem was...to bring them within the fold of the vast Indian family. The hope was not materialised (Elwin, 1963); 3) The community development and national extension service programmes do not lead to all round development (Rao, 1964); 4) Rural community in underdeveloped countries has...deteriorated due to development (Stavenhagen, 1964); 5) Planning does not suggest that economic development has already begun. In many cases the opposite is true (Ponsioen, 1968); 6) Our planned economy shows a lop-sided and disharmonious advance (Mukherjee, 1970); 7) Capitalism failed to develop the productive forces in India (Davey, 1975); 8) One encounters growing poverty amidst economic expansion (Epstein et al, 1975); 9) Five-year plans both in respect of the rate of economic growth and social justice failed (Sethi, 1975); and so on. Arguments by these authors in favour of their reactions to the development programs, respectively, are: i) In villages the new economic opportunities are inconsistent with some established social rules (IX); ii) The deficiency in performance to secure the advancement of the tribals without disturbing the essential harmony of their life and securing their integration without imposition (140); iii) The process of economic growth has not been subjected to the wholesome discipline of human and spiritual values which this country had cherished through the centuries (172); iv) The rural community in India has lost its capacity to feed and clothe itself (321); v) The expectations of rise by social change for most of the rural population in developing countries have not been fulfilled because the planning in many cases has

led to economic and social deterioration (101); vi) In planning, improvements observed are national income, industrial and agricultural output, capital accumulation, development and modernization of public sector industries, nationalisation of transport, insurance and banking, decrease in mortality etc. The negative outcomes at different levels of living are concentration of income and wealth, reduction of real wages, massive unemployment, population increase, inadequate education and medical facilities etc. (2); vii) The "uneven and combined development" (Trotsky, 1932, pp. 26-27) of capitalism on a world scale and the relations of subordination between countries — advanced and backward — failed to accelerate the productive forces in India, (109); viii) The maldistribution of incomes in the rural areas...is central to the problem of economic growth (Jacket); and ix) The social objectives were considered outside the main strategy of the plan and were later added to it as frills. The purpose of social justice was lost (164).

They argued further that the orientations of planning were needed to be drastically modified by either institutional planning (Mukherjee, 1970), political wisdom (Sethi, 1975), or by zealous approach to the productive use of human factors (Rao, 1964; Ponsioen, 1968; UN, 1964). Economic growth then should not be treated as a technical problem only. The reduction of social justice into a political category is harmful to development. Development however, depends on the important aspects of the understanding of mutual relationships of different societal institutions, and not on approaching those institutions separately in an isolated manner (Myrdal, 1968). The concept of development as we see, then embraces economic, moral and cultural aspects at the same time. A question at this point may arise: does this tone and tenor echo a similar aspiration in the aims of our plans? The approach documents, for our national plans claimed that the: (1) first three national or state plans commissioned sectoral plans, namely, agriculture, industry, transportation, health, education etc.; (2) key-note of the 4-plan was directed to the fulfilment of the needs of each village community and the different types of people living in it, that is, planning at the grass-root level (Sen, 1972); and (3) the 5-plan, a people's plan, was for a self-reliant economy and for social justice. A departure in the last plan from that of the earlier ones was to stress special emphases on the basic requirements which would meet the needs of the weaker section of the society (Planning Commission, 1973). India's plans as indicated in the documents aspired balanced national growth and development. Why then our expectations were not fulfilled even after three decades of independence?

