RURAL RECONSTRUCTION IN INDIA:
FROM DICHOTOMIES TO DIALECTICS.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **"Rural Reconstruction in India: From Dichotomies to Dialectics"** submitted by **Benson M. O. Agaya** in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University**, has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree or diploma of this or any other university and is his original work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. Dipankar Gupta

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Dedicated to my mother Gaudencia Agaga
whose life exemplifies deep sacrifice and generosity

RECONSTRUCTION OF RURAL SOCIETY IN INDIA

1.0 Introduction

This study attempts to develop a perspective of change and reconstruction in rural society in India against the background of diffuse social cultural orientations and often contradictory preferences, needs and aspirations. Two dimensions of change are of special significance in this analysis. The first is the transformation that is spontaneous, or which occurs as secondary consequence of deliberate actions and is largely unpredictable. The second pertains to conscious and deliberate human action whose consequences can be predicted or anticipated. These two are important to this study because their divergence introduces an element of uncertainty in planned change for rural India which needs to be resolved. An analytical framework within which these two dimensions of change can be synchronised is therefore necessary if chances of success of planned development programmes in rural India have to be increased. A holistic framework of analysis can then be constructed after taking into account the sources and types of variability within and between paradigms or structures of relationships. The important aim is to arrive at an integrative perspective of change amidst counteracting forces and contradictory perceptions of needs, aspirations and strategies. Transformation of rural society in India is therefore analysed in the framework of continuities and discontinuities.

The starting point in this analysis is the conceptual and theoretical delineation of rural society as distinct or separate entity from urban society in India. This distinction is necessary if problems and issues that specifically relate to rural India are to be addressed. Though analytically plausible, the distinction between rural and urban society in India has empirical limitations because of the intricate connections between them. The intertwining of rural and urban characteristics can be discerned in economic, cultural, social, political and administrative linkages.

Thus any distinction does not allow the interpretation of problems, whether of poverty, family or cultural relations as typically rural or urban. In this case there is no assumption either that the process of change in rural society is the reverse of the process in urban areas.

Several attempts to differentiate between rural and urban society in India have been made. Misra and Sundaram (1979:1), describe 'rural' as a term used in reference to an area characterised by non-urban style of life, occupational structure, social organisation and settlement pattern. Dube (1992:1) identifies the distinguishing factors between rural and urban society as ecological settings, the degree of access to, and entitlement in economic resources, prevailing political styles and nature of decision making, strength and fragility of social bonds, penetration of development and availability as well as quality of social services and so forth.

Chambers (1983:173) uses a bi-polar ordering system of first and last to describe the unique nature and problems of rural areas as opposed to the urban. Most of the first rankings in terms of human organisation and preferences are skewed in favour of the urban areas. For example, when compared with rural areas, there is more concentration of skills, wealth and power in urban areas. People tend to associate more readily with symbols and values of urban life than with those of rural life.

Viewed from the perspective of key institutional structures, rural societies have sharply defined social cultural boundaries unlike in urban areas where identities and values are highly composite and tend to overlap. Social organisation in urban areas is largely, though not exclusively, based on secondary group associations such as occupational, professional, recreational and neighbourhood relations. Rural communities on the other hand are generally based on primary group relations such as linguistic, ethnic, religious, and kinship affiliations. Thus Ghorpade (1991:90) would describe an ideal village or rural society as one with significant interdependence of social groups and kin loyalty to the collective. He contrasts this with industrial urban society where there is an overwhelming growth of the value of unbridled individualism

and personal advancement. Considering, however, that penetration of urban industrial values and products into the villages has undermined the isolation of rural areas, it is important to note that a rigid separation of the two social systems is not tenable. Ghorpade provides the example of the simultaneous rise in individualism and caste loyalty as instruments of self advancement in both rural and urban society.

Given the lacunae presented by the above discussion, there is a need to shift away from the dichotomous construction of human society in which the urban is treated as the polar opposite of the rural society implying thereby mutually exclusive characteristics. The difficulties in applying certain criteria such population size, occupational patterns, spatial and social mobility and the nature of interpersonal relationships to draw fine boundaries between rural and urban types of society has given rise to the idea of rural-urban continuum. It suggests that societies can be arranged based on their increasing or decreasing complexity and varying structural levels. In this scheme the rural and urban structures remain at polar ends with a possibility of differentiation from one end to another. The continuum hypothesis has however been strongly challenged, particularly by evidence of co-existence of different elements attributed to different societal types. Oommen (1984:12) employs the criteria of social structure and culture to distinguish between types of societies. This is particularly relevant in the explanation of continuities and discontinuities between such divergent systems as rural and urban. Whereas cultural forms may exist simultaneously in two or more types of societies due to spatial-temporal linkage between them, the socio-structural form in which these cultural attributes find expression is generally different for different types of societies. The importance of caste and kinship as repositories of emotional attachment may transcend rural and urban boundaries but have different manifestations in socio-structural organisation. For example the rural family would live in the same household while two castes would settle in separate villages in rural situations. In an urban setting, the same identities would be expressed in terms of proximate kin residences and formation of caste based associations to

replace locational identity which is more feasible in rural than in urban areas. Such replication of cultural forms in different structural set-ups is indicative of the constitution of communities as sub-systems and as part of wider social systems. This explains the continuity between rural and urban society indicated by common cultural attributes.

Following David Lockwood, Oommen (1984:16) has invoked the idea of core institutional order to understand social transformation in rural India. The critical or 'dominant' institutional order is identified and used to analyse cumulative changes that have repercussions for the entire rural social system. In this case the changes that affect or alter this core are used to explain the transition from rural to urban society and to distinguish between the two systems. Shah (1977) observes that the key to understanding the reform process in rural India is to examine the institutional base especially the agrarian structure and evaluating its relevance to economic development and change. Attention to the core institutional structure is crucial in formulating policy and laying out strategies of reform. Thus the core institutional structure influences the construction of identities, wills, values and preferences of the people and determines the nature of social organisation and the direction of social change. Some crucial examples of the core institutional structures in rural India around which authority and power relations are built, are the caste system and land. Both of this factors are at the centre of most socio-economic and political relations in rural India.

Changes in the socio-structural systems connected with the core or dominant institutional structure provides an important means by which the transition from rural to urban society can be understood. For example, an introduction of bullock drawn plough or tractor cultivation alters fundamentally the socio-economic organisation of an agrarian rural society. The introduction of mechanical cultivation indicates, not just a change in tool of production, but involves a reorientation in social organisation and relations of production. First, a reduction in labour employed for cultivation points to a possible diversification in occupational structure so that surplus labour can be absorbed

in non-agricultural activities. Secondly, use of labour saving devices is indicative of changing sizes of holdings that can be attributed to availability of avenues of sale and purchase of land. Wherever there is subsistence production system the emergence of market based production would alter the socio-economic structures of rural society. The changes in techniques of production, ownership and occupational systems consequent upon alterations in the core institutional element in society such as land indicates a shift from one type of society to another. These diverse orientations of production between rural and urban society imply distinct social order observable in relations of production, exchange and access to resources. This explains discontinuity between rural and urban types of societies.

Rural reconstruction is therefore a process that seeks to transform the structure of society by targeting its core institutions and ameliorating the disadvantages that arise from oppressive and unjust human relations. Reconstruction is a concept that has close affinity with such other terms as reforms, transformation and development. These terms are not used strictly as substitutes but alternately in this study to broadly reflect the exercise of moral responsibility and the institution of redemptive measures for the underprivileged in rural society in India. They are used with reference to ethical responses to the deprivations and sufferings of people both in psychological and material sense.

The objective of rural reconstruction in India is to evolve social systems that would help improve the conditions of human existence. Far from being merely concerned with increase in incomes and better economic conditions of the people, change is viewed in a wider sense to encompass the diverse fields of human life and endeavour.

Berger (1974:18) points out that:

Development is not just a goal of rational actions in the economic, political and social spheres.... It is also, and very deeply, the focus of redemptive hopes and expectations. Even for those living on the most precarious margins of existence, development is not just a matter of improved material conditions; it is at least also a vision of redemptive transformation'.

This process involves conscious and deliberate actions aimed at dismantling the inhibitions to human pursuit of dignified living conditions.

Since there are more diverse issues than the single objective of economic improvement, this study seeks to examine the ways by which these diversities can be reconciled. The focus is on how competing and sometimes contradictory factors and interests can stimulate and propel the transformation process in rural India. Two important dimensions to be considered while analysing programmes of change in rural India are the preconditions and approaches to transformation. These would give an insight into the extent of compatibility between precept and practice in rural development in India.

1.1 Preconditions and Approaches to Change

The preconditions of rural reconstruction embody the ideological and theoretical conceptions about changes that are intended to be introduced in the society. They mark the constraints within which interventions and actions towards rural change are undertaken.

Approaches to rural reconstruction relate to the strategies and methods employed in realising the desired changes in social conditions. Approaches generally include plans, schemes, programmes, projects and even social movements designed to produce changes in rural areas.

The relationship between the approaches and preconditions is that of mutual influence. Effective intervention in rural society is dependent upon an adequate and accurate understanding of the existing social conditions. Change in social conditions is also dependent upon the adequacy of tools or measures that are introduced. It is important to synchronise the approaches with the preconditions so as to minimise or eliminate the impediments to the process of rural reconstruction. The means by which these two dimensions can be made compatible is the central focus of this study.

1.2 The Problem

The complex nature of reality has always thrown up varied perceptions and theoretical statements about human society. These varied perceptions do not, however, necessarily reflect mirror images of the realities they claim to represent. As Berger (1974:9) argues, words describe the realities of social life but words have the power to create and shape reality.

One major limitation in social interpretation is that the facts presented tend to reflect more of the ideas and biases of the people who formulate them than the qualities and attributes of the phenomena under observation. This study concerns itself with the implications of these biases in received[1] programmes of rural development and change in India. More significant, is the fact that one idea or value is justified by the absence or presence of particular attributes. The method of comparison and contrast is used to qualify ideas and values or to adopt a reverse process. For example social justice is assumed to occur when competition is restricted or stopped.

This study examines how a subverted interpretation of context limits the effectiveness of measures or tools employed in rural reconstruction in India. Structural contradictions in development paradigms can be linked to the concern with process-reversal or displacement that characterises most plans aimed at transforming society. The sources of mismatch between the preconditions and approaches to change in rural India are identified and remedies suggested.

In this case it is observed that the theoretical limitations in development thinking restrict the achievements of objectives of reforms hence the little or lack of improvement in the living conditions of rural people in India. Transformation of rural society is largely oriented to the views and perceptions of the dominant agencies to the neglect or exclusion of alternative views. Strategies are one-dimensional and generally reduce the problem of change to a single goal or objective. For example, change in

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[1] Received development pertains to programmes that are instituted either by the state or other agencies that are external to the target communities with or without local initiative in the project conception and implementation.

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rural India may be understood to be possible through resource redistribution, institutional control or legislation. Linkages and intersection between these measures is hardly considered as crucial for the achievement of the goals. The common assumption is that each of these measures by itself is sufficient for the realisation of the desired changes. Examples of such measures undertaken in India at various points in time include land reforms[2], Panchayat raj[3] and affirmative[4] action for the socially weak and culturally oppressed segments of rural society, known variously as 'reservations'. Each of these measures is intended to disperse the decision process to various segments of society and to redeem those who are disadvantaged by historical and cultural factors.

Whereas it is not suggested that these measures are irrelevant to the improvement of living conditions of the rural people in India, it is argued that they need to be strengthened by linking them with other relevant and complimentary measures. It can be pointed out here that the narrow definition of problems which stems from accepted conventions and traditions among development practitioners is responsible for the weaknesses of reconstruction strategies. This problem is recognised by Mikkelsen (1995:27) who observes that 'there is a tendency for development aid to set agenda of issues and define "development language" which has also come to dominate development research.'

The set language of development or the known 'traditional' approach presents a twofold problem. First, is the external bias whereby the issue or subject of reconstruction and the possible line of intervention as seen by 'experts' obliterates the views and opinions that would emanate from the people whose needs and aspirations

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[2] The first major land reform measure was undertaken in the first Constitution Amendment Act of 1951 which in principle sought to check the disparities in land holdings and to abolish *zamindari* system, that is, the practice of exploitation and oppression by middlemen and landlords. See for example P. K. Agrawal 1993, *Land Reforms In India: Constitutional and Legal Approach*. New Delhi: M. D. Publications Pvt Ltd, p.36.

[3] A system of devolution of administrative powers in rural areas through elected councils starting from the village level through to the district level.

[4] Affirmative action is the American equivalent of protective discrimination used in India by the state to ensure that individuals and certain segments of society are safeguarded to a certain degree against disadvantages of historical and cultural discrimination and prejudice.

are in question. Secondly, there is the internal bias which grants local communities absolute and unquestionable rights in determining matters of development to the exclusion of opinions of experts from 'outside'.

The task set in this analysis is to outline the consequences of simplistic and deterministic conceptions and interpretations of the problems of rural society in India and to explore viable alternatives to better realise the objectives of social reconstruction. Attention is directed to the means of exercising choices that better address the concerns of people in situations of contradictions of values and aspirations.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of this study, arising from the above problem are,

1. To examine the social and cultural variables in the rural reconstruction environment that largely remain invisible due to reductionism and determinism in development practice.

2. To identify the gaps between the objectives and achievement of rural reconstruction programmes in India in the light of inadequate or obscure socio-cultural data.

3. To identify the basis of a possible multiple-objective and cross-factor intervention strategy for rural society in India.

1.4 Justification and scope

Most discourses on the subject of development and change tend to isolate social phenomena and to eclipse some dimensions while analysing relations between variables. The concern with simple causal relationships restrict analyses to linear transformation patterns that are inconsistent with empirical situations that obtain in rural India. For example increased subsidies on fertiliser prices is intended to increase agricultural output and eventually through trickle-down mechanism contribute to reduction in poverty. Such a view considers economic variables as sufficient to explain change in rural society but ignores historical, cultural, technical and political factors

that would influence the process. Even among the economic determinants of change suggested in the above example, it is noticed that attention is given to production relations and not exchange relations. The basis of shift from production to exchange relations is examined in more details in chapter two.

The argument maintained in this study is that a multi-focal as opposed to a bi-focal approach is essential for the understanding of rural reconstruction process in India. For instance the observation that large segments of human populations in India live in rural areas and the nature and quality of their lives would have a direct bearing on the non rural populations as well as on state policy and plan underscores the complexity of the process of reconstruction. This draws attention to the inadequacy of linear and polar construction of relations between social phenomena.

Alexander (1989:56) observes that the building of dams and irrigation projects, spread of education, establishment of fertiliser and other industries, extension of transport etc., have their bearing on economic activities and life in rural areas, and therefore on rural development. The point emphasised here is that change in society has several dimensions, the planned and the spontaneous, the predictable and the unpredictable elements and finally the intended and unintended consequences. It is an illustration of complex relations even within apparently simple categories such as urban and rural, the elite and subaltern, the state and society, gender and the inside and outside agencies.

The justification of this study is that it explores a possible way out of the general concern with dichotomies and bifurcation in dealing with social issues. There is a search for a perspective that would not depict change in rural India as taking place through displacement of values, and substitution of strategies.

1.5 Hypothesis

The agencies involved in the process of rural reconstruction can be divided into two categories namely the 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Outsiders are the professional groups, researchers, governmental and voluntary agencies, aid workers, and administrators who motivate and participate in the change process from outside the communities in which they operate. Insiders on the other hand are members of the rural communities, recipients of aid, or simply, target populations for whom change or reform is intended.

