

1. Importance and Problems of Studying a Backward Region

A study of the programmes of Rural Development in the hilly Himalayas was felt necessary because of the fact that since Independence the Government of India has tried with various types of programmes to solve the socio-economic problems of the rural areas. Although several studies are available on the impact of developmental programmes undertaken in the plains, studies on hill areas are not available to the same extent. The hill areas, in addition to the problems faced by the plains, face another problem which is ecological and this poses added difficulties in developing the hill areas.

In undertaking this study, a number of empirical problems of studying backward areas had to be faced. Adequate data were not available as detailed and accurate records of developmental activities were not kept in any of the offices; neither was there a clarity regarding developmental activities found among the officials. As such, more reliance was made on the primary data gathered during the survey of the villages.

The hill villages are not close-knit as the villages of the plains as such, village studies of the hills are quite different from that of the plains. It is not possible for a researcher to build rapport with the villagers for which direct and constant contact is necessary. The hilly terrain was also

a problem while conducting the village survey. The villagers, especially in the interior parts, not used to seeing outsiders, suspected that the information asked was meant for reporting to higher authorities and felt inhibited at first.

The villagers themselves do not always show a sense of belonging to the village. People in one part of a village have little interaction with the people residing in the other parts of the village; most of them did not even know the boundaries of their village. As such, a sociological survey method was used while interviewing the sample respondents which did not necessitate close interaction with the villagers.

3. Survey of Literature

Though underdevelopment seems primarily to be an economic feature it has important sociological concomitants and it is these social aspects which become important for studying the changes going on in underdeveloped societies from a stage of underdevelopment to a level of higher economic and technical performance. It is therefore necessary to identify some of these studies.

Sociological studies on development in India usually takes into account processes going on at the micro-level in a village or in a number of villages. J.C. Dubo (1958) has studied Community Development in two Western U.P. villages. Albert

Mayer (1958) has studied the Etawah Project, S. Dasgupta (1963) studied Tagore's experiments in rural development around Shantiniketan. B.C. Dube, H.A. Sutton and G. Gallup (1962) have studied the working of village level workers both in the village and administrative set up. H.H. Beers (1962) has studied relationship among workers in Community Development. T.S. Epstein (1962) studied the Community Development Programme.

Some other studies isolate single factors and study their role in development. The role of tradition and social structure has been studied by H. Ginger (1956), P.O. Bailey (1967), T.S. Epstein (1962), B.C. Dube (1964), H.D. Morris (1967) and Ratna Datta (1968). The role of elites has been studied by Leela Dube (1965), L.P. Vidyarthi (1967), P.C. Joshi (1968) and Yogesh Atal (1968). Administrative Pattern and Bureaucracy have been studied by H.V. Sevani (1968), J.J. Spengler (1968) and A. Avasthi (1968). The role of Education and Communication have been studied by H.S. Gore, I.P. Dassi and S. Chitnis (1967) and M.S.A. Rao (1967). The role of agricultural extension has been studied by A. Mukhopadhyay (1971).

In Macro-analyses problems of development in India have occupied a prominent place in the works of Gunnar Myrdal (1968). In his book "Asian Drama", he has taken Indian problems as representing those of the other third world countries and by studying India's problems of development he provides explanation of poverty in South Asia. Kusun Nair (1962) and John P. Lewis (1962)

have also studied problems of development on a micro-level.

Nair studied the social constraints on economic development, the low aspiration among Indian peasants and "structural inflexibility" of village India. Lewis has written about the problems faced by India in development in the beginning of the sixties.