II

Out of hundreds of studies on cultural sensitivity to resource utilisation a few

may be reviewed here to indicate the role of culture. Between 60 and 80 percent of the population in most developing countries are living in areas where the agrarian technology is hardly improved. Selection of groups would obviously fall for demonstration on such primitive areas where the expectations to rise for change is given, but the pace is constrained by the socio-cultural factors. Following illustrative examples showing experiments with developmental programs in the two adjacent States of Orissa and West Bengal, among the tribal and the peasant societies, would explain this phenomenon : 1. Tribal villages in Orissa : the efforts of the administration for colonising the tribal (Bhuiyas) have not been successful, because of their sentiments against earth work in general (52). The individualistic tendencies of settled cultivation prove too strong for the tribal communal institutions (51). Even when the tribals have facilities of artificial irrigation in some planned villages, they are reluctant to raise vegetables and other crops besides rice in their lowland fields. The reason commonly advanced is that kinship obligations for offering presents to relatives would be so heavy and insistent that they might fail to satisfy them. In that case, they are exposed to witchcraft (Mahapatra, 1955 : 52) ; 2. Peasant villages in Orissa : a number of innovations attempted by a voluntary organization to introduce a particular item or practice as widely possible among the villagers. ...These innovations are desired either to replace an existing item or practice, as covered wells for unprotected water supplies and "improved" poultry for local fowl, or to add to existing practices and items, as the introduction of vegetables growing, ...and the innovation of latrines (Frazer Jr, 1968 : 401) ; 3. Peasant villages in West Bengal : the 5-year plans aim at bringing technological changes in the field of agriculture. It is expected that the economic considerations would make all farmers accept change promptly. It is observed that when a new farm practice is introduced it does not meet with immediate total acceptance. Their behaviour does not appear to be solely economic. There are other forces at work (27-28). The different categories of farmers differ in respect of such variables as, socio-economic status, education, outside contact, land ownership, land tenure etc. It appears that those who are social leaders also are innovators in the field of agriculture. Such persons have a high level of education and more outside contact. They develop an outlook which makes them change oriented (Dasgupta, 1963 : 34), and so on.

These illustrations indicate some of the basic socio-cultural considerations vis-a-vis the developmental measures : (i) attempted innovations, *no matter how superior the existing items or practices* have to adapt to the patterning of village life or force the patterning to bend sufficiently to accommodate innovation (Frazer, Jr, 1968). Example — the rejection of irrigation program in plain villages, and the failure of colonisation scheme

for tribals in Orissa (Mahapatra, 1955) ; and the peasant villages in West Bengal (Dasgupta, 1963), suggest that all farmers do not uniformly respond to the program of agricultural improvement ; (ii) if attempted innovation is not identifiable according to rural cultural need felt by the people, but to replace an existing item or practice as thought justified on welfare count, the cultural factors may stand on the path of its acceptance. Example — the introduction of covered well and latrine, as against the existing unprotected water supplies and defecation in open fields, respectively, were desired to curb the serious public health problems. But the villages did not want these as felt-need. The concept of ritual purity mainly, and also the distance of latrines from working place ; and the general ignorance of causation of diseases, respectively, blocked any attempt for change (Frazer Jr, 1968) ; (iii) acceptance of innovation does not depend always on the frame of mind of the innovators, but does depend on the explicit village need. Example — the introduction of "improved" poultry for local fowl, and growing of vegetables along with the traditional cultivation of paddy as against the rice cultivation exclusively, were accepted into the ways of increasing cash income through increased and new production for the market. The improvement of nutritional standards was however, not related to explicit village needs (Frazer Jr, 1968.) All these examples show that the idea of resource utilisation through planned action suffered from frustration. A visit to tribal villages in the same area in the mid-fiftys by the author confirmed the failure of irrigation and colonisation schemes ; the poultry and the latrine programs did not make much imprint, but the vegetable and the pump-well programs had had somewhat villages' acceptance ; and the assistance offered in the form of technical knowledge to improve the traditional method of cultivation did not, however, appeal to all sections of village society. Many an opportunity for improvement of economic situations thus had to be withdrawn. The differential nature of inter-connections of the patternings of the donor and the recipient cultures had been an important factor to be reckoned with. Many social scientists were convinced that a culture could be atomised into inter connected layers. Not too few among them are also impressed by the Tylorian concept of culture for inclusion in the definition of it, the aspects like, technological, sociological, and ideological etc, which form a "complex whole" (Tylor, 1958). The acceptance of innovation, for them is likely to be guided by certain principles which we may summarise as : (a) interrelatedness of cultural parts, like kinship, economic, political, religious etc. integrated into a system. It is possible that a change at any one point of culture may have repercussions on other parts. Goldschmidt (1952) divides the cultural spectrum into, relation of man to his resources (ecological), structural relationships between members of the culture (sociological), established systems of values, goals, and sanctions etc. (ideological), and culturally

