

CHAPTER X

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTS GATHERED

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10.1 Introduction

The present chapter is designed to present in brief, an analysis of the facts gathered and presented in chapters IV, V, VI and VII. In the end of the chapter VIII, a detailed analysis of the facts gathered and presented in the aforesaid chapter has been made and therefore, the same has not been repeated here. In the case of the chapter IX, the hypothesis under study has been tested following certain select "indicators" and the result of such testing has also been mentioned there, where testing rather than analysing the hypothesis has been made in conformity with the approach of the said chapter.

At the very outset, one likes to point out that, this analysis is indeed, brief and in some cases repetitions of some of the earlier observations made in chapters IV, V, VI and VII may be found though, an utmost care has been taken to minimise the same as far as possible.

10.2 The Analysis

10.2.1 Chapter IV

1. Of the villages surveyed in the district, the percentage of literacy is the highest in the sample area. And this seems to have an important bearing on the leadership pattern of the area. In place of traditional or hereditary leadership, one sees a keen competition for elective offices. Persons with a fair education, good landholding and subsidiary occupation are found to occupy the key positions of the village. Youth, in the sample area, is a force to reckon with. They have made their presence felt in all the representative institutions of the village. The spread of education, however, has not been even ; it is largely confined to only one section of the population i.e. to the immigrant caste Hindu Bengalees. Members of the other sections like Rajbansis, Muslims, Oraons, and Mundas are no match for the former so far as education and economic background are concerned. As a result, there remains a considerable communication gap between the immigrants and the rest of the population and leadership in the sample area has practically become the exclusive monopoly of one community. The tribals, the local Muslims and the non-Bengalees are totally unrepresented in the elective institutions of the village. Any challenge, actual or potential to the existing leaders comes only from the Rajbansis.

Elective offices although fairly open to the members of the immigrants themselves, are not so to people belonging to other castes.

2. Political parties, though quite active in the area, do not appear to have been successful in welding different castes and communities into a coherent whole ; spirit of narrow localism and blind allegiance to one's own caste reigns supreme. Far from bridging the ever-widening social gap between the immigrants and the Rajbansis, parties have sharpened caste sensitivities for reasons of unprincipled immediate gains.

3. The emergent youth leadership appears to be suffering from a sense of alienation and deep frustration. Excessive pressure on land resulting in disguised unemployment, a certain amount of disdain for rural life, lack of fruitful employment opportunities and spread of education of a type unrelated to rural needs have all combined only to heighten their discontentment and have drawn them to agitational politics.

4. The local self-governing institutions like the Gram and the Anchal Panchayets are almost non-existent ; the few surviving members are far removed from the people. The Anchal Panchayet particularly has reduced itself to a subordinate agency of the bureaucracy, while the Gram Panchayet

has ceased to function at all. The consequence is a big communication gap between the administration and the people. Rural development is bound to remain a far cry till local planning and local initiative are encouraged.

10.2.2 Chapter V

1. The village is ridden with inter-caste rivalry and tension. Social intercourse among the different castes is far from free. The caste pattern is also different from the villages of the South Bengal. There is no caste Hindu family in the sample area. Barring the Muslims, all the people of the village are members of the Scheduled Caste. So, there is no domination of the so-called higher castes over the lower ones. The "Khastriyas", the "Tanties" and the local "Muslims" all belong to the same ethnic group, speak the same dialect and consider themselves as sons of the soil ; while the "Manasudras" are refugees from East Bengal (now Bangladesh).

The "Manasudras" have remained outside the mainstream of the village population, they are considered intruders in the area by the rest of the population. Leadership positions in the Panchayati institutions, club and the School Managing Committee are all held by the Tanties and the Khastryas with Muslims as minor partners.

Namasudras are very carefully kept outside the charmed circle. Illiteracy and abnormal poverty seem to have perpetuated and further intensified caste animosity. Leaders have failed so far to initiate the process of integration ; on the contrary, being themselves the prisoners of caste prejudices have often found a handy-stick in caste divisions.

2. The village can scarcely be regarded as a "catchment area" for the recruitment of leaders of district/state/national level, rather it is more of a "vote-bank" for the latter. No one from the village contested any general election during the last ten years. Interview with the existing office holders did not reveal that anyone of them aspired either for a position in the state or national legislature in the near future.

3. Leaders, because of their poor education and economic background, did not seem to have an adequate perception of community problems. Out of 30 persons holding different elective offices only one was found to be a graduate, while only two other read upto Class VIII. The Anchal Pradhan, the Adhyaksha Gram Panchayet and the Secretary of the village Primary School -- the holders of three most important offices -- none of them had education above Class V standard, notwithstanding the fact that the

village is only six k.ms away from Jalpaiguri Town, the district Head quarters.

4. Panchayeti institution have become seat-bed of corruptions. Devoid of any effective power, these are being utilised as mere agencies for relief distribution. People of the area no longer have any trust upon the panchayet members who have come to represent only themselves. Leaders of these institutions simply carry out the orders of the bureaucracy and the political bosses of the town. The process of rural development can never be accelerated till these institutions of rural democracy are rejuvenated and imparted some degree of popular character.

5. Spread of education in the sample area is being retarded because of stark poverty of the ruralfolk. Economic betterment of the lot of the poorer sections of the village people is a condition precedent to popularisation of education. Apart from other reasons, starvation during the lean months of the year is the principal cause behind their attendance in school.