Some studies have examined the sociological assumptions and theoretical orientations of existing studies. The relevance of western bourgeois theories of economic development has been questioned by Andre Gunder-Frank, who has applied the Marxian framework in studying underdevelopment. Similarly A.G. Desai (1960) has shown the capitalistic system of production to be the main reason behind underdevelopment. Desai (1961) has also, by using the above approach, shown that the advantage of developmental policies were being accrued by the privileged classes. Sartar Aziz (1978) in his study of the impressive rural development in China has provided a theoretical framework to study prospects of development in its social, political and economic aspects. George Rosen (1986) provides a framework for studying relationship between social, economic and political changes in India and their relationship with governmental policies of development. Guy Hunter (1969; 1970) has studied the sociological implications of agricultural development. He has stressed on the importance of proper institutions rather than technology which is dependent upon policies, administrative standards and education.

Francine R. Frankel (1971) has studied the impact of

India's Green Revolution. Gilbert Etienne (1968) has studied the impact of new agricultural technology in four regions with different ecological settings. B. Dasgupta (1977) has also studied the impact of new agricultural technology. Mumtaz Ali Khan (1978) studied the working and impact of Small Farmers Developmental Agency.

In these basically sociological studies, the structural, institutional and motivational factors of development have been in varying degree dealt with. On the other hand, the role of ecology has been either taken for granted or totally ignored. Our hypothesis is that the structural institutional and ecological factors play almost equally significant role in economic development of a region not only independently but also in interaction with each other. Our study of the impact of developmental agencies in the hill areas of the Eastern Himalayas is aimed at testing this hypothesis.

3. Objective of the Study :

Independent India inherited a long border on the north, the whole of which falls in the Himalayan belt. The entire region is generally backward and politically sensitive. The Government of independent India has therefore devoted considerable attention to the economic development of the region and its people.

The hill areas of Darjeeling district of West Bengal form a part of the eastern Himalayan ranges and are bounded by Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan on the north, west and east respectively. The social and ecological variations which exist between the hill areas and the plains of West Bengal call for a distinctive study of the different social, economic and political processes that are going on in the area.

When the British first annexed the hill territory of Darjeeling between 1835 and 1836, the area was covered by forests and was sparsely inhabited. Colonisation took place when the East India Company decided to develop Darjeeling as a hill resort. Many ethnic groups settled there successively. Of these groups the Nepalese were the most numerous.

The present study is aimed at evaluating the socio-economic impact of the developmental work that is being carried out by governmental agencies and identifying the factors constraining development in the eastern Himalayan region with specific reference to the West Bengal Himalayas.

In this area all the developmental programmes of the Central and State Government are operative. Besides these general schemes the state government sponsored Comprehensive Area Development Corporation (CADC) is also functioning in Kalimpong I development block. Although the CADC is an all-state project encompassing selected target areas in both the plains and the hills, in Kalimpong I it has naturally acquired a specific hill orientation.

4. Scope of the Study

In evaluating the performance of the developmental Agencies, it will be seen as to how far they have been able to attain the objectives of economic, social and political development in the following senses :

- (a) The economic component of development implies raising of the standard of living through increased production and employment opportunities which is necessary to meet the needs of the rural people and raise their incomes.
- (b) The social component of development implies the equal or equitable opportunity to develop and share the available resources.
- (c) The political component implies that a social condition should be attained where the masses can participate in development both at the local and higher levels.

The extent of realisation and feasibility of the programmes of development in the area will also be studied.

5. Hypothesis

Our primary hypothesis can be elaborated in the following ways :

- (1) Ecological Factors : In the existing ecological conditions of the Himalayan region there is scarcity of resources needed for economic upliftment of the masses. The uneven nature of the

terrain makes communication and transport extremely difficult. Cultivable land is scarce and as a result the bulk of the population are forced to live in scattered villages with small holdings and carry on cultivation and other economic activities at a very low level of technology. The effect of elevation on productivity is also considerable.

(ii) Institutional Factors : These factors imply the constraints in development which occur due to the lack of coordination among the institutions entrusted with the developmental activities. As there are a number of institutions functioning in the area, coordination among them becomes very important for their effective functioning. But it often so happens that each carries out its own developmental activities which results in duplication and other problems for which the villagers suffer. Institutional factors would include the limitations of different institutions engaged in rural development.