One common criticism of reform programmes is that they reflect the will and perceptions of the outsiders and obscure the needs and aspirations of the 'insiders'. Thus, it can be argued that the more the involvement of the 'insiders', in decisions, the smaller would be the gap between the objectives and actual achievements of development programmes in rural India. Another parallel can be drawn between the economic and political variables in rural reconstruction. One would argue that political considerations tend to overshadow economic and social factors in 'outsider' directed development programmes. The linkage between variables is however summarised by Puri (1989:97) in the argument that; 'even in seemingly "pure" economic decisions and functions, political considerations and consequences are never entirely absent'.

Considering that none of the above mentioned factors such as 'outsiders' and insiders, political and economic, modern and traditional or economic and social can operate in isolation or complete independence of their assumed opposites, the hypothesis to be tested in this study is;

Factor displacement and assumed mutual exclusivity between variables contributes to failures or low achievements of reform programmes and strategies in rural India.

Thus a tentative conclusion would be that interactive-variable approach contributes to high performance and achievement of desirable results in rural reconstruction process.

1.6 Methodology

The analytical scheme followed in this study counterpoises the generalised or discrete and the particularised or dis-aggregated approach to the understanding of change in rural society. This juxtaposition is essential in order to examine how people identify their needs and decide on the appropriate means to meet them. For example Kottak (1985:332) draws attention to the fact that although people in contemporary rural society want certain changes in their lifestyles, the motives to modify their patterns of life lie more in concrete and practical everyday existence than in abstract ideals such as progress and freedom.

Most traditional analyses of social reconstruction have tended to focus on generalised and abstract themes like secularism[5], egalitarianism[6], liberalism[7] and socialism[8] as preconditions for change. Gore (1991:286) espouses on these ideals as directing society towards harmony of relations between its diverse segments. Secularism for example aims at reconciling different religious interests by separating between the private and public spheres and precluding religion from activities of the public domain such as elections or governance. Egalitarianism accords equal opportunities and access to resources by all within a particular social entity. Liberalism seeks to free individuals and institutions from arbitrary hindrances as could be based on primordial identities and values such as language, sex, religion, race or region and to insure against domination, oppression and exploitation. Finally, socialism is intended to

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[5] In the Indian context it means equal respect for all religions and faiths. This is meant to ensure that no one individual or segment of society suffers deprivation and discrimination or draws undue advantages on the basis of religion.

[6] Egalitarianism in India finds expression in the idea of social justice. It is linked to fairness in distribution of resources and opportunities pursued through the principle of fulfilment of basic needs and proportionate representation. Examples of measures undertaken to realise this goal include reservations for scheduled castes, tribes and other economically and socially backward communities.

[7] This pertains to the measures to guarantee freedom of expression, association and choice. In the Indian society it begins with legal recognition and protection of socio-cultural practices and includes provisions for democratic representation from village councils to parliamentary level through the exercise of universal adult franchise.

[8] Socialism in India is pursued by placing restrictions on private property which is otherwise considered as a major means of perpetuation of social economic inequalities.

ensure that control, allocation and use of resources serves the collective rather than private interests.

By examining the fundamental components of these concepts it is expected that the complex interrelations will be brought to light so as to minimise the risk of creating polarities where there is none and lumping together attributes and factors that are incongruous. This analysis highlights the limitations of substitution, reversal and displacement in achieving transformation in rural society in India. For instance to adopt the subaltern approach would amount to switching roles between the dominant voices or values and the recessed or dominated ones. Similarly to assume that improvement of living conditions of rural people can be realised by emphasising the needs and aspirations of the collective and not the individual leads into a trap of contradictions and conflicts. As Friedman and Friedman (1980:128-29) argue, liberty and equality are complementary in that differences in tastes, values and capacities will lead people to want to lead different lives. Liberty or choice of a lifestyle of ones liking does not however confer on individuals exclusive or absolute rights of opportunities and access to resources. Therefore when rural reconstruction is undertaken on the basis of generalised ideals, one factor is likely to be traded off for another as say between liberty and equality.

The alternative perspective is the segmented or dis-aggregated view of the complex social phenomena. It points to the diverse issues that fall into such categories as the institutional, cultural, social, technical, historical, economic, political etc. This type of interpretation does not however show a particular direction of change nor provide a specific basis of intervention in rural society.

Given the emphasis on dichotomy and the inherent conflicts and contradictions in rural reconstruction efforts, special attention is given to cross-factor analysis in this study. An attempt is made to identify the interactive element from the apparently polarised social variables. As pointed out by Mikkelsen (1995:27), at the borderline of variables or through confrontation between variables, new ideas emerge so as to open

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up methodological issues that need to be addressed with regard to development and change in society.

1.7 Data Type and Source

The data used in this study is derived from books supplemented by articles and reports from journals, magazines and newspapers. Data on collective efforts of people in such organisations and systems as co-operatives, *Panchayats* and Community Development is utilised to focus attention on how diverse interests and perceptions could be synchronised to facilitate rural reconstruction. Even though the focus may have a modernist bias, the basic concern is with variations in time and space of socio-cultural structures of rural society given any kind of theoretical orientation. The necessary conditions for social action that highlight how idiosyncrasies and contentions are resolved in rural social milieu in India so as to propel society in a particular direction are of special interest in this study.

1.8 A Review of Some Perspectives of Change in Rural India

The question of how programmes of change can be introduced in rural India with better chances of success recurs in most development literature and analyses. Better strategies and ways to respond to the ever increasing problems of dispossession, hunger and poverty remain central to most studies of change in society in general and rural areas in particular.

Several useful concepts and good intentions expressed in rural development plans unfortunately do not translate into the success of these programmes. Some of the concepts commonly used in development plans include 'basic needs', 'growth with distribution', 'social sector lending', and 'sustainable development'. Appraisals and evaluations are accordingly conducted to determine the nature, direction and pace of transformation in rural India. Persistence of discrepancy between intent and achievement becomes an important line of investigation in this case. The point to

investigate is not ignorance by development practitioners of the requirements of rural society but the theoretical and logical foundations of development paradigms. Thus a review of some perspectives on rural reconstruction in India is pertinent.

Several explanations have been provided for the divergence between expectations and achievements of development programmes in rural India. The first explanation pertains to the internal differences of interests and values between the diverse segments of society that lead to pulls and tensions in several directions. The second relates to the differences between 'outsiders' and 'insiders' in the perception of needs and aspirations of the people as well as the appropriate means and ways of addressing them. Thirdly, power differentials that have historical, political, economic and cultural origins are considered to hamper the realisation of the transformation objectives.

With regard to the perception of needs of rural societies, Chambers (1983:141) refers to the *paternal trap* as plaguing the relations between the 'outsiders' and the 'insiders'. Outside intervention, he argues, is usually conceived with a remote view of the rural reality. This when coupled with powerlessness of the rural people in influencing knowledge and decisions, culminates in the paternalistic relations between the 'outside experts' and the 'ignorant insiders'. All decisions are made and actions taken on behalf of and for the benefit of the latter without according them any role or say in the process. The consequences of this approach become clear when the target populations consider the plans as imposed on them from outside and resist or reject them. Chambers (1983:144) illustrates the conflict of perceptions with an example of a clash between customary and legal basis of choice and conduct. He notes that:

> When the West Bengal government first tried to register share-croppers so that they would hand over only the legal maximum of one quarter of the crop to their landlords instead of the customary one half, some share-croppers pleaded 'with tears in their eyes' not to be registered....
> To alienate their landlords would mean loss of loans to meet contingencies such as when food ran out, a child fell ill, a dowry had to be found or a ceremony was to be performed.

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Implied in the foregoing statement is the notion that the primary motive behind any choice is economic benefit. The need for social redemption would in some circumstances repudiate the assumption that rural people enter social relations for 'purely' economic reasons. Similarly, the above observation by Chambers can be challenged from the fact that adherence to legal requirements does not preclude observation of customary practices.

D'souza (1986:105) expounds on the structural constraints on development. He examines the limitations to change in the light of mutual suppression between economic and social forces as well as between tradition and modernity. He maintains that the principles of determinism and predictability have not sufficiently taken root in rural India. He considers the predominant influences on Indian society as religion, ethnicity, caste and kinship. Caste system, he notes, operates on the principle of ritual and social inequalities channelled through groups in which membership is hereditary. This according to him is inconsistent with the aims of reforms and development based on the principles of self reliance, creativity and sociability. Attention is thus directed to the contradictions between new ideas and values and the old social order.

According to Oommen (1984) the accent is on the possibility of meeting the goals of society through isolated individual actions, that is through synergy. This study opens up a new level of analysis of social change through the interplay of the micro and macro variables. To address the contrast between 'an insect's eye-view' or micro-perspective and 'a bird's eye-view' or macro perspective of change, there is need to adopt a dialectical rather than dichotomous method of analysis.

Oommen (1984:17) therefore observes that emphasis on economic factors of change should not preclude other aspects of change. He points out that, the means of production in society determines values other than economic such as political authority, social stratification system and ritual structures etc. He argues for a multi-pronged analysis of social change, with specific attention to (a) the nature of the measure introduced, (b) the character of the antecedent social structure and (c) the

historicity of the phenomenon undergoing change. Thus a multi-spectral understanding of social reality reduces the risk of unjustified simplification and unwarranted generalisations.

Gabriel (1991:1-2) addresses the problem of validation of hypothesis. Taking the hypothetical position that rural populations are relatively similar everywhere except in minor respects, he counterpoises the idea with the fact that social phenomena depict sharp variations in different situations and even within the same populations. He proceeds to examine the relationship between the internal and external agency with regard to the perception of reality and change. He observes that the outsiders' contact with the inside situation in rural society is often superficial and does not substitute the fundamental knowledge necessary for them to articulate the insiders' views. He notes further, that outsiders are insulated from the insecurity of food supplies, chronic ill health, illiteracy or powerlessness and their good intentions and occasional field visits to the nearby settlements cannot adequately replace their lack of fundamental knowledge.

The critical issue that derives from Gabriel's analysis is the efficacy and reliability of observation tools in capturing the qualities of phenomenon under observation. Questionnaires and other tools of data collection are based on certain prior assumptions or knowledge of the observers about the situation under study. One common assumption is that people everywhere are primarily motivated in their choices by economic incentives. Human actions, as argued above, are determined by other values besides economic considerations. At any instance, therefore one observes a string or combination of values that have to be critically evaluated if change in society is to be understood. It is also important to take into account the fact that values are not pure types or categories as illustrated by the idea of cognitive dissonance[9] such that a

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[9] Cognitive dissonance refers to the choice dilemmas that confront an individual or a collective in accepting new patterns of behaviour and is attributed to conflict between new values and old values or social order. Often such contradictions are resolved through a system of selective rejection and selective acceptance of new ideas and values.

new idea is not completely displaced or replaced by another. Thus it can be argued that the analysis of change in rural India has to take into account the possible discrepancy between elicited data and the actual experiences of the people.

Gabriel (1991:2) therefore points out that 'change should be comprehended through its features such as noticeable complexity, which permits few predictions but rather expresses probabilities. Suggesting an anthropological approach for the understanding of change, he maintains that the aim is to see beneath the surface of visible activities or statements, to view processes rather than symptoms and to see whole systems rather than parts. At the centre of anthropological method are the human values that are considered, not for their own sake but as cultural phenomenon with their own history, certain logic and inter-connectedness and dynamics (ibid:33).

Closer to Gabriel's argument is a the position taken by Alexander (1990:1), who explains the divergence between latent and manifest characteristics of change as follows;

> An attempt to put into place visible projects such as super highways, large dams, capital intensive industries and high quality education facilities in developing societies in line with the developed societies often fails to take into account the significance of the internal process and mechanisms expressed by them.

Further, manifest projects in rural areas are often taken to be indicative of development without attention to such factors as distribution and access to such resources and facilities within the rural communities. The significance of such projects could better be assessed in terms of their redemptive value and contribution to the improvement of living conditions of the oppressed and vulnerable people.

Alexander advocates a real change in value orientation of the people as an alternative basis of assessment of change in rural society. According to him, values are flexible and those that are congenial to the required changes have to be cultivated if the objectives of reconstruction in rural society are to be met. Drawing a distinction between the collective and individual goals in society, he argues that 'villagisation' or communal orientation of economic production has a positive social contribution in that

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it provides conditions necessary for participation by villagers in the decision-making process. The provision of common facilities like primary education, water supply and health facilities, transportation and communication facilities, ensures a far wider reach than would be feasible under unbridled competition. Alexander notes however that collectivisation has a dubious economic impact in that productivity under communal systems is far below that of private undertakings since individuals tend to value and pay more attention to their own private gains.[10]

Given the range of contentions between different values, interests, interpretations and preferences, the pertinent question would be how to direct rural society in India towards the achievement of specific goals. An argument that is discernible from the above review is that change in society is dependent upon an accurate grasp of the fundamental knowledge and structure of the society. A common mistake in the project of rural reconstruction is to ignore the fundamental structure and focus attention on displacing the peripheral components. Since the understanding of social reality as argued above is only partial, this approach has to be considered with caution because spatial-temporal transformation of cultural attributes of rural India must have repercussions in the fundamental social structure in order to be of any significance. The composite logic proposed in this study aims at identifying a 'social-prism' of change that embraces and reflects the diverse spectra of human values, needs and aspirations and focuses them at a common point to trigger corporate action. The line of corporate action is the unifying force by which diverse and opposite values are reconciled so as to prompt action in a particular direction and towards a particular goal. It is this line of transcendence that this study advocates should guide and be used to evaluate change in rural India.

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[10] This argument derives from K. C. Alexander's (1989) evaluation of Ujaama programme in Tanzania as an example of communal production system. "Strategies for Rural Development in Third World Countries", in John S. Augustine (ed.) *Strategies for Third World Development*. Sage Publications, p.57.

1.9 Summary and Outline of Study

There are five chapters in this study. Chapter one introduces some conceptual and methodological issues involved in the analysis of change in rural society in India. An attempt is made to define the basic characteristics of rural society and to identify the nature of the transformation that would be relevant in the Indian context. The problematic of categorisation, characterisation and differentiation of rural society is examined in the light of contending claims, values, and aspirations as well as their interconnections that necessitate a focus on an appropriate strategy of reconstruction in rural India. A conclusion is drawn that the lacunae in the analyses of change can be resolved through a synthesising or composite perspective that reconciles contradicting views. It is pointed out for example that dichotomous analysis employed in most theories and strategies of reconstruction ignore the fact that collective conscience and action indicates to a large extent convergence rather than divergence of values and structures.

In the second chapter two broad theoretical perspectives on change are analysed. These are the classical Marxist and modernisation theories and their variants, the neo-Marxist or dependency theory and neo-liberal theory respectively. They form the basis of the critique of traditional sociological analyses of change that advocate displacement and reversal as a way of transforming society. The main thesis of modernisation theory that change can be realised by replacing old traditional values with new and modern values together with historical materialism logic of overthrow or reversal of oppressive capitalist production systems are in this case re-examined. Attention is also focused on the fundamental process of empowerment of individuals and groups through improved productive capacity taking its multiple dimensions and not just the economic and instrumental attributes. Further three kinds of approaches to rural reconstruction namely, state sponsored or supported, Gandhian non-violent, and the Marxist violent strategies of development are examined. An attempt is made to

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show that the fundamental drawback in these strategies is their concern with value displacement rather than value transformation.