patterned orientations (psychological) etc. He further notes that the inter-connections existing within a cultural system should ascertain the relationship, not only between institutions, but also between the above areas in the spectrum. From this basic postulate other considerations follow, namely, (b) the nature of social grouping and allegiance like family, territorial, economic, political etc. through which one's loyalty in society is identified, (c) status role and leadership system through which decisions on matters affecting various aspects of group activity are arrived at, (d) collective obligation and reciprocity indicating group solidarity, (e) group autonomy and self determination by the management of own internal affairs without outside interference, and so on. These socio-cultural postulations when translated into action for the exploitation of resources boil down to the following sequence for fruition of the desired change and development ; 1) the existing cultural linkages need to be spelt out as fully and objectively as possible ; 2) the identification of the various types of social groupings maintained by a group, and which of the various *types* of organizations the typical individual feels himself most closely identified with ; 3) the identification of the systems of status, role and leadership maintained by a group ; 4) the character of a group solidarity, collective obligations etc. and 5) the existing political structure of a group, and the people's attitude to it (Yatsushire, 1953).

In the background of the above principles we may have a quick look into some of the major sociological theories related to resource utilisation and socio-cultural change, and finally search out, primarily in the backdrop of these theories, for the nature of impact the developmental measures may have upon agrarian societies.

III

The continuity in development and the fulfilment of plan targets are the key-notes of the theories. In brief, these theories, by and large, argue in favour of a macro-organizational infra-structure to enable to transform peoples' motivation towards a techno-economic goal at the level of overheads. Mention may be made of the scholars like Lewis (1955), Libenstein (1957,) Rostow (1960), McClelland (1961), and many others. They are of opinion that an economic progress through the "big-push" (Rosenstein-Rodan, 1961), might be attained by the generation of entrepreneurship, attainment of economic growth, improving material benefits, increasing per capita income, development of economic relations, etc.etc. The thrusts of these theories converge on a central argument for a macro-planning for an overall technological achievements. The considerations as to how the benefits of the approach would filter down to the various sections of society, and also what would be the nature of the social distribution of efforts, have drawn least attention. Also

what will happen to the various socio-cultural groups following such line of development has not been fully grasped. The outcome, however, following these academic theories, are abysmally uneven resource accumulation between the different sections of society and the steady pace of the widening of gaps between the various sections. This approach particularly in the Third World countries turned into uninspiring exercise.

International Labour Office affirmed nearly two decades ago that the economic development is a social process, and therefore the economic and technological, and the social aspects cannot be separated. The changes in the technology require the creation of new types of human organization (ILO, 1959). Economic development necessitates change of habits, personal relationships, aptitudes. It generates new goals for individuals and for communities and proceeds through the creation of new forms of cooperation and organization.