(iii) Social factors : These imply the elements of the existing social structure which seem to have primarily been the result of the land revenue system introduced by the British in the area and due to forced migration. In the existing social structure characterised by socio-economic inequalities different sections have different degrees of access to resources, be it political, economic or social. Any developmental activity should consider the fact that the sections having access to resources is not likely to be interested in developmental activities which might

endanger their present position or which does not serve their interests too. On the other hand, the more resourceful ones would try to utilize the benefits derived from developmental activities to make their positions more secure. Further, the social inequalities are getting enhanced as the villages have lost their isolation and the market has entered the farthest corners of the village. In this competition in the market the poor farmers are the main losers and in this process their poverty too increases.

Thus, our hypothesis is that due to the above constraints the developmental agencies have not been able to realise their objective in the area under study.

6. Area of the Study

The villages of Sindopong and Bhalkhore have been taken up for the purpose of carrying on the intensive study. These two villages provide us with a sort of a continuum of geographical locations characterised by features of extreme underdevelopment in Bhalkhore to comparatively better agricultural conditions in lower Sindopong and relatively urbanised conditions prevailing in Upper Sindopong. These variations have been caused primarily by the ecological conditions prevailing in the area.

Moreover, as both the villages come under CADP we will be able to study the developmental activities of the agency. This is a unique attempt towards rural development initiated by the State Government of West Bengal along with other developmental agencies and departments of the state and Central government.

7. Programmes and Agencies of Development operating in the Area.

The programmes of development includes the Accelerated Hill Development programme and the Integrated Rural Development Programme. The above programmes are implemented through different agencies. The main implementing agencies which implement their own programmes besides the above are (1) Panchayat Organizations (2) Block Development Office (3) Comprehensive Area Development Corporation (4) Agriculture Department, (5) Tribal Welfare Department. There are other agencies too through which the accelerated Hill Development programmes are implemented but we have taken up those agencies which are only linked to Rural Development Programmes.

8. Research Methodology and Sources of Data

(a) Research Methodology : Observation and Interview as tools of research have been used. Schedules were prepared to interview selected respondents and public leaders. Interviews without schedules were taken of other officials. The schedules were pretested during the pilot study and corrected according to the findings of the pilot study. The data gathered has been analysed through simple statistical means of frequency distribution and tabulation.

(b) Sources of Data : Sources of data include both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include data acquired from the interviews and schedules. Secondary sources include

(a) Census reports (b) District Gazetteers (c) Statistical accounts, (d) Reports and Informations from the different offices and other such sources.

9. Abstract

The study consists of seven chapters.

I. The First Chapter studies the different theoretical approaches which explains underdevelopment. The theoretical framework on which the developmental programmes are based has been studied. The relevance of the Marxian approach to understand and solve the problem of underdevelopment and poverty has also been studied.

II. The Second Chapter describes the area under study. The description includes historical and geographical information about the area. The Revenue administration and basic data about the villages under study.

III. The Third Chapter draws a profile of the sample respondents who were interviewed for the purpose of studying the impact of the agencies. The caste and ethnic composition, landownership, income, occupation, and educational levels of the respondents have been studied.

IV. In the Fourth Chapter a detailed description has been given of the programmes of development and the structure and functions of the developmental agencies.

V. The Fifth Chapter studies in details the impact of the

different programmes and agencies in the villages under study. The impact of Panchayat Organisation, CAPP, IRDP, SFDA and SC-ST welfare department has been studied.

VI. Chapter Six deals specifically with the problem of rural agricultural development and community schemes in the context of Darjeeling. It includes Rural Credit, Operation Barga, Agricultural Schemes and other Community Schemes/^{Which} have been studied.

VII. The Seventh Chapter is the concluding Chapter with some critical reflections on the theoretical framework of the Government's approach to development based on the study undertaken. It also studies the validity of the hypothesis which was drawn up at the initial stage of the study.