Chapter three utilises the evidence from state initiated or supported approaches to change, namely *Panchayat raj*, Community Development, and co-operatives as used in rural India to highlight the importance of collective action in the reconstruction process. It specifically discounts the thesis that decentralisation of development planning eliminates conflicts and ensures equal and undifferentiated benefits for all segments of rural society. Efforts are made to show that change should not be understood on the basis of conflicting and mutually exclusive categories but in terms of interacting categories. For example bureaucratic and political involvement in planning has to be viewed in an interactive relation with the authority structure of local communities or voluntary organisations and not in exclusive spheres or domains. It is emphasised, however, that the interaction between different phenomena and variables takes place through a complex process involving selective acceptance and selective rejection of new values. Partial displacement takes place simultaneously with partial accretion.

The fourth chapter attempts to derive the interactive element between the external agency and local initiative through an analysis of the structure of voluntary agencies. It is demonstrated that the core institutional structure necessary to generate and sustain corporate action is the fundamental element permitting a transcendence of divergent views and interests.

The fifth chapter provides a summary of the key elements or pillars of a reconstruction strategy for rural India. The conclusion of this study is thus derived from the understanding that whereas dichotomies and comparative analyses are essential as pointers to the differences in social structures between segments of rural society, the transformation process is essentially dependent upon an interactive rather than a displacement process.

THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

2.0 Introduction

Two contradistinctive sociological traditions are used to examine the process of change in this chapter. These two theoretical frameworks are the structural functionalism and historical materialism. They are important as distinct schools of thought that form the foundation of development and social change theories known as modernisation and traditional Marxian respectively. It needs to be clarified that these two differ in their perceptions of the propelling force behind social transformation and change. To the former, the main force is the new ideas and values that emerge to gradually displace the old social order while to the latter, it is the force of alienation rooted in exploitative relations of production between the working class and the owners of capital[11] that draws a reactionary response that changes society.

The use of these two theoretical views is made so as to examine their relevance as analytical frameworks for the process of change in society in general and rural reconstruction in India in particular. Given their divergent perceptions of change and propositions for intervention in social processes, the critical task would be how to derive a legitimate strategy for social reconstruction.

Modernisation theory contrasts with the classical Marxian theory in the way they visualize change. The former contends that it occurs through gradual differentiation, adaptation, and integration of society. To the latter, change occurs through radical revolution stimulated by contradictions in the relations of production. The two theories also differ in their perception of the role of human agency in the transformation process of society. While modernisation theory shows human action as

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[11] In rural India land being the main force of production would be considered as capital in its broad sense. Ownership of land confers the right to hire and exploit the members of the opposite class especially the landless whose only source of livelihood is labour. Exploitation of labour in rural India is a widely acknowledged fact.

based on accretion and accumulation of new experiences leading towards conformity to the social system and institutional structures, traditional Marxian theory shows it as geared to rejection or opposition to the system and institutional structures. In the first case the motivation to change is functional equilibrium caused by infusion of new values and in the latter case it is because of functional disequilibrium caused by conflicts in relations of production. For social integration, modernisation process depends on individual adherence to the ideals of rationality, transparency, and competition and therefore sustenance of social system on the basis of individual competence and adaptability. Classical Marxian theory perceives integration as an outcome of collective action based on ideal of equity reinforced by moral social concerns and equal participation.

The two theories, however, concur in their emphasis on evolution as an inevitable force that propels society in progression to higher forms of organisation. Both therefore suffer from the same weakness as the analyses that view human societies as changing through a process of linear progression from less complex to more complex and superior forms. Empirically no two systems or societies go through completely identical phases in their transformation and no single society has purely modern or socialist characteristics as advocated by these theories. Secondly the two theories stress on the displacement of one set of values by another, culminating into fundamentally different social structures. Traditional Marxian theory contrasts the capitalist values of private appropriation with the socialist values of collective ownership and control.

The common premise of the two theories is their subscription to the idea that society evolves from one form to another with marked distinctions in terms of principles of organisation and value orientations. Long (1977:6) observes that evolution is implied by reference to diametric oppositions such as traditional/modern dichotomy, rural-urban continuum, and the concepts of structural and cultural 'obstacles' or 'prerequisites' of development.

Aligned to evolution is the concept of progress. For example, most foundation theories and even their variants such as the neo-liberal and neo-Marxist which are offshoots of modernisation and classical Marxian theories respectively, tacitly suggest that the transformation of society involves a significant element of progress. This is only partly true because change in society can take place in either of two directions of progress or regression. The latter would be the case if a measure is introduced in rural society that may for example lead to increased impoverishment, growth in family discord and displacement of large masses of people as witnessed in areas where large dams or huge steel plants have been constructed in India. LaPiere (1965) points that the idea of progress underlies Ferdinand Tonnies' juxtaposition of *Gemeinschaft* or community orientation with *Gesellschaft* or society orientation in institutional behaviour. In Max Weber's writing he notes the contrast between traditional non rational and modern rational bureaucratic forms of organisation. Emile Durkheim's mechanical solidarity of simple traditional society is counterpoised with organic solidarity of complex highly differentiated society. In Durkheim's terms, progress in complex societies is contained in individuals' declining submission to group ideology known variously as "collective representation".

In the same way Talcott Parsons uses pattern variables to show the diametric opposition between traditional and modern society. Choice of action or social behaviour for each type of society is based on two opposite value orientations according to Parsons.

The insights on change provided by these two perspectives tend towards generalisations that need to be taken with caution. Boudon, (1986:22) calls attention to the fact that many of the trends of change apparently discovered in society are not confirmed by facts and many of the conditional laws proposed seem to be contradicted as it were by subsequent research. Perroux (1983:5) argues that development can never be defined in universally satisfactory way and cannot take the same pattern for all countries, all experiences and all requirements.

Given the labyrinth of experiences, interests, values, and ideologies one could encounter in the rural setting in India, it would be important to find ways of resolving the discrepancies between conjectures and observations. When the two theoretical perspectives are confronted with each other, their usefulness derives, not from the choice of one or the other as a strategy of change, but in the challenge and search for ideas related to facts and facts supported by ideas.(ibid:8) For example when underdevelopment lays emphasis on internal forces of contradiction as determinants of change and modernisation theory stresses on external influences, the alternative view would seek either complementarity or transcendence of contrasting perceptions. The insiders' and outsiders' roles as complementary, or put differently, the 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' perspectives could provide holistic view of the process of development. It is therefore observed in this inquiry that social change and rural reconstruction are not just about fitting or conforming structures but also include novelty from where new structures emerge and new relations are constructed.

The aggregate conditions proposed by these theories stress on attributes and not relations of two distinct qualities or values. For example, if two conditions namely developed and underdeveloped form the background of analysis, the transformation of the latter to the former needs clear-cut criteria which becomes the common yardstick of comparison. Once this criteria is established then transformation can be embarked upon along the desired path. It is this common yardstick that Guy Berger (1992:10) identifies as economic and defines in broad terms as the struggle for existence by human actors. In this regard the definitive space of social existence is largely determined by the extent of access to and control of material requisites of life. Economic factors are therefore among the major considerations of theories of transformation in society as discussed in section 2.7 below.

2.1 Modernisation and social structure.

Modernisation theory identifies two forces of change in society namely displacement and compatibility. By displacement is meant the breakdown of traditional social and cultural forms and their replacement with modern forms of organisation. The second element, namely compatibility, relates to the integration of new values and systems of belief into the institutional structures of society. Modernisation results into distribution of functions into several institutions through the process of differentiation. In order to have harmony of functions, values have to be adapted to the new institutions. Change occurs as a result of value adjustment and adaptation to the new institutional arrangements.

Citing Dobb, Webster (1984:42) maintains that traditional and modern society have distinctly opposite behavioural orientations such that the shift from the former to the latter implies a movement towards more freedom, innovation and progress. Modernisation provides a means to break from the more or less static world of the traditional society. It is assumed that change is resisted by traditional society because it is perceived to run contrary to its normal or natural functioning.

In the Durkheimian analysis the simple primitive society is distinct from complex modern society because of the different forms of social cohesion between their members. Members of traditional society conform to rigid patterns of norms and beliefs while in modern society rules are much less rigid. There is more room for individual expression in modern society making it more 'progressive' than a traditional society.

Max Weber's focus is on the peculiar cultural processes that support capitalist organisation of production. In this case modernity has unique attributes in rational ethos and the *spirit* of capitalism. The dynamism of capitalist society centers around changing normative systems, differentiation, business motivation, and individual ambition. This is contrasted with rigid and unquestioning conformity to past tradition.

2.2 Modernisation and Rural Change

The modernisation perspective of rural change is based on the distinction between tradition and modernity which suggests that traditional social order can be broken down and replaced by modern social systems. The highlight is on the reliance on human attitudes and aptitudes as well as on socio-political and economic institutions for achievement of this goal. To this extent, tradition is considered as an orientation to the past and lack of ability to adjust to new circumstances. In traditional society choices are not based on rational and scientific values but on fatalistic, superstitious and emotional values. Kinship is the primary reference point around which all relationships are controlled and decisions made.

Modernisation challenges traditionalism thereby paving way for progressive social systems to replace the old. Achievement becomes the single most important factor that replaces kinship and ascription in role distribution and performance. The marks of achievement are innovation and entrepreneurship. Fatalism that pervades traditional society is overcome by developing scientific attitudes and ethos.

Viewed from the perspective of W. W. Rostow's theory of stages of economic growth, an observation may be made that there are specific parameters and a distinct direction towards which improvement of society is assessed (Webster, 1984:52). In Rostow's frame of analysis, the parameters include removal of obstacles to economic growth, existence of entrepreneurial ambition, sustained capital accumulation and investment. Eisenstadt (1966) argues that such an outline of the path and direction of social change amounts to the use of the history of development of industrialization in the West as the blueprint for development throughout the world (Webster, 1984:53).

It follows that the principle of displacement when applied in rural reconstruction, requires exposure to modern values and the adoption of modern institutions. When rural institutions modernise, there is an assumed point of convergence where similarities of structures and values can be observed among societies.

2.3 Limitations of Modernisation Theory

A number of empirical and methodological issues are generated by the assumptions and propositions of modernisation theory. The first relates to the observation that tradition presents obstacles to social change. This claim has validity only when taken from the point of view expressed by Sinaceur (1983:1) as the paradox of development. He contends that there is always a simultaneous occurrence of desire for progress and mistrust of its consequences. Wallman (1977) shares the same view with the observation that;

> Most of us want to live better and to live the way we have always done; to participate and to remain separate; to keep with the Joneses and to distinguish ourselves from them; to give our children more options than we have had and to see them choose as we would have chosen (op.cit:38).

Even though lack of progress may sometimes be a consequence of internal history of resistance, it can also be attributed to asymmetry of power in relations within and between societies. Internal structural resistance or regression attributable to power asymmetries is not restricted to traditional society since it occurs in modern societies as well.

There is also an assumption of smooth and conflict free replacement of traditional values and systems with modern ones. Resistance to change or lack of change in society may be testimony to the limited chances of consensus upon which aspects or elements of tradition can be changed at any given time. Whenever there is consensus on changes to be effected in society the second hurdle would be the emergence of disagreements on the method to be followed in realizing them.

The argument that modernisation can take place through diffusion of technology leading various societies towards a common path of industrial capitalism can be termed as the illusion of convergence theory. This theory envisages the convergence of capitalism and socialism through the agency of technology. It also predicts the crumbling of systems and forms of traditional order through the force of technological innovation and modernisation. The evidence that such convergence has

limited chances of occurrence is demonstrated in the following report on reasons for the sagging global capitalism in the Newsweek Magazine (14th September, 1998:30).

> The deeper explanation is that market capitalism is not just an economic system. It is also a set of cultural values that emphasises the virtue of competition, the legitimacy of profit and the value of freedom. These values are not universally shared. Other countries have organised economic systems around different values and politics. As a result spreading capitalism is not simply an exercise in economic engineering. It is an assault on other nations' culture and politics and almost guarantees a collision. Even when countries adopt some trappings of capitalism, they may not embrace the basic values that make the system work.

Another point on which modernisation theory can be challenged is the treatment of modern and traditional society as polar opposites. Evidence of co-existence of different elements attributed to different societal types contradicts this assumption. Again there is tendency to club numerous forms of social organisation such as caste, tribal, feudal, and peasant structures under traditional society without the necessary distinctions in their characteristics. Even though some of these societal types may share certain cultural attributes, each of these systems has a distinct core institutional structure and therefore so different in nature and principles of socio-structural organisation that they cannot be treated as similar. Tribal societies in India are distinguished by structures that portray primitive forms of social organisation and general socio-cultural isolation from the wider social system. Feudal societies are identified by systems of ownership and control of land based on rent collection and oppressive exploitation of labour while caste society is based on hereditary ritual status operating on the principles of inclusion and exclusion.[12] Similarly the diametric opposition of traditional and modern society provides inadequate explanation of the process of transformation from the former to the latter. Here it is noted that an alteration in the key or core institutional structure causes major changes in a society which may eventually lead to its transformation into a different societal type. The idea

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[12] Inclusion and exclusion in caste society in India applies the criteria of ritual and social discrimination as used to determine choice in marriage, food sharing, occupation, and residence among others with the ultimate aim of retaining intra-caste social reproduction.

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of partial displacement and partial rejection, selective retention and selective accretion explains the oscillation between rural and urban society, tribal and 'detribalised' society and even feudal and non-feudal society. When treated as mutually exclusive categories, there is no consideration of the fact that modernisation does not necessarily result from total obliteration of tradition. Within modern societies, traditional values and patterns of action and interaction are known to persist. Conversely, elements of modernity exist in predominantly 'traditional' societies. For example, age, sex, and family background, even though supposedly relevant largely in the domain of traditional society, have significant place in the allocation of roles in modern society as well. In the same way modern capitalist society does not necessarily encourage achievement by motivation. The glass-ceiling[13] principle for instance does not permit certain classes or categories of people especially women in some patriarchal societies to rise above certain ranks in modern organisations. Schools and families have different expectations on levels of achievement between the sexes even in modern society

In India caste presents an example of modernisation and tradition paradox. It has not only retained its traditional significance but also changed due to modernisation in certain respects. Apart from the family, caste networks play an important role in modern industrial urban settings and members are relied upon for support in matters of finance, business, and career. Paradoxically, in certain modern institutional set-ups, caste has shed many of its overt manifestations such as rigid occupational stratification.

Power relations and its impact on social change is not clearly outlined in the modernisation theory. Webster (1984:61) observes that economic growth is as much if not more about the power to control resources as it is about ambition to do so. Changes in society do not take place in an unproblematic fashion involving exchange of ideas and unhindered substitution of values. There are always two broad

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[13] The glass-ceiling is again a concept originating in America and used to refer to a point beyond which aspirations and merit is not sufficient guarantee of social mobility especially for marginalised groups such as women and the blacks. In India the equivalent factors of disadvantage would be sex, age, religion, caste and language which puts a limits to ones ability to acquire leadership positions and even attain certain social status in spite of protective discrimination and modernisation.

manifestations of power. On the one hand are the people who lack the power to influence social processes and determine their outcome and on the other those who have the ability to influence and even impose their will on society. It therefore argued that the diffusion of ideas through the process of modernisation has its own differentials based on power asymmetry.