6. While there is an unmistakable sign of emergent youth leadership, womenfolk of the village requires awakening from their century-long slumber. As things stand now, half the total population of the village remains outside the

"karmayajna" of rural reconstruction. The government agencies and the rural leaders must activise themselves in this regard ; here they have yet to open their accounts.

10.2.3 Chapter VI

1. Leadership pattern, in the sample area, continues to be traditional and hereditary. A small coterie of 15-16 people, mostly big land holders of the village, divide the spoils amongst themselves. Recruitment from the base is yet to come. Wealth has been the passport, so far, for entry in the leadership positions, whatever may be the outward democratic facade. The abolition of Zamindari has not materially changed the picture. The former Zaminders till now wield formidable powers since they have successfully retained their grip over land through the possession of "BENAMI-Lands" i.e. by transferring ownership rights to fictitious persons. The M.L.A. the Anchal Pradhan and the Adhyaksha — the three richest men of the village are three little autocrats. They have kept themselves tightly enthroned in seats of power and to achieve this end they consider no means unfair or dishonourable. Intimidation, use of actual violence and eviction and share-croppers are not infrequent. The present leadership of the sample area is exploitative and it goes unabated since a subjective sense of political competence is largely absent in the masses. The village

population appears to be prisoners of a "subject political culture". To the present leaders of the sample area, public welfare or rural development is of secondary importance ; their main concern being enhancement of their own riches and they desire political power because it is a handy tool to further their own economic interests. It was alleged that during the hey day of Congress they professed to be Congressites and again with fall of Congress from seats of power in the State, it did not take much time for them to be "leftists" — only the bottle might change but not the wine.

2. Youth population, in the area, has been consistently denied all access to decision making process. The leaders have all along been indifferent to their needs and expectations. Their youthful energies are being directed to wrong channels and they are thrown to the lap of anti-social elements and extremist parties. Any creative endeavour by the youth is foiled unless it serves in some way the interests of these self-seeking leaders.

3. The fact that the members of the Gram Panchayet were elected uncontested may be construed as a symptom of political incompetence of the people of the area. The king-makers go unchallenged. Entry into the leader-group is not quite open to all. Besides this, that an Adhyaksha can keep the Panchayet defunct for long eight years also

does not redound to the credit of the other members of the body. Even when the Panchayet starts functioning, it is made to starve for want of adequate finance. The insignificant amount that the Panchayet gets by way of sub-allotment from the Anchal is too small to keep that body alive and this, more than anyother factor, saps the enthusiasm of the members.

4. On the agricultural front, whatever may be the individual performance of a few big farmers, small and marginal farmers of the area are being gradually thrown out of cultivation because of recurrent floods, high prices of agricultural inputs and exploitation by the 'Zotedars' (big farmers). Distribution of vested lands by the government to the landless peasants, have only resulted in the illegal re-sale of these plots to others.

5. Rivalry and conflict amongst the leaders — particularly between the Anchal Pradhan and the sitting M.L.A. — have made some of the institutions of the village perpetually sick, while in some others the present office bearers are reluctant to hold fresh elections for fear of losing office even though their term expired long ago. This has halted the growth and development of these institutions.

10.2.4 Chapter VII

1. The present study considers those farm-families as

leaders who have been successful in producing farm output higher than the village average at a given period of time. They have been called leaders in the farm sector since their success may be a source of inspiration to other farm-families in the years to come. They have shown that agriculture can be made a meaningful and fruitful occupation by the adoption of improved farm technology. They are pioneers in certain experimentations like the application of chemical fertilisers, introduction of High-Yielding-Varieties crops and the use of modern tools and implements etc. Here the criteria of leadership are the spirit of innovation, the continuous increase in per acre yield and the ability to motivate fellow farm-families to further accelerate the process. These farm-families are leaders in the sense that they are prime movers in expansion of farm output, income and employment. The best seven such farm-families have been singled out for detailed study. The performance of the leaders have been compared with those of other seven selected following stratified sampling method.

2. A comparative study of the two groups reveals that farm-families identified as leaders have a higher level of education, more assets and more contact with extension agencies than the other seven. In the first group, all the heads of families save one have subsidiary occupations in addition to

agriculture, while in the second group only three are engaged in subsidiary occupations.

3. Agriculture, in the sample area, is however beset with certain problems. The foremost among them relates to share-cropping and hiring of agricultural labourers. Under the present political climate, the Zotedars suffer from the phobia of losing their ownership rights to the share-croppers ; the former are confronted with an everincreasing pressure to hand over two-thirds of the farm output to their share-croppers. The Zotedars seem to be too eager to evict their share-croppers on any pretext and the consequence is frequent outburst of violence between the two. Hiring of agricultural labourers on daily wage had so long been an exclusive affair between the employer and the hired labourer and in lean months one could easily hire a day labourer even at the rate of Rs.2.5 a day.

But now as a result of legislation the minimum wage has been fixed at Rs. 6.5 a day and political parties are there to threaten those who are prone to underpay. The employers on their part contend that crop-prices do not justify wage payment at the stipulated rate. Farm-management on their part, they complain, is getting increasingly difficult and uneconomic. The day labourers and share-croppers, on the other hand, face starvation at least for the time being.

10.3 Concluding Observations

Conceptual framework and theoretical concepts of Rural Leadership and Rural Development have been given in chapter II. In this chapter, the analysis of the facts gathered and presented in chapters IV, V, VI and VII, appears to reveal that leadership mostly fails to generate requisite 'internal forces' to provide the required 'stimuli' to the fellow rural people for going ahead with their development.