Enlightened economic measures only, thus, cannot set a steady economic development. The social development of a nation is also to be simultaneously fostered. Otherwise, the economic gains achieved during one period may largely be wasted in a following stage of induced development by social and political dislocations. Out of many an instances from the Third World nations, Argentina, a basically resourceful country, had undergone a period of economic stagnation during a decade of unprecedented economic expansion elsewhere. It failed to maintain a steady economic growth. National and foreign experts in the country thought that the barriers to growth were fundamentally of an economic character, and that the problems could be resolved adequately by strong economic measures. This was, however, proved ineffective. The experts failed to realise the increasing awareness of the fact that social and cultural barriers could equally be important as economic factors in determining the course of development. The urgency to apply the knowledge of social processes in economic development was not seriously urged upon. An analysis of the "national character" demonstrated that 'some cultural traits of the bulk of the population are inimical to the emergence of social relationships which would enable individuals to act concertedly in the pursuit of common goals and interests'. These cultural traits also constituted a powerful barrier to the economic initiative. The essentially apathetic value-orientation profile of the Argentine case was the critical factor limiting the possibility of steady and continuous economic development. A study examining this situation recommended that a progressive and radical socio-cultural transformation was necessary for the steady economic development (Fillol, 1961).

A fresh look into the effects of development suggests that the nature of response of Indian society to development may more clearly be understood by perceiving the society through its social structure. In this frame the key

role of social stratification is recognised as crucial. The perspective of induced social change that comes out of this scheme of social structure and development does acknowledge the socio-political process as a developmental priority. The techno-economic approach that stands out of the major academic theories is considered inadequate. It underplays the role of particularly the different socio-cultural groups and also of the relationships of powers and interests existing within the society. Here in this approach the society is looked as a functionally integrated homogeneous unit built by inter-dependent sections of society.

Among others, a recent case study on the sociology of developmental measures and rural resource utilisation in India highlights facts which counter the assumption of growing relationship of mutual dependency of the various sections of the society, as an internalised behaviour. The results show that, 'the various groups act according to their respective positions and interests....the relationships with the outside agency also is built by them in this way. ... the social groups within a village do not merely depend upon each other functionally. But some of them dominate some others. Again, some of them also compete with some others... . And, ... those who are in the dominating position try, ... to maintain and strengthen the same as much as possible for which they design and manipulate the situation as best as they can' (Bandyopadhyay, 1974).

Planning aims at balanced development for all sections of society. Experts are of opinion that while priority was given to national planning, regional planning had not sufficiently developed. Therefore, since the turn of the 4-Five Year Plan (Planning Commission, 1970) the developmental schemes for resource organization and utilisation has dawned with a new robe — the micro level planning (= regional planning) — as distinct from either the nation-state level or the individual village level plannings, though any serious experiments, other than academic, with this approach is yet to be undertaken. The basic arguments for the three approaches are :

1. Macro-level planning starts at the national level and is broken down into segments suitable for regions.

2. At the lowest level, each village provides the raw material for planning. Our villages, are not, however, economically viable for developmental investments. The village with its small population base and meagre resources is too small a unit for development.

3. A middle range focus on the regional level for development would be useful. The major concerns of micro-level planning would be to locate the socio-economic activities and their linkages over a region (Sen, 1972).

The national and regional plans provide a broad framework within which detailed economic planning of India should be made. Micro-level

plans can help fix priorities for different regions depending on their specific needs.

Discussions about the shape and contour of our future national plans often come up at government and non-government levels. The proposed 6-plan envisages "area planning" for a substantial participation of the people from all sections of society. The plan would ensure fullest use of local resources and manpower (The Statesman, 1977). The people would expectingly be motivated into the process of participation for national development. The proposal, however, does not seem qualitatively to be much different from the earlier ones in which the techno-economic approach had passionately been fostered. Suggestions, tangible, as to what social mechanism would be necessary to bring national plans nearest to peoples' plan have not yet been brought into discussions seriously.

The "area planning" therefore may be interesting as a more specific techno-economic program to try with. But to students of social science the question still awaits an answer: have all doubts been fully satisfied, presumably, by this new approach to the pattern of India's resource utilisation?

All these approaches, however, may still improve gains in the overheads of planning according to their respective merits, to the socio-economic performance. But would we not go by default in our experiments if the gains do not reach the individual citizen? Could we then afford to gloss-over the principle question of the social distribution of results? Could single-armed techno-economic basis for development still improve India's situation? Our past plans amply have answered negatively to these questions.

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