Social transformation does not therefore involve a simple process of displacement or replacement of one set of values or structures with another. In it are implied a vast number of interpretations, modifications and accommodations within the existing social structures. Spybey (1992:16) maintains that modern *economistic* perception of change has an underlying ideology that tends to *devalue* alternative examples of societal development or distorts them in order that they should fit conveniently into the overarching theory. Apart from economic institutions, politico-military, religious and socio-cultural institutions can play a significant role in bringing about change in society. A restricted perception is therefore unsuitable for comprehending the complexities of social reality as would be the case in rural India. Such a perception is likely to limit the effectiveness of social intervention for it increases the chances of excluding important determinants of change. Webster (1984:63) thus concludes his analysis of modernisation by observing that, 'the relationship between values and economic context is therefore, a complex and dynamic process inadequately conceived by the traditional values/traditional economy-modern values/modern economy dualism....'

2.4 Underdevelopment and Social Structure.

Underdevelopment or dependency theory of rural reconstruction challenges the perception of neo-liberals that modernisation is the high point in the evolutionary change in human society. It is rooted in the Marxian materialistic conception of history. The central idea is that developments in human society are linked to the modes of production and resultant exchange relations. Blomstrom and Hettne (1984:9) identify

two components of the mode of production. The forces of production consisting of raw materials, human knowledge or skills, tools and machines on one hand and the relations of production on the other. The origins of all historical changes according to the traditional Marxian theorists is the conflict between the forces and the relations of production. Whenever the forces of production are incompatible with the relations of production, the social relations become obsolete and new structures have to be evolved. Spybey (1992:15) argues that when the relations of production of an epoch cease to be appropriate for its technologically advancing forces of production, a major contradiction is created in the social structure and revolutionary change is considered inevitable.

Dependency is a condition that emanates from unequal relations of exchange in which capital is the main medium of dominance and exploitation. Capital is critical because it represents more systematically accumulated surplus value extracted in the process of production and subsequently used to establish and expand dominance. Underdevelopment theory represents a spatial-temporal variation of traditional Marxian theory which analyses change through the perspective of capitalist mode of production and its inherent contradictions. The unit of analysis shifts from class in the classical theories to nation-states or inter-community exchange relations in the neo-Marxist theories. The link between underdevelopment theory and the traditional Marxian theory can be understood from Mao Tse-tung's contention that for a social unit to undergo change there are two causes, the internal and the external which are inter-linked. Thus Mao Tse-tung argues that 'internal causes are the basis of change and the internal causes become operative through internal causes' (Frank 1978:3). This brings into focus the important connection between production and exchange as complementary factors in social change. Citing Palloix, Frank (1978:4) observes that;

> the external dynamic never leads to an internal dynamic, but on the
> contrary follows it; it is never autonomous but is induced by the
> internal dynamic. Beyond that, what is called the external dynamic
> is nothing other than the external manifestation of the problems
> raised by the internal dynamic.

The polarisation of society into the dominant and the dominated classes or the exploiter and the exploited nation alienates the latter and leads to structural contradictions that trigger off revolutionary transformation.

For example in feudal society the privilege and dominance over the serfs by the lords stems from the fact that tenural and personal relationships, as well as the economic, social, and political systems are centered on land. Those without land, the serfs, are alienated from the forces of production, land and labour and to a large extent the product of labour. This translates into a disadvantage for the dominated when there is exchange with societies or nations with the instruments to accumulate surplus. The relations between the dominant and the dominated nation is perpetuated through the mechanism of colonialism. Revolutionary change is born out of the tensions and conflicts between these two opposite systems.

The objective of change as implied in the underdevelopment perspective, is to check the lack of penetration of the benefits of capitalist production into some segments of society. The imperialism thesis of underdevelopment theory is that dependency is sustained by the transfer of surplus from the colonized to the colonizer and from satellites to the metropolis. In order to bring about change in society, the exploitative link between the producer of surplus and its appropriator has to be broken.

2.5 Underdevelopment and Rural Change

The Marxian understanding of the transformation of society is that production process upon which human survival is dependent takes place within given social arrangements which are altered due to some in-built tensions and contradictions. The production arrangement according to Spybey (1992:17) accommodates a potential and fundamental inequality in social relations arising from appropriation of ownership of the means of production and leading to the creation of class conflict. Inequality is manifested in the promotion of dominant class interests to the exclusion or neglect of the interests of the subordinate classes. Entrenchment and perpetuation of interests of

the dominant classes not only creates a structure of hierarchy of interests, but also structural resistance to change. The weak and exploited find it difficult to challenge the structures through which dominance and exploitation is perpetrated while the dominant strive to maintain their advantages. Traditional Marxian theory therefore advocates change in which the pursuit of collective interests supersedes the promotion of private or individual interests. Its variant the neo-Marxist theory proposes equitable distribution of wealth between nations and communities.

The neo-liberal perception of development, however, emphasises on free enterprise initiative, competition, and achievement which culminates into expanded economic growth and development of society. The reliance of modernisation theorists on the mechanism of percolation of the benefits of economic growth to the entire society in the process of development is challenged by the experience of entrenched inequalities. The criticism of 'trickle-down' effect principle points out to its focus on vertical growth, however concentrated, while neglecting the equally important horizontal growth or social distribution. The challenge by the Marxian theories is underscored in the changing perception among modern theorists that the idea of development can no longer be equated with economic growth. In retrospection the rethinking of development by the neo-liberal theorists can be observed in Kumaran's (1991:15-21) argument for example, that other necessary indices of desirable change include, social justice and welfare, sensitivity to culture of the people and environmentally sustainable projects. While economic variables are neither nullified nor denied by this argument, other factors are brought to light such as political, cultural, social and environmental suitability. Thus growth is juxtaposed with distribution or put differently the quantity of change is examined against its quality.

The argument advanced by the dependency or underdevelopment theorists stresses that the structures through which unequal benefits accrue to different sections of society have to be destroyed if development is to be meaningful and rewarding. The starting premise of this argument is that the supposed freedom of exchange of ideas

and wealth is the very vehicle through which inter-societal colonialism is established and sustained. Unequal exchange between producers of capital and its appropriators, following the inequalities in production relations under a capitalist system, ensures that the appropriators have a stranglehold over the former. This repudiates any claims of altruistic concerns in the system of exchange advocated by the neo-liberal theorists and exposes the overriding motive as that of profit. The call therefore is to wrest the control of capital from private hands and restore it to public or collective institutions. This dovetails with the argument that unmitigated private accumulation of capital provides suitable conditions for perpetuation of unequal exchange.

The dependency theory stresses on the dialectical unity between the development of development and the development of underdevelopment. According to Frank (1975) development and underdevelopment have an intimate reciprocal interaction and the latter cannot be understood if one abstracts from external or foreign influence. Citing Lacoste, he observes that underdevelopment results fundamentally from the intrusion of the capitalist system. He argues that underdevelopment is systematically and everywhere associated with colonisation (ibid:viii). Colonisation here is understood in a far broader sense than the restricted meaning of the 16th-19th century where it applied to physical and political occupation and domination, that is dominant/subordinate exploitative relation. The wider connotation of colonialism can be seen in the emergence of the term neo-colonialism which describes a relation of dominance and exploitation which does not include formal political incorporation. Since dominance and exploitation is not confined to nation-state relations, Frank (1975:4-5) distinguishes between external colonisation applying to nation-state relations and internal colonisation which takes place within the nation-state.

Colonialism and imperialism, meaning empire or expansion, are often used almost interchangeably to suggest that a colony by common understanding is the dominated part of a system in which the imperialist is the domineering part. Thus Frank (1975:viii) argues that 'colonial', 'imperial' and 'capitalist' refer to 'a system of

relations in which domination, super-subordination, exploitation and... development of underdevelopment play a part'. The vital force in the capitalist system of dominance and exploitation is the surplus value. Frank (1975:11) defines economic surplus as; 'the actual or potential excess of a social unit's production over its necessary consumption which may or may not be exploited or invested'. In a capitalist system, it is from the surplus value that a high culture or development is created to benefit the segments or nations with the ability to appropriate this surplus. Citing Paul Baran, Frank (loc.cit.) maintains that, 'it is not so much the total wealth or income of a society, but its surplus and the way it used which determines the kind and type of development or underdevelopment that occurs'. Attention is paid to the surplus, not because it represents the total transfer of wealth from the satellites to the metropolis, but it shows the sacrifice at the source in terms of underdevelopment. Frank (1975:13) notes, however, that 'development and underdevelopment are not the summation only of economic quantities but their [ac]cumulation and the whole social structure and process which determines that accumulation'. The range of sacrifice is so large that it includes among other disadvantages, foregone production, high infant mortality, war ravaged populations, massive displacement of people from their land without adequate compensation, loss of freedom and environmental and cultural degradation.

Some critical questions relating to capitalist modernisation therefore include alienation and contradictions emanating from the exclusion of the producer from consumption and the ability of the non-producer to consume and to accumulate surplus. Power differentials in society also leads to the development of paternalism in society. Peasant, tribal and other rural societies are subordinated and forced into dependence on dominant groups such as non tribal societies, urban dwellers or traders and speculators. In rural areas the intervention efforts end up benefiting the dominant classes as the concept of 'progressive' farmers, peasants or artisans impedes the inclusion of disadvantaged people as agents of change. They are treated instead as targets of change thereby perpetuating the principles of 'paternalism'.

The project of rural reconstruction in India is geared to reducing or eliminating such disparities in development. Such measures that could ameliorate suppression and exploitation of peasants, landless labourers, and artisans among others are sought outside the colonial structure of dominance. Development of new consciousness usually manifested in social mobilisation and movements typifies the responses to colonial and imperialist deprivations. The demands for separate states within the Indian union can be interpreted as political reactions to internal colonisation. Elsewhere, the orchestrated expressions of nationalist feelings especially when deciding issues related to resource allocation, cultural and environmental preservation among others is evidence of determination to tackle exploitation and subordination. Underdevelopment theorists' analysis of change in rural society in India would advocate the transformation that roots out institutionalised disadvantages evident in 'casteism', 'landlordism', and 'landlessness'.

2.6 Limitations of Underdevelopment theory

Underdevelopment theory attributes change in society to social conflicts or tensions based on unequal exchange between societies. Its argument is that the genesis of crises is the strictures of dominance and exploitation inherent in relations between nation-states and communities. Change therefore occurs as a revolutionary response to this type of crisis. The chief mode of production and exchange that is particularly susceptible to exploitation and dominance is the capitalist system.

This understanding of the motivation to change can be questioned on the basis of its overly economistic focus. Central in the materialistic conception of history is the idea of profit and exploitation supported by monopolistic systems. It can be argued that the emphasis on profit as the main motive in production and exchange in society, obscures other important variables such as religious, environmental, political and cultural factors. Viewed differently, the blind pursuit of profit can be counterproductive especially where there is competition to ensure there are alternatives

and substitutes for commodities and services. The focus on profit as the leading factor in relations of production and exchange can be contested from the fact that other non-market determinants of social exchange such as social, cultural and political regulations often come into play. Sensitivity to the cultural ethos of society is an essential part of production. Sales promotions, price cuts and other marketing strategies may have non-exploitative social and cultural impacts upon society especially when intended to overcome unfair competition.

In summary it can be observed that the Marxist analysis of change as a reaction to dominance and alienation for which the solution is independence, and self sufficiency overlooks two factors. First, interaction between societies can be assessed, not just on the basis of exploitation but also on the basis of cooperation. Secondly, some critical decisions in society are made not because of economic merit but because of militaristic and strategic or legal and political requirements.

Spybey (1992:20) advances another argument that can be used to counter the dependency model of dominance and exploitation. The industrial capitalist mode of production which is central to the argument of dependency theory especially the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised does not take into consideration the pre-capitalist social order that exists alongside capitalist mode of production. In rural India for instance, there are several examples of non-capitalist modes of production to which this model may not apply. The systems such as subsistence agricultural production and the tribal economies exist either in isolation from or alongside the capitalist structures.

Socio-economic linkages in society and the systems of exchange are examined only from the point of view of extraction of surplus. Kitching (1982 cited by Webster 1984:87) argues that a case of exploitation cannot be established merely on the basis of the difference between capital inflows and outflows in an economy. Even though this method can be used to establish the element of profit, it does not consider the

possibility of the multiplier effect.[14] The anti imperialism and anti exploitation thesis of underdevelopment theory also underplays the role of trade and exchange. The value of exchange between societies cannot be reduced to only what is financially or economically calculable.

From a different perspective, dependency theory is seen to overlook the existence of internal circulation and accumulation of capital. By stressing that an external agency appropriates surplus value, the proponents of this theory ignore the fact that not all surplus value drawn from a society or nation benefit outsiders. An example in this case would be the feudal or semi-feudal systems that are still prevalent in many parts of rural India in which the transfer of surplus outside the system is only marginal. The argument here is that exploitation and dominance can and does exist even where there is no capital transfer outside a social system.

Finally, the dependency theory advances its argument on the basis of polarity between the colonised and the colonisers or the subordinate and dominant but takes little account of internal variations within these categories. It can be observed that even though a segment of society could be categorised as the elite, developed, politically influential or rich and placed in opposition to the poor, underdeveloped, depressed and subordinate, each of these categories may be interspersed with the classificatory attributes of the opposite category.

2.7 Towards an alternative strategy of Development

From the foregoing analysis it can be observed that both modernisation and dependency theories consider change to consist of the pursuit of fixed goals or outcomes. To modernisation theorists the goal is universal capitalism whereas to dependency theorists the aim is universal socialism. Each of them gives a secondary role to the human agency in transforming social systems against the directions

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[14] These are the indirect benefits that a society draws from an investment or project such as infrastructure development and employment in unrelated firms or industry.

determined by forces of modernisation and exploitation respectively. The direction and aim of change is preordained therefore excluding numerous possibilities in terms of strategies and consequences of human action. Spybey (1992:19) maintains that the only adequate counter to such falsely deterministic frameworks, namely universal capitalism and socialism is the adoption of the argument that it is human beings who have produced and who will reproduce society. The guaranteed path to better living conditions, more freedom and equality is seen as illusory if either of these two theories influences the choice of development strategy. It needs to be stressed that there can be multiple strategies and outcomes of development in society at any given time.

The search for alternative strategies of social change therefore begins with the recognition of the centrality of human actors in all social processes. This recognition draws attention to how rural India has been constructed and how it can be reconstructed based on a combination of values, goals and strategies. Smelser (1998:173) distinguishes between the immediate and long term aims and outcomes of social action. 'Real human action is captured in short term adaptive efforts to deal with situational challenges.' He argues that most economic, political and social strategies are not especially oriented to the long run. Immediate, short term situations, however, provide contexts for further action by societies and nations leading to long term changes and transformation. He notes for example that cultural movements based on sub-national, ethnic, gender, regional or linguistic identity form the point of departure for long term transformation and trends such as economic, environmental, solidarity or identity, and democratic revolutions. In this case, longer term transformations are most often unanticipated accumulations or precipitates of the short term reactions to immediate economic and political environments.

Smelser's argument when applied to rural India would require an identification of the immediate and particular factors and move incrementally to the generalised issues in social transformation. This is reinforced by the argument that the inside-out

approach forms the immediate context upon which external factors or outside-in strategies are built.

In order to determine which strategies would elicit the desirable changes, attention has to be focused not just on the assumed aggregate or quantitative outcomes but also on human conditions whose patterns are to be reordered. For example the two theories described above seem to consider the goal of development as attaining regular patterns of interaction and behaviour. The tendency towards common attributes and interests is interpreted to be part of the solution to deprivations. It is important to note that interaction can be established between groups, individuals and institutions despite differences in interests values and attributes.

One particular concern is to reconcile the private or individual interests with the public or collective interests. An alternative strategy of development would not deny genuine and legitimate private interests in favour of the collective interests. The goal of social reconstruction should be to identify the tangential point between individual interests and collective interests and not to treat them as mutually exclusive.

The transformation of rural society in India should be an endeavour to apply these theories not as ends in themselves but as means of discovering alternative strategies and trajectories of social change and integration.

Transcendence in development and transformation thus seeks to provide the link between polarities embodied in the two theories of dependency and modernisation. Berger (1992) draws attention to the futility of seeking a grand and universal theory of development that would cover all modes of production and embrace all possibilities of human relations. A grand theory would contradict the suggestion that an appropriate theory is one which entails the key and fundamental elements that accurately define the phenomenon under investigation.

There are some general inferences that could be drawn from the analysis of the process of development and social reconstruction. First, it can be noted that social sciences use generalisations and abstractions in identifying, selecting and ordering facts

and these to a large extent determine the strategies and measures of change undertaken in rural society. Secondly, a broad understanding of reconstruction or development calls attention to the idea that there should be a constant variable with consistent and general meaning across all situations. Thirdly, the central element in human life and interaction is production of livelihood hence the linkage of development with economics.

Berger (1992:10) quoting Max Weber (1948) notes that a phenomenon is economic *only* insofar as and *only* as long as our interest is exclusively focused on its constitutive significance in material struggle for existence. Other extra-economic dimensions of development such as politics, ethics, ideology or culture can be seen to be reflected in the material dimensions of life. Thus if two divergent social conditions namely the underdeveloped and developed are to be understood, they have to be comparable on the basis of a common yardstick. This common yardstick seems, from the foregoing theories, to be economic and if the transformation of underdeveloped society or system is to take place, economic parameters have to be focused upon. Development can then be assessed on the basis of two qualitatively distinct properties. On one hand there is decreasing productive capacity and on the other increasing productive capacity. The question that is left unanswered is whether it is sufficient to use economic criteria as the exclusive standard of measurement of change. Following from Berger's (1992:8) question on who benefits from growth or whose decisions are implied in the ideology of 'developmentalism', the political or moral context of change does not nullify the basic concern with the expansion of productivity.

This however has to be qualified within the question of context of development, which opens up a plethora of competing values that have to be addressed within a given strategy or framework of change. For instance moral, environmental, political and ideological efficacy of the model have to be ascertained. The fundamental problem that has to be resolved in this case is concurrence of approach to development among people or social units that hold different values. The problem is further

compounded by the shortcoming of modernisation theory in relying on value free analysis and prescription. Here objectivity is preferred to subjectivity. Berger (1992:9) maintains that the process of development has to be understood in the two dimensions of objectivity and subjectivity. In this regard he argues that 'it is one thing to be aware of the broader significance of economic growth and another to make one's definition depend on it'. The expansion of productive capacity in this case represents the objective dimension of change measurable in terms of economic quantities such as better techniques of production, improved infrastructure and increase in income levels. Its subjective dimension incorporates such questions as the extent of diversification of occupations, success in land redistribution, and access to education and health facilities. The qualitative and the quantitative dimensions of change are in this case seen as dialectically connected. Certain indicators are expected to accompany this expansion in productive capacity in order to satisfy the condition of convergence of qualitative and quantitative aspects of change. These indicators include non-exploitative systems of exchange, movement towards eradication of social 'evils' and wider participation in the change process. Expansion or growth in productive capacity is therefore not only a means of stimulating change but also a fundamental measure of actual reconstruction in rural society in India.

Social reconstruction calls for a holistic view of the dynamics of expansion of productive capacity without isolating the quantitative and the qualitative dimensions of the phenomenon. Hence the emphasis by Berger (1992:18) that while development is an economic concern, its explanation needs to be more broadly social. The social dimension of expansion of productive capacity can be elaborated upon by taking into account the broad aspects of individual and collective participation in the change process. This introduces into the social structure an internal criteria of qualitative and quantitative analysis of growth. This can be illustrated by a factor evaluation pattern as follows;

Fig. 1. Factor evaluation criteria on changing productive capacity

Factor	Evaluation Criteria
1 Decision	Enhanced/reduced
2. Involvement	inclusion/exclusion
3. Control	Presence /absence
	← ——— →

In this scheme there are two dialectical conditions that determine the actualization of productivity. The tendency towards the first option indicated by the arrow pointing to the left contributes towards expansion of productive capacity. The movement to the right has an opposite effect of reducing or constraining productive capacity. None of the factors listed in the left column is complete by itself unless combined with the other two. Similarly no movement as shown by the arrows to the left or the right provides an adequate explanation of change without considering the factors that produce the opposite effect. This goes hand in hand with the argument that development or change cannot be adequately analysed in an atomistic way but through the totality of opposing and complementary values or variables.

2.8 Approaches to rural reconstruction in India

There are three general approaches to rural reconstruction in India. They are the state sponsored or supported programmes, the Gandhian non-violent approach and the revolutionary or violent transformation. The revolutionary or violent approach and the state sponsored programmes of change are broadly fashioned around the Marxian and modernist theories respectively. The Gandhian approach takes an intermediary position, neither fully committed to tradition nor to modernity. Value displacement or replacement is the major orientation of the first two approaches. The Gandhian approach is inclined to value transformation.

The Gandhian Approach

This approach is based on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's conception of an ideal society. It is built on the philosophy of non violent social reconstruction and driven by the objectives of *Swaraj* (independence) and *Sarvodaya* meaning 'uplift of all'. Gandhi had envisaged a society based on the principles of *Satyagraha* (truth) and *Ahimsa* (non-violence) to be ordered around *Gram swaraj* (independent village entities) or village republics.

To Gandhi, the modern industrial society with its system of mass production and blind pursuit of material wealth epitomised a system of senseless violence and exploitation. In the same way some elements of Indian tradition such as untouchability[15] and social degradation of women reflected a moral decay. Apart from untouchability, the other major concern of proponents of Gandhian model of social reconstruction was to ameliorate the suffering of people disadvantaged by the exploitative agrarian system in rural India. The *Bhoodan* (land gift) movement grew out of the desire to transform an exploitative agrarian system. Its objective was to obtain voluntary land donations to be distributed to the landless. According to Oommen (1972:28) it was intended to 'remove the bitterness existing between land owners and the landless.'

The *Bhoodan* movement widened its scope in 1952 to become *Gramdan* or village-in-gift. Its aim was to promote collective living in villages through common ownership of land resources. The three pillars on which the *Gramdan* movement was built could be identified as; (a) collective will or *Gram Bhavana*; (b) community determination or *Gram Samkalpa* and (c) power of the people *Lok Shakti*. The affairs of the community under *Gramdan* movement were to be looked after by legally

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[15] The Hindu social hierarchy entails a subdivision into four main strata or varna, namely Brahmin or priestly category, Kshatriya the protection or defense group, the Vaishya or producers of wealth and Shudra or providers of service to the other three varna. The untouchables consist of those outside these four categories and have traditionally been subjected to the most inhuman social degradation and mistreatment because of their assumed ritual impurity and inferiority.

constituted village assemblies known as *Gram Sabhas*. *Gram Sabha* was to be constituted by drawing one member from each household.

Bhoodan-Gramdan movement marked a significant change in values of exchange from that of receiving to that of giving. This is underscored in Vinoba Bhave's statement on his aim in promoting the movement; 'I want to create an atmosphere of *giving* in this age of *taking* so that non-possession and co-operation in place of ownership and competition, may be the basis of life' (Oommen 1972:35). Since the failure of land reform legislations had opened the way for violent revolts such as the Telengana peasant revolt in the state of Andhra Pradesh Sarvodaya was seen as an alternative, non-violent approach to social reconstruction.

Sarvodaya operates on the principle of reconciliation of conflicting value systems and ideologies that have the potential of triggering violent confrontations. Oommen (1972:37) identifies some of the values underpinning Sarvodaya as *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (truth), *Asteya* (non-accumulation), *Sarir-Srama* (physical labour), *Aswad* (regulation of taste) *Sarva-Dharma-Samanatrye* (equal reverence for all religions), *Swadeshi* (using indigenous products), and *Sparsh Bhavana* (complete touchability orientation). It is a synthesis of universalistic-humanist principles and parochialism of village republics. Its method of change includes renunciation and wider participation by incorporating all adult members of society into the decision making process. Another important element of transformation in the Gandhian model is selective acceptance and rejection, so that for example the acceptance and rejection of tradition and modern is not total.

The practical difficulties of separating people's behaviour from their identities based on caste, ideology, language, religion or region is the major obstacle to the achievement of objectives of rural reconstruction using the Gandhian paradigm. Since the focus of the study as indicated below is on state sponsored and supported programmes a detailed critique of this approach is not attempted here.

The Violent Approach

These violent revolutionary movements are primarily geared to overthrowing the capitalist and feudal order prevalent in many rural areas in India. This largely explains the central role of communist parties in organising the rural masses against socio-economic systems that consign them to living in squalid surroundings and subjects them to grinding pauperism. Their aim has been to build a consciousness among the depressed members of society that would reverse the hitherto unquestioning acceptance of inherited inferiority.

The background to violent methods adopted by sections of the rural population in India to bring about social transformation lies in the failure of most legislative measures introduced since independence in 1947 to safeguard the interests of the vulnerable categories of people. Some of the categories of people intended to be protected by the legislative measures include the low castes known variously as Dalits, tribal communities, women, landless agricultural labourers and poor peasants.

Mohanty (1977:xvi) writes that under the prevailing socio-political structures in India, a small elite has been helped to grow at the cost of impoverishment of millions of masses. This elite has built up an elaborate machinery of coercion and legitimisation which has generated a lot of resentment among the deprived sections of society. The Maoist movement founded on the theory and practice of Mao Tse-tung's ideology of attack on the imperialist and exploitative socio-economic structures sparked off two major peasant revolts in India in the 1960s.

The 1967 peasant uprising in Naxalbari area of Darjeeling district of West Bengal occurred in the backdrop of an oppressive and exploitative agrarian system. The Naxalite movement, as this strategy has come to be known after the Naxalbari incidence, has its focus on land question considered to be at the root of rural poverty. As Oommen (1990a:244) notes, 'the key objective of these mobilisations has been to transfer power and control of agrarian systems to the poor peasantry.' They have often employed the strategy of small squad action adopted by the Communist Party of India

(Marxist-Leninist) in 1969 to target rich peasants and landlords for elimination and to transfer their land to the landless. Such peasant movements have not just ended with the reversal or shift in approach to development but have often become instruments in capturing political power.

The violent approach to evolving a non-capitalist path of development was also applied in a peasant uprising in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh state in 1968. Srikakulam revolt involved a tribal community, the *girijans* (hill people). Their motivation to revolt was the condition of desperate hunger and starvation they had been forced into. According to Calman (1985:21) 'returns to agriculture which was the main source of livelihood had been insufficient and this was compounded by the loss of *girijan* lands to non tribal outsiders and widespread indebtedness to the same outsiders.' In other instances the government had imposed rules that limited the access of tribal populations to forest products and cultivation. Predictably the state response to the uprisings was a quick and decisive forceful suppression.

Two consequences of violent approach to rural reconstruction can be noted. First the displacement syndrome or transfer of power from the dominant to the dominated has often led to the establishment of proletariat dictatorships which does not make the social system qualitatively better except to reverse the role of the oppressor and the oppressed. Secondly, violence directed towards opposite values and structures is erroneously assumed to result in their annihilation. The oppressive systems have elaborate mechanisms of responding to any threat to the privileges of dominant categories in society. An important example is the use of private militia, the *Ranbir Sena*, by upper caste land owners in the state of Bihar to counteract the threat of the Naxalites.

The State Sponsored or Supported Development

The state sponsored or supported rural development has three vertices which can be classified as follows,(i) the binary opposition between tradition and modernity, (ii) the superior-inferior dichotomy and (iii) the horizontal diffusion or 'catching up' mentality. Binary opposition pertains to the argument that modernity and tradition are mutually exclusive categories and that the latter can be transformed to the former through adoption of appropriate models of development. The superior-inferior dichotomy relates to the assumption that the old and inferior systems and values can be replaced in entirety by the superior ones especially through the means of technology. The horizontal diffusion or catching up mentality is the driving force behind the modernisation approach to rural development. Under this approach it is thought that socio-economic disparities can be resolved when the less endowed or disadvantaged groups in society adopt and emulate the values and lifestyles of the 'progressive' and 'prosperous' categories.

State sponsored change operates on assumed principles of homogenisation and consensus. The idea of catching up is supposed to drive society towards homogenisation hence solving the problem of disparities. A system of organisation of rural development that advocates public cooperation is considered as driving towards consensus and even popular endorsement of state policies and plans.

Judging from the above value premises of modernisation theory, which underlies most state sponsored projects of rural reconstruction in India, one could argue that the instruments of change adopted in this approach are assimilation and annihilation of 'low cultures'[16], 'minority interests' and 'inferior' systems. It is therefore an endorsement of hegemony of the mainstream cultures over other

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[16] The mainstream culture generally associated with the dominant social groups is mostly used to segregate and stigmatise the dominated, thus their aspirations values and needs are classified as low culture and subordinated to the former.

institutions or process usually through the forces of market and technological innovations. According to Oommen (1990b:128) the theory of catching up amounts to emulation of paths traversed by specific societies without attention to the historicity and existential conditions that may often be drastically different. A further critique of the modernist perspective of rural development can be advanced on the basis of relative autonomy between system parts. Oommen (1990b:99) uses the concept of relative autonomy to refer to the inherent ability of social systems to change while maintaining certain vital characteristics or attributes. Thus the process of change in society proceeds through a system of selective retention and replacement of certain elements of tradition.

Having conceded that differences of values and social forms do not attest superiority or inferiority of systems attention may hence be directed to reconciling different perspectives and values that permeate rural society in India. Again it is emphasised that rather than through binary opposition, change in rural India could be understood through a continuum. It means that there is a point of transition between two poles with a wide range of possibilities in between.

The discussions in the following chapters are restricted to the modern state sponsored or supported rural reconstruction programmes so that the theme of dialectics can be examined in more details from a narrower scope. It is also clarified that even in cases where Non Governmental Organisations and other voluntary agencies play a central role in rural development they usually operate within the ambit of state administrative units. The dialectic approach is adopted bearing in mind that regardless of the strategy used for change in rural India, no social category is a pure type and no system or set of values can be seen in isolation from other interacting systems and values.

Chapter Three

COLLECTIVE ACTION AND CHANGE IN RURAL INDIA

3.0 The empirical context of state sponsored or supported rural development

In this chapter the experiences of rural reconstruction in three areas of social mobilisation and organisation namely community development, Panchayat Raj and co-operatives are examined. The role of two types of agencies, the state and non-official organisations which includes people's own initiatives are focused upon. The preceding chapter saw the argument developed on the divergence between materialism and idealism, that is, historical materialism and modernisation theory respectively. As already noted, modernisation thesis is that the major force behind change in society is idealism which sees social adjustment towards certain values and ideals. On the other hand the traditional Marxian theory contends that consciousness is the driving force behind change in society and derives from the conditions under which its members obtain their material needs. The connotation in the idealist perception is that there need not necessarily be a material dimension for transformation to be initiated or desired. The materialist perception is that social disparities and deprivations whether of child marriage, or caste discrimination cannot be seen in isolation from their material manifestations.

The central premise of this discussion is that there is a contending argument for every view, idea or need expressed in a development paradigm. It is emphasised that in spite of such divergence, each side of the opposing views represents some truth about social reality and needs to be examined to test its validity and to determine its significance in social change. Given the overlapping values that obtain in society, it is argued that a composite perspective could help resolve the conflicting claims on the direction of change. Far from being eclectic, the synthesising view of change attempts to bridge the gap between theoretically divergent value systems and social structures.

For example, in deciding which between idealism and materialism is central to rural reconstruction process in India, it can be demonstrated that neither has an exclusive influence on the process of change. Even though consciousness grows out of experiences such as social, economic, or political deprivations, it is also true that ideas influence change since plans are geared to realising at some point in future, comforts and advantages that are presently not experienced or known. It can also be shown that the desire for dignified treatment or for clean or safe environment underscores values that are not necessarily measurable in quantitative or economic terms.

Taking into account the contradictions and multiple strategies adopted in rural development programmes, it is necessary for each programme to incorporate a contingency plan. Contingency plan here relates to strategies devised to respond to unforeseen or unanticipated occurrences in the course of intervention in rural society. An issue that is addressed in the subsequent paragraphs is how development plans could allow for admission of new facts and experiences that arise unexpectedly in the process of social transformation. Creating room for change of goals or objectives takes into account the possibilities of shifts within the reconstruction paradigms.

Participatory and democratic organisations provide mechanisms to correct or respond to deviations from the expectations of their members. Such constituency organisations[17] as farmers' societies, Panchayats, and co-operatives are necessary to ensure responsiveness and accountability that is crucial for rural transformation. The requirement for such organisations is the acquisition and maintenance of improved conditions of life for their members. The principles of organisation involved are democratic participation, voluntarism, and accountability.

It is emphasised that the programmes and plans of rural development should be judged by their ability to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. The relevance

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[17] The concept of constituency organisations is adopted from Esman (1978) and used with reference to popular self regulating organisations by R. C. Mascarenhas 1993, 'A comparative study of the institutional basis for implementing rural development programmes in India,' in Sushil Mittal and Vaman Rao.(eds.), *Development and Change in India*. New Delhi: B. R. Publishing. p.76.

of development programmes is gauged by the extent of involvement of people in deciding matters that concern their daily lives. Control is reinforced by the availability of avenues to resolve any conflicts of interests.

A point of concern in rural reconstruction in India is that it cannot be taken for granted that the formation of local or community organisations would be without any hindrances. For example the caste sanction of status and the class related inhibitions to social mobility have to be taken into account in analysing change in rural society. Apart from the concern with internal contradictions and inequality, there is also the need to establish the basis of legitimate and effective external intervention in rural society.

The purpose of intervention is to evolve new structures to replace oppressive and exploitative ones with minimal confrontation with the social and cultural values of the concerned society. An important means of realising this objective would be to initiate institutional and structural diversification that would alter the core of the disadvantageous system. For example, to check unemployment and use of bonded labour in a peasant society, sources of income outside the agricultural system could be explored to minimise dependence on agricultural labour.

Change normally occurs in society in the context of contradictions. These could arise from gender inequalities, rural-urban disparities, or polarity between poverty and affluence among others. These contrasting phenomena are supported by opposing value systems and change can only be realised by reconciling these conflicting values. For example the idea of *Shramdan* or the gift of labour delivered without questioning or expecting returns would be subjected to varying interpretations and its benefits questioned depending on ones ritual status in the Hindu system of hierarchy or one's religious background. Long (1977:155) quoting from the study by Dube (1958), notes that *Shramdan* was considered by upper caste Hindus to be demeaning since it involved manual labour. They did not however hesitate to use the idea to assert their control over low caste Hindus in community development projects. Dealing with the

changing context of value is therefore an important component of rural reconstruction programmes.

In the following paragraphs an attempt is made to re-examine the social and cultural matrix of rural India in order to identify the determinants of change. This is followed by an analysis of three programmes that have been introduced in rural India since independence in 1947 and the extent to which they have contributed towards enhancement of productivity and self reliance and dignity for the rural people. The relations between rural communities and external agents of transformation are examined. Finally a rapprochement is attempted between contrasting values and perceptions in various sections of rural society.

3.1 The social structure in rural India

Large sections of rural populations in India depend on land and agriculture for their livelihood. Among the distinguishing factors between rural and urban society, mentioned in chapter one, are the different social bases of organisation of production. The structural organisation of social reproduction based on either land or capital distinguishes urban from rural type of society. Land in rural India has a limited capacity to support high productivity due to fragmentation and asymmetrical distribution. This is compounded by production relations that allow some landlords to earn a living without labour and alienates those without land from the product of their own labour through a system of unequal exchange. Land based production is also associated with such malpractice as bonded labour, and usury that is the bane of the poor in rural areas.

Disparities in land holding between households and different status groups is primarily responsible for the inability of many rural people to meet their subsistence requirements. The consequence is massive hunger, malnutrition and disease in rural areas. Rural people with little or no land become vulnerable to exploitative practices such as bonded labour, child labour and usury.

Alongside low productivity in agriculture there is breakdown of cottage industries due to heavy competition from manufacturing industries. The fetters to cottage industries include lack of credit, inadequate technology and limited access to market especially the urban market.

There are also large proportions of illiterate population in rural India. The urban areas in comparison exert strong pulls on literate populations that tend to overshadow their illiterate populations. It follows that rural areas experience sharp manifestation of social and cultural deprivations related to factors such as caste, religion, and region. The amenities like roads, water, schools, hospitals and electricity are concentrated in areas occupied by relatively high social status people.

Moral appreciation of the human quality which is essential for change is largely absent in rural society in India and is generally accentuated by structural boundaries that support social and spatial separation. The linkage of socio-cultural identities with physical space in rural areas ensures, unlike in urban areas, that the challenge to inequality is feeble or completely absent. In rural India this is exemplified by the actual segregation between caste Hindus and lower caste Hindus, poor and rich peasants and Hindus and Muslims among others. A corollary of such socio-structural disparities is the limited chances of empathy and mobilisation for collective efforts in development activities. This argument approximates Rudolph and Rudolph's (1967:104-6) view that 'affectivity' and empathy are essential for the erosion of socio-structural differences that hamper change.

Rural-urban migration is another phenomenon that has negative repercussions for rural society in India. Artisans and other skilled persons who attend village training institutes eventually move to urban areas in search of better-paid jobs. The biggest motivation is the relatively faster rate of returns to investment on skills in urban areas as compared to rural areas. Those left behind are usually people with low skills whose productivity cannot help improve the poverty situation of rural areas.

Long (1977), observes that complete and thorough elimination of 'landlordism' has not been achieved in rural India. For rural areas, the inadequate enforcement of the Land Ceiling Act allows for continued exploitation of the vulnerable sections especially the landless and low caste people. *Begar* a practice under which influential landowners and government officials compelled the poorer people to work without wages or at nominal rates, though legally prohibited is still a feature of rural society in India. In comparison urban areas have a better mechanism for controlling land distribution and enforcing the Urban Land Ceiling Act.[18]

Chambers (1983:108-10) provides a characteristic structure of rural society that fits the Indian situation as well. Rural India exhibits disadvantages associated with spatial remoteness and isolation. Remoteness is reflected by the fact that rural society is usually far removed from networks of communication and sources of information. This restricts entry of new information and reduces the impact of benefits that external intervention could bring to the disadvantaged rural people. Chambers further observes that vulnerability and powerlessness of rural people is indicated by few or no buffers against contingencies such as bad weather, sickness, or marriage expenses. It gives room for *predation* on the weak by the powerful.

The following discussion examines the suitability of state sponsored and received development programmes to the rural conditions in India and explores how relief for the underprivileged and disadvantaged people could be realised in a more meaningful way. Breaking structures that support the disadvantages outlined above is crucial to the reform process. In order to bridge the gap between the disadvantaged and advantaged segments of rural society the central focus is on the ways and means of overcoming structural inhibitions and vested interests.

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[18] Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act come into force in 1977 and was instituted as parallel measure to the Land Ceiling Act applicable in rural India. Apart from easing acquisition of land for public purposes it also aimed at checking concentration of land in a few hands which could lead to exploitation of the public through exorbitant rents. The Urban Act was repealed through a vote in Parliament on 15th March 1999.

3.2 Social Mobilisation and Intervention in Rural India

A major reorientation of strategy to harmonise government intervention and peoples' own local initiatives has come as a benefit of hindsight on failed experiments of rural reconstruction. Government plans for rural areas have hitherto been delivered as packages without proper attention to peoples own involvement in planning and decision on matters of concern to them. The awareness of the need for peoples involvement has hardly contributed to the increased effectiveness of development or transformation programmes particularly because of the difficulties of reconciling conflicting interests. People's own initiatives have not helped in resolving the numerous contradictions encountered in rural society in India. One explanation of continued conflicts is that most of the voluntary organisations engaged in rural transformation operate in zones that territorially coincide with state administrative units. Often their functions are neither fully integrated nor separated leading to sustained conflicts especially when they tend to employ different strategies to pursue their different objectives. An example emerges where there is competition to gain loyalty of the rural populations through patronage and distribution of favours.

Generally, state led development programmes have focused on the assessment of available resources for an effective and balanced utilisation. Another major goal of rural development in India has been to increase productivity and reduce inequalities. Three of the strategies used to realise the objectives of balanced and equitable development are examined below in the light of the subjective and objective evaluation criteria for increased productivity discussed in chapter two. The involvement of people in decisions and their control of matters that concern them are the key elements in the assessment of effectiveness of peoples own development organisations and the relevance of intervention. The contribution of co-operatives, Community Development Schemes and Panchayats in ameliorating, eliminating and neutralising constraints to productivity and equity is in this case significant.

The broad orientation of development programmes provide useful insights for comparison of the achievements of plans with the stated objectives. The first category of plans are those oriented towards creation and expansion of resources, that is, the growth model. The second category includes plans that go beyond production of resources to examine the relations among people and between people and nature, that is, the equity and sustainability model. Change in the first case concentrates mainly in the domain of instrumental needs of people and society. The second type incorporate the expressive needs in the plans for social change. Expressive needs not only pertain to strengthening of emotional bonds, identity articulation and feeling of security among primordial groups but also their relations with people having different identities. It also extends to human interaction with the physical environment. It is argued that the rural development plans partly fail to achieve their targets because they often tend to neglect the expressive dimensions of change while concentrating on the instrumental goals. For example social and cultural distinctions and their implications for access to benefits are hardly addressed while setting up common programmes for the villages.

3.2.1 Community Development

From independence the focus of Community Development in rural India has been on promoting self help with the assistance of the government. At independence a lot of attention was given to irrigation and agriculture related activities which later extended to education, social welfare, industries, housing, health, sanitation, transport and communication.

The division of rural areas into development blocks is therefore an important feature of Community Development program. The block consists of between sixty and a hundred villages. These blocks constitute the target populations for change, the zones of local resource mobilisation and the point of injection of external resources. This could be a drawback to the process of reconstruction as such large blocks not

only present logistic problems in co-ordination of development programmes but also increase chances of conflict between interests of villages.

In India the ideology that propels community development is the quest for an alternative to laissez-faire. This reflects collective responsibility for the uplift of the weak and disadvantaged. Such historically and culturally deprived sections of Indian society whose needs are underscored in community development are tribal, low castes and marginalised or special groups like the youth and women.

The need for socio-economic redemption of the underprivileged sections of rural society requires that people be allowed to participate in the improvement of their own lives. Collective effort is a necessary strategy in the design and implementation of community development projects. An important feature of this type of development is that it usually combines a number of objectives. Griffin (1986, p.165) refers to the multi-purpose nature of community development projects as including provision of social services, development of industry as well as agricultural and non agricultural activities and performing local government functions in rural areas. Government support in community development is often aimed at increasing output from agriculture and cottage industries and also extending special benefits to certain target populations. The ultimate aim of community development should be to decentralise decision making both in planning and implementation of development programmes.

An evaluation of Community Development schemes introduced in rural India can be made on the basis of two principles of accelerated conscious change and the local significance of that change. The process of Community Development should be consistent with its definition as an embodiment of conscious acceleration of economic, technological and social change and specifically relevant to the concerned village or area. People in the target area should play a role in deciding plans and strategies of development. Changes in material provisions like schools, roads, and medical facilities should have an impact on literacy levels, hygiene or health conditions and ease of transportation.

Since community Development involves interaction of the internal and external agencies of change a second evaluation criteria would be on the use of incentives to accelerate change and to eliminate coercion. Often asymmetrical power relations in-built in the social hierarchies forms the basis of coercion. When this occurs it strips, Community Development of the necessary element of voluntarism. Some social and cultural structures however may hamper the participation of the deprived and the weak in the development programmes. Krishnan (1993:127-28) notes that in rural India the power to bring about change is mostly attributed to external forces beyond the control of the local people. It is further argued that the idea of Power-Distance compounds the problem of participation or involvement of local people in Community Development. Krishnan defines Power Distance as the gap that is created between two individuals or groups as a result of status differences. There is generally a reluctance in rural India to 'breach' the Power-Distance or the subordinate-superior gap. The socially weak are often treated as subordinates and remain passive followers of the directives of the real or assumed superiors. Occasionally there are attempts to incorporate local people in the development programmes by providing incentives to encourage their participation but often there is a tendency to overlook this vital element of change. Krishnan further observes that change is only likely to occur in those spheres of rural society in which the consequences are concrete, immediate and obviously positive. Whenever it is not possible to demonstrate the likely results of change then the second option of ignoring local participation is adopted. Mascarenhas (1993:76) notes that an often repeated reason for failure of centrally planned or bureaucrat-directed and administered programmes is that they are rarely, if ever, based on local needs, resources and capabilities of the intended beneficiaries. This is particularly so when plans are conceived as for and not with the targeted people. According to him the target group approach is usually interpreted as need of charity and distribution of doles and there is hardly any attempt to strengthen people for self reliance. One way in which local needs are side-tracked in Community Development is to draw common programmes without

considering local variations in socio-economic resources and structures. Similarly people's capabilities are often insufficiently assessed because of assumptions of consensus among various sections of society and the possibility of unhindered social mobility.

There are several shortcomings evident in the rural Community Development programmes in India. The heavy dependence on external funds especially from the government means susceptibility to sudden cuts due to competing needs and demands. Chaturvedi (1987:72) identifies a number of competing demands on government budget such as 'defence spending, preference for heavy industry, need to maintain stable consumer food prices in urban areas and provision of a variety of urban services.' The government directed programmes lay emphasis on provision of infrastructure facilities for rural areas but rarely focus on necessary institutional and structural transformations. Material and management inputs are applied to old institutional structures with little or no impact. Chaturvedi therefore argues that the use of bureaucratic and market channels to bring change to rural society has failed to take into account their limited reach and effectiveness in India. This leads to the conclusion that the fruits of development are mostly cornered by people with economic entitlements, social privileges, and political power as the deprived, the vulnerable and the poor are by-passed.

The struggles of the deprived are usually ignored in designing community development programmes. Their aspirations and methods of survival under conditions of extreme oppression and exploitation are obscured as attention is concentrated on the rich and influential. The former are rarely taken into consideration in the larger plans of rural development. The common stereotype of appalling and hopeless lives of the poverty stricken villages forecloses a critical view of their opinions, values, attitudes and strategies. Assumptions are made that local communities either have wrong ideas or lack them altogether and that their poor conditions can only be altered by injecting correct knowledge or expunging from them old and incorrect ideas. This is

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largely responsible for the failure by community development agents to get the crucial insights into the existing conditions in the villages so as to evolve the necessary strategies to change their structures.

Synchronising the external with the internal view of development enables the operation of a system of social controls. Recognition, rewards and pressure to fulfil certain responsibilities are important mechanisms that ensure responsiveness and accountability within and between communities. In rural India another handicap to Community development is the predominance of formal, market-oriented structures over informal structures of organisation. Whereas rural societies would seek to apply the values of utility, calculation and scientific precision, they cannot ignore customs, beliefs and tradition. Social decisions are based as much on rational ideas as on emotions and influenced by sacred values as by secular ideas. Thus community development could benefit rural India if the crucial combination of values is used to support rather than to curtail wider choice in matters of social change.

3.2.2 The Panchayat Raj

The major setback to Community Development in rural India could be identified as the failure to synchronise government and other external agencies support with local initiatives and participation. Chaturvedi (1987:74) citing the Mehta Committee Report,[19] observes that rural development and rural welfare are possible only with local initiative and direction. It is maintained that rural development has to be an instrument of expression of local people's will in local development. Such will could be established if significance is given to local leadership in decision making and implementation of programmes.

In order to enhance the local significance of development and change, it becomes imperative to institute some form of devolution of power and functions.

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[19] The document referred to is known as the Balwantray G. Mehta et. al., 1957, "Report of the Team for the Study of Community Projects and National Extension Services." New Delhi: The Planning Commission of India.

Panchayat Raj becomes an important link between the target community and external agencies of change. Shiviah (1984:32) notes that the system of local government perceived under Panchayat system would be within a limited territorial and juridical range but comprehensive in its administrative functions. It would have under its ambit, civic welfare and development functions. Panchayats combine service administration with political governance. In this way Panchayats function as deliberative, policy and implementation systems. Deliberative function captures the elements of involvement in decision making, policy implementation and control.

The central idea in the operation of Panchayat system is that it should introduce the zeal of a movement, and create an institutional framework for change rather than be an accretion on the existing institutional structures. Its main thrust should be the introduction of democratic operations in rural development programmes. An elected leadership is necessary for establishing and maintaining popular participation and support for plans and projects. The Mehta report cited by Shiviah considers Panchayats as means of evoking popular initiative and providing the motive force for continuing the improvement of economic and social conditions in rural areas. Further it is argued that popular support envisaged in the Panchayat system is based on assumption of mobilisation and high information flow with low coercion as opposed to totalitarian structures with low information flow and high coercion.

The proposal to set up village, block and district level committees of elected representatives with adequate power and resource backing, is aimed at achieving decentralisation in development planning and implementation. Each federal unit or provincial administration is also empowered to develop its own model of Panchayat Raj. Chaturvedi (1987:75) notes that 'with the introduction of Panchayat Raj in 1958 all kinds of variations have been noted in different states. These variation are with respect to structures of decision making, implementation, resource allocation, staffing pattern, training and recruitment of staff and devolution of power at different levels.' There is, however, a persistence of what is described as the reality of 'bureaucratic

centralism'. Even though in theory the Panchayat system is supposed to be a step towards decentralisation, there is still no change with regard to the heavy concentration of administrative powers on a few individuals and institutions in rural India.

The state's role in designing the operation structure of the Panchayat system is usually accompanied by bureaucratic controls and political interference. Various political parties compete to gain control of the Panchayats. The various political contentions and the overwhelming influence of bureaucrats in the Panchayat system takes place at the expense of local interests since patronage replaces partnership in their relations with the local people. The political parties in power at the state level tend to gain leverage over their opponents through manipulation and extension of selective benefits to their supporters. The casualty in this case is democracy which is supposed to be the main objective in the devolution of power. A recent example was the struggle for control of Payyavur Panchayat in Kerala between Congress Party of India (Congress-I) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (C. P. I-M).[20] In many cases political manipulations and bureaucratic hurdles have blocked elections from being held for long periods. Chaturvedi (1978:77) observes that with tensions and pressures emerging within Panchayats, the system has reinforced elitism at the cost of greater participation.

Functional autonomy for Panchayats is hampered by the three tier structure that reinforces hierarchical control rather than accountability in the relations between *Gram* (Village level), *Samiti* (Block level), and *Zila* (District level) Panchayats. Prasad (1970:188-93) attributes the strenuous relationship to the higher 'legislatures' being in a position to formulate plans and earmark funds to the lower bodies for implementation of these plans exclusively. It reduces the Panchayat to an implementing bureaucracy and denies it its deliberative powers. Prasad's evaluation of the functioning of

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[20] The Hindustan Times, Saturday 9th January, 1999, "Darkest Chapter in Kerala Panchayat Raj History ends: C. P. I(M) has egg all over its face," New Delhi, p.7

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Panchayats is that it is a body where elections are concomitant with an outburst of strife involving the entire village which leaves in its wake a trail of hate and raging bitterness. Further this condition is associated with the presence of political parties which naturally come in full force for the occasion. One observes that parties create dissension where unity is called for and exaggerate differences where they should be minimised.

Some critical questions that emerge regarding Panchayat system in rural India are (i) how to realise internal cohesion; (ii) how bureaucratic structures can be made amenable to development planning and implementation; and (iii) how accountability can be enforced without falling into the trap of excessive external control. The constraint of co-ordination between various levels of administrative structure is compounded by the internal differences of needs, interests, wealth and power. Since human beings do not live or operate in isolation, development plans can be designed to reinforce co-operation and interdependence and not opposition and dependence. This is not to suggest that a forced unanimity and consensus should be sought. The emphasis is that areas of convergence of opinion and ideas be used in launching development programmes. Examples include community organisations such as women's groups, credit associations, religious associations, neighbourhood associations and co-operatives.

Shiviah (1984:36-38) identifies some benefits in rural area development attributable to Panchayat Raj system in spite of a few shortcomings. They include: (i) political activism and awakening of people to articulate the problems and needs of rural India, and (ii) building institutional competence at village level. Similarly there is (iii) the weakening of the traditional basis of legitimacy such as feudal and semi-feudal order and providing an alternative democratic basis of legitimacy; (iv) conscientisation of the poor, oppressed and exploited and giving them a platform from which their demands on the political system can be expressed. Other advantages are (v) the raising of the levels of aspirations and achievement motivation of the generally poor and less

advanced groups; (vi) extending the reach of feedback structures between rural people and their leaders and between them and the state; and (vii) creating an effective mechanism of development administration especially through gains in local supervision and maintenance.

3.2.3 Rural co-operatives

Formal co-operatives have together with the Panchayat system and community development sought to strengthen mutual aid as a basis of rural transformation. Oommen (1984:254-5), has identified three main streams of co-operative transformation of rural society in India. The first is the less intense, gradual process of social evolution, and the second is limited-change oriented with focus on selected spheres of human activity. The third stream takes an institutional view of change that covers all aspects of human life. In the first category are found most forms of traditional co-operatives such as common labour pools and asset generation or saving groups. The activities carried out in these types of co-operatives include support in turns to individual members to purchase bullocks for cultivation, distribution of pools of grains and other food stuff, and conducting ceremonies and feasts to strengthen social and emotional bonds. The second type of co-operatives is restricted to specific areas of economic activities such as milk production, spinning, or weaving. The third category begins from a particular economic activity like agricultural credit but extends its areas of concern to as diverse fields as social, cultural, and political activity.

Regardless of the range of activities, the co-operative system is anchored on the principle of interdependence. Members may be drawn from diverse socio-economic backgrounds but the linking factor is usually a common goal such as getting farm inputs through a credit system or good prices for output. Informal non-bureaucratised co-operatives pursue, with relative ease, common goals and interdependence since most of them would be constituted on the basis of primordial groups like caste, religious community and common gender. On the contrary the formal co-operatives

with emphasis on bureaucratic organisation driven by merit and achievement provides ground for value conflicts in a rural society with strong attachment to tradition. In the latter case members and Directors of co-operatives are under constraint to de-link from their primary group loyalties in the interest of common good. Oommen (1984:269) observes that when members are obliged to suppress their primary status and identities they are drawn from primordial collectivism towards instrumental collectivism. An observation of the rural society in India would reveal that the affective and ascriptive values are never completely abandoned in favour of achievement and affective neutrality though either type of value orientation may under various circumstances be recessed. With the shift from primordial collectivism to instrumental collectivism, attention is drawn to individual as a unit of observation and not the group. Individualised entry into co-operatives provides an impetus for competition. This generates the need for group formation in order to compete for maximum benefits. This is partly the reason why political party influence within and between co-operatives is strong in rural India. The basis of organisation of co-operatives shifts from communal to class and ideological identity depicting the influence of status group, socio-economic individualism, and mobilisation for the three phases respectively. The status differentials assume significance at this point and coupled with competition rather than co-operation could cause tensions and contradictions.

Even with formal organisation, there is continued expression of differences based on gender, caste, and class within co-operatives in rural India. Oommen's (1984:263) study of co-operatives in Allepey, Kerala reveals that none of the female members was on the Board of Directors even though 20-30 per cent of their members were women. They remained largely passive members and hardly attended general body meetings. The reason why women did not involve themselves in institutions such as village co-operatives, he noted, was the social constraint put on them in their participation. Krishnan (1993:111) reinforces this view by stating that the traditional family expectation on women is that of dutiful and obedient sisters, mothers and wives

with no role in decision making. Harijans[21] too had little representation in membership as well as in leadership of co-operatives which they managed to join with extreme difficulties according to the study by Oommen in Allepey. It may be concluded that instrumental collectivism pursued on its own is disadvantageous to the socially and culturally underprivileged members of rural society.

Co-operatives in rural India are mainly concentrated in the agricultural sector which is the largest economic activity. They strive to provide members with credit and agricultural inputs like fertilisers, seeds and farm implements. They also aim at ensuring adequate compensation and returns to members for their produce. Co-operatives to a great extent, extend their activities beyond increasing productivity and profitability of the economic undertakings around which they are formed. A common example in India is the fair price shop which is normally set up to provide members with essential commodities at reasonable rates. Other activities undertaken in this manner are aimed at promoting harmonious relations and strengthening social bonds among members of the rural communities.

Co-operatives aim to improve socio-economic conditions of the people by expanding their own resource bases and setting up appropriate administrative structures. Increasing share capital and providing competent leadership is therefore important for the functioning of every co-operative. When an initial target population is not on its own able to raise the intended share capital, co-operatives take the option of opening up membership to those from outside this target group. For example a Harijan co-operative can open up membership to upper caste Hindus or Christians in order to generate adequate share capital. Apart from the need of share capital generation, another possible reason for mixed membership could be to allow better educated people to become members so as to perform management functions. Mixed co-operatives or co-operatives with members drawn from diverse segments of society

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[21] Literally, Harijans means, children of God. This name was given by Mahatma Gandhi to the oppressed castes to confer some degree of dignity on a category of Indian people referred to as untouchables and subjected to lots of indignity.

may instead of promoting, end up harming the participation of intended groups. Usually the decision making and control is captured by these external groups. Oommen's (1984:180) study of Harijan co-operatives in Kerala reveals that the Nairs and Syrian Christians came to dominate and control the Harijan Co-operatives.[22] Within a particular co-operative, sometimes a group may exert its dominance as a result of numerical superiority. For example when a co-operative is constituted by two or three castes, the one with numerical superiority may use its dominance to gain advantages over the rest especially in constituting the Board of Directors. Thus the needs and views of the smaller groups or minorities are side-tracked.

The power asymmetries and contending interests that are reflected in decision making and control of co-operatives in rural India often have negative implications for the reconstruction process in the society. Chaturvedi (1987:78-9) identifies a number of flaws within the co-operatives that militate against change. These include failure to recover loans advanced to members especially the rural rich and influential who treat loans as grants or subsidies and do not feel morally obliged to repay. Far from being autonomous institutions with greater involvement and control by the people they function as extensions of government bureaucracy. Chaturvedi notes that often the government and the co-operatives have interlocking directorates. Considerable financial dependence on the government further deprives the co-operatives of the desired autonomy. The rural elite who control co-operative ignore the interests of the poor who generally find it difficult to become members as a result of restrictions imposed by the former. The few among the poor who succeed in becoming members of the co-operatives face further discrimination when they seek to join the Boards of Directors. He maintains that the management of co-operatives are influenced by the political party affiliations of the members and Directors. This goes contrary to the

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[22] The Nairs are placed high in the Hindu caste hierarchy while the Syrian Christians, converts from upper castes, by virtue of the egalitarian nature of their faith are considered to be relatively free from the oppression and discrimination associated with the caste system. Even though Christians may retain some caste related practices such as endogamy they are assumed to have high degree of social mobility compared to other socio-religious groups in rural India.

general principle of equal treatment to all members regardless of social background or political affiliation. The credibility of the loaning system is brought to question under such circumstances since credit is given or denied on the basis of perceived political loyalty or disloyalty. The role of bureaucrats as educators, enablers, and promoters is neglected as they assume the roles of masters within co-operatives. Bureaucrats sometimes justify their dominance as a measure to safeguard public funds. According to Chaturvedi, social hierarchy with its tendency towards exclusiveness of the various strata restricts participation in co-operatives. For example, few if any, of the scheduled castes take part in any organised village activity.

Oommen's (1984) analysis concurs with Chaturvedi's observations. He cites a major setback to co-operatives as arising from unutilised resources due to disagreements on programmes. Disagreements and factionalism often culminates in frequent removals of office bearers at the expense of consistent pursuit of development objectives. Corruption and inefficiency is another serious problem that is usually the cause of rifts between Boards of Directors and the general membership of co-operatives. Several functional requirements including obtaining complete records on members assets, holding regular meetings, disciplining errant members, drawing proper production plans for each member and ensuring that every transaction is legally sanctioned are commonly violated. It is also noted that co-operative activities tend to concentrate on service provision and rarely serve the important need of improving members' productivity. Few of the services provided are relevant to the people's needs since it is possible to find a fertiliser shop being set up in an area predominantly inhabited by landless agricultural labourers.

3.3 Dichotomies and single dimension propositions

Dichotomies usually present possibilities of choice between two extreme and opposite alternatives. The analysis of social change in rural India indicates that there are numerous other possibilities as far as choice or social action is concerned. For example, in deciding between secular and sacred behaviour, it is observed that religious affiliation plays an important role in determining leaders in rural development programmes. Such a consideration of religion does not however preclude other determinants such as merit and educational qualifications. Membership drawn from diverse social and economic backgrounds is another evidence of mixed factor considerations in organisation of development programmes.

The presence of diverse views and perceptions in rural development programmes in India is quite evident. In this analysis, however, importance is attached to the possibility of rapprochement between these contending views and interests. Rudolph and Rudolph (1967:6) argue that dichotomies emphasise incompatibilities between norms, structures and personalities located at two opposite ends of a spectrum. Such a definition, they maintain, is useful for correcting excessively narrow perspectives and parochial judgement in complex situations, by placing them in the context of plausible alternatives. When dichotomies are drawn on the basis of unproved assumptions however, they tend to weaken the understanding of change since they screen out particular, exceptional and contradictory phenomena and characteristics.

Attention is hence focused on the utility of the latent, deviant and minority alternatives in understanding change in rural India. These may throw light on how historical circumstances can be altered to become sources of new or transformed identities, structures and norms. For example, the historical disadvantage of minorities and the oppressed could be an impetus to transcend the inhibiting boundaries and ensure adequate representation for these categories in Panchayats, and equitable distribution of benefits of community development.

Engberg-Pedersen (1997:186) advances two parallel arguments that would be useful for the determination of a plausible trajectory of rural reconstruction in India. The first observation is that social actors are fairly rational and constantly try to get the best out of existing opportunities. Though faced with constraints, rural actors evaluate their restrictions and devise strategies to by-pass them and exploit whatever opportunities they can. The emphasis is on the fact that rural dwellers are active, careful and strategic actors given the paternalistic and arrogant attitudes underlying many official development efforts. This stands in contrast to the second view that the apparent well calculated decisions by rural social actors are generally influenced by institutions and forces beyond their control. Their actions are therefore not the sole result of autonomous and reflective decision process. The gist of these contentions is that no social action is possible without some form of constraints. These constraints are either in form of alternatives lines of action or social control mechanism. The possibility of change in rural India has to be examined in the light of these limitations and constraints.

3.4 Reconciling Precept and Practice

Considering the discrepancies between the achievements and the stated objectives of the programmes of change in rural India, there is a need for a critical look into the assumptions of these paradigms. First there is an assumption that society changes according to preferential principles such as choice of growth as against equity, or achievement against ascription. Similarly there is an assumption that the path of change is determined once and for all time on the basis of specific values.

From the above discussion, it is evident that new experiences emerge that set development on trajectories that are different from the anticipated ones. Since assumptions and experiences tend to diverge, the possible corrective measure would be a contingency plan. Contingency plan in rural reconstruction can be developed within the framework of participatory constituency organisations. The principal value of such

a plan is that it allows new facts and experience to inform the process of change. Esman, cited by Mascarenhas (1993:76) maintains that constituency organisations are crucial in ensuring people's role in their own development. They are backed by local accountability and draw their strength from public authority. Sometimes accountability and equity in the community organisation is threatened by disproportionate wealth, disparities in power, divisions along caste, religious, linguistic or gender lines and excessive external control. There is a safeguard in constituency organisations through a system of dual accountability. According to Esman dual accountability can be ensured by encouraging internal democracy through regular elections and meetings and member participation in decisions as well as by allowing independent bureaucratic controls on standards and audits. This culminates into a synergy between internal system of social control and the external control and accountability or put differently the blending of institutional supervision and mutual trust. The contingency plan is based on the need to ensure both internal and external accountability while maintaining some degree of autonomy in the process of change and development.

A second important factor would be to uphold the community interest in development programmes. Community interest can be broadly defined as the composite needs of a collective that include political, social, cultural, environmental and economic elements. They surpass the whims and manipulations of individual interests but remain relevant to each member that constitutes that whole. Competing interests do not reduce the importance of these needs for the individual. These needs are secured by institutional structures that define the relationship between the individual and the collective. The relationship is directed by the two principles of responsiveness and accountability between the individual and the collective. Such a relationship nullifies the value neutral assumptions that separate individual interests from those of the collective. That which threatens the collective good threatens the individual good and that which is favourable to the composite goal is ultimately favourable to the individual. Emphasis is on the convergence of subjective and the

objective goals of change. Differences based on attributes are superseded by inter-subjective relations. For example in objective terms, an individual's interests are assumed to be different from and opposed to those of the collective as also with other individual's within society. The subjective view goes hand in hand with affectivity that cumulatively reinforce the collective interests. The collective concern is not reducible to its component parts. Thus each member of society would work towards the achievement of good health, better transport and communication facilities, clean and safe living environment as well as having fewer dependants among other needs. These would form the basic minimum desirable conditions for human life. Different means available to fulfil these needs does not diminish individual's quest for the overall good. This reinforces the collective change as opposed to fragmented change. Similarly by opening up ascriptive and affective boundaries, the gap between the individual and collective values is diminished. Thus primordial collectivism would exist alongside bureaucratic standards of efficiency.

3.5 Beyond Substitution and Displacement in rural reconstruction

The social and cultural contours of rural India undergo rapid and tremendous changes thereby rendering some programmes of reconstruction obsolete and ineffective. These programmes tend to impose an order on rural society but fail to adjust to its complex and capricious socio-cultural matrix. Change is defined on the basis of conflicting and distinctive categories and not on the basis of interacting categories.

Ideally, real life should distinguish between the personal and the collective, or the private and the public but the fluid nature of these boundaries makes it difficult for development programmes to operate in exclusive spheres. An analysis of change in rural society in India needs to address itself to the segregation or compartmentalisation of the theoretically opposed but empirically inseparable phenomena. For example, the homogenising symbols such as language, locality, and law are often expected to stand

separately from the differentiating factors of caste, and social and economic status. These two dimensions are not easy to separate as far as their influence on choice and behaviour is concerned.

Rural transformation is thus focused on community and institutions since they are a collage of experiences, values, aspirations and meanings and form the central references for each individual. Change is predicated on the interaction between two reference points namely the individual and the collective preferences. The apparent contradictions and tensions attributed to divergence between individuals can be considered as necessary but not sufficient condition for social transformation to take place. A three dimension view of social reality reveals not just the contradictions, or two opposite and incompatible values, but also how they interact with each other. Affirmation of primordial and ascriptive identities should not preclude merit and achievement in organisation for rural reconstruction. An example of interaction between supposedly opposite values is given in Rudolph and Rudolph's (1967:121) account of Lucknow rickshaw-pullers. They note that the caste rules of commensality were not strictly followed in the work context but adhered to under domestic conditions. In rural India a possible application of this principle would be in relating the individual choices and preferences to the common or collective preferences. Individual choices are never made in complete isolation or indifference to other people within the society. Sen (1970:6) argues that:

> The society in which a person lives, the class to which he belongs, the relation that he has with the social and economic structure of the community, are relevant to a person's choice not merely because they affect the nature of his personal interests but also because they influence his value system including his notion of "due" concern for other members of society.'

Two determinants of individual choice can be discerned in this case. The first is the individual's choice for self's sake which answers to personal or private interests.

The second level pertains to choice for group's sake where the individual is located as an interested party within the collective.

The thrust of this argument is that legitimacy is not just drawn from one sided facts. Human social character is not just determined by what is public and objective but also what is private and subjective. Change in rural India would take place even when religion, gender language, and other primordial values are not completely separated from public domain. In reality, the boundaries between these apparently divergent values and structures are not stable and impermeable. The primary focus of change in rural society in India is to transcend these boundaries since there is a continuous interaction between these supposedly divergent choices and values.

Chapter Four

TOWARD A RELEVANT STRATEGY OF RURAL RECONSTRUCTION IN INDIA

4.0 Introduction

The search for a relevant strategy of reconstruction and development in rural India directs attention first and foremost to the need to strengthen people's hand by giving them a role in matters that concern their own lives. Porter et. al., (1991:xv) describe this as a course that promises a prospectively better and more orderly future than a past replete with distressing failures. Rahman (1994:205) considers a viable strategy of rural reconstruction as one that treats any theoretical propositions on change as tentative and subject to validation or modification by the people's own processes of reflection. Sundaram (1986:225) draws attention to complementarity between agencies of change by arguing that the problems of rural communities are vast and complex and cannot be left to the state alone to solve. He suggests that there is need to stimulate, protect and promote people's initiative in rural reconstruction.

A perspective that embraces collective conscience or community interests and interdependence between agencies of change therefore has to be evolved. Significance is attached to the central role of the rural communities or 'insiders' whose needs and aspirations have to be addressed within specific cultural, economic, political, locational, and historical context.[23] The second pedestal on which such a strategy has to be anchored is the support of external agencies comprising aid workers, the state, research workers and voluntary organisations. The point of interaction between these opposite forces is based on the quest for reduced dependence, elimination of oppression and genuine involvement and control of decisions by the subjects of change.

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[23] Here the cultural aspect embraces the technological capabilities whereas the locational include the environmental issues that are crucial to contemporary analyses of development and change.

This strategy discounts a dogmatic position based on mutual exclusivity, between values, interests, and agencies. Taking into account the wide temporal and spatial variations in historical, economic, political, cultural and technological circumstances, it is important to recognise that the conceptual categories of egalitarianism, social justice and sustainable development lend themselves to diverse interpretations. Thus the trajectory of change that is sought here is based on some form of fuzzy logic that adjusts for ambiguous and capricious variables with reference to a common basis of corporate action. The essence of composite approach to rural reconstruction can be illustrated with the help of the following few examples.

Alongside the need to increase autonomy of rural communities there is the requirement of partnership and co-operation with 'outsiders' or the external agencies. Similarly a prospective view of change has to be juxtaposed with retrospection into the antecedent conditions in the rural community in question. This gives the vital historical data on the society upon which future actions are based. A balance also has to be struck between the expectations of internal accountability and the demands of external transparency in the execution of development plans.

The analysis in this section begins with an outline of some common principles and concepts considered important for the improvement in strategies of rural reconstruction. The various meanings and dimensions of change drawn from these concepts is used to illustrate the inefficacy and weakness of replacement principle in comprehending social reality. The reliance on displacement and the relevance of dichotomies is again called to question by examining the nature and operation of voluntary organisations in rural India. Finally an attempt is made to define the line of transcendence or interactive relations between the supposedly opposite structures and systems.

4.1 Fallacies in Conceptualisation of Development

Development project evaluation reports and literature are replete with accounts of failures and contentions about the relevance of strategies. The experience of experiments in rural reconstruction in India is no exception. Concerns range from the by-passing of people in designing and implementing programmes to conflicts between local values and those imposed by the externally introduced projects. Other issues relate to differential access to entitlements[24] due to corruption, inefficiency and sometimes stoppage of support from outside before projects are completed.

Diverting common resources for individual or private benefits serves as a warning beacon that subsequent development plans should include safeguards against deviations which might result into loss of enthusiasm, tensions and conflicts. This section examines the problems arising from the general design of rural reconstruction programmes and how they hamper the achievement of the objectives of directed change.

Some concepts in the transformation and development of rural India have guided the process of change but at the same time continue to exacerbate the pursuit of wrong strategies due to their assumptions and emergent interpretations. For instance the high value placed on international aid programmes and state sponsorship of development fails to take notice of the latent objectives of these schemes. According to Porter et.al. (1991:4), 'the strategic and diplomatic interests behind these projects are not obvious and do not necessarily come through in stated objectives.' By tying funds to specific projects, aid and sponsoring agencies do not, for example, allow the necessary deviation and flexibility when evidence emerges that the goals given in the project design are unrealistic. Ghorpade (1991) illustrates this limitation by referring to the concept of schematic budget used by funding agencies to set an expenditure schedule against fixed project fund and specific budget heads. Such plans overlook the

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[24] Entitlements are defined in economic terms as access to goods and services to which can be added non-economic factors of respect for human dignity and safe living environment.

potential conflicts about location of projects and fund allocation between sub-projects within the targeted unit such as a Development Block or district. Granted that a basic guideline is necessary to check against haphazard allocation of resources and duplication of projects, there is usually little or no allowance for meeting unforeseen expenditure or withdrawing funds from projects with unrealistic objectives. A common indicator of this weakness is the rush expenditure towards the end of designated periods without proper planning. Ghorpade (1991:82) observes that sometimes funds are allowed to lapse because of improper planning and co-ordination of schemes and projects.

A contrast can be made with Rahman's (1994:214-15) account of the experience with rural development agencies in Sarail Upazilla in Bangladesh where there is a marked preference for internal resource mobilisation over external credit. Each credit application is endorsed by two members of the organisation concerned who undertake to follow up the use of the credit and general financial condition of the debtor and to alert the organisation to any unforeseen problem that may arise which might affect repayment on time. Assistance may then be provided by extending the repayment period if the difficulties are considered genuine. This sociological, humane and self educational approach is different from the credit bank or aid-organisations' alternative of rigid procedural rules insensitive to specific human circumstances.

Coating realities in fashionable terms and concepts is the second source of dislocation in programmes of rural reconstruction. Terms like participation, empowerment, sustainable and equitable growth are familiar in rural development plans and strategies but they tend to obscure the realities and constraints within which programme objectives have to be realised. To achieve equitable growth for example, is a socially desirable proposition but politically it may not be tenable because of the intractable differentials of power and access to instruments of control and authority. Use of political patronage in the selective distribution of resources is a common method by which inequality is perpetuated in rural society in India. Effective

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participation by people in development planning and implementation is dependent on their technical and financial endowments but often the presence of representatives is confused with actual contribution to debate and decision making on behalf of the *'represented'* people. Ghorpade (1991:85-6) provides an insight into this discrepancy by stating that the supposed people's representatives in many cases do not make informed contributions to development discussions and merely endorse the decisions of an individual or few 'experts'. The relations between humans and their physical environment, being an essential component of development planning draws attention to some challenges to development. The usual good intentions of conservation are curtailed by inadequate technology and lack of alternative resources. Setting aside land for forests and soil conservation is possible if the basic requirements have already been met. The people without land of their own like agricultural wage labourers are unlikely to be involved meaningfully in sustainable development efforts. For marginal farmers and peasants, their deepest concern is with their own survival first and that of the future generations second.

As far as empowerment is concerned, it is unlikely to be realised in situations where government and other agencies that intervene in rural society make decisions for the people and not with the people. Hegemonic tendencies emerge quite regularly in development programmes sponsored by outside agencies. Porter et.al., (1991:94) argue that aid agencies possess the degree of leverage necessary to ensure that the traditional, particularistic or political idiosyncrasies known variously as 'obstacles' or 'barriers' do not hold sway on sponsored projects. This approach helps to extend external political and economic control over the area and people among whom development is to take place. Institutions set up to ensure control in this manner are normally justified as necessary steps to protect development decisions from idiosyncratic and traditional or political influences. By shutting out tradition, at least in theory, the process of effective interaction with and empowerment of the rural communities is subverted.

The third factor that sets-off rural reconstruction action in the wrong direction is what Porter et.al., (1991:92) refer to as control orientation. They observe that the application of better management techniques, logical frameworks, tight financial control and cost benefit analyses are responses found world wide in major aid agencies to control uncertainty created by rural development projects. The main assumption is that all variables are related in a cause effect structure and can be controlled in a predictable manner to achieve desired objectives. Human institutions have only a limited capacity to deal with contingencies in the social environment characterised by a great deal of uncertainty and unpredictability. In control oriented development approach, factors considered to be important are listed and drawn into a single system. The shortcoming of this kind of control is that it does not accurately reflect social phenomena that have wide temporal and spatial variations. Whereas it is desirable that scrutiny of expenditure of public funds be made to reassure agencies that their goals can be confidently achieved, it is equally important to distinguish between manipulable and non-manipulable factors. For example, the assumptions about the likely behaviour of beneficiaries sometimes prove detrimental to the interests of the people if rigidly fixed into a development programme. Thus development projects should allow for change if new evidence is obtained to warrant a shift of course from the existing one. Early decisions in the design of development projects tend to narrow the range of later decisions. In India for example the government is considered as a provider of welfare and ultimate deciding authority. This hampers the incorporation of people into the project decisions and leads to the growth and perpetuation of dependence on the government.

The foregoing analysis indicates that such determinants of change in rural society as culture, economics, politics, and history have to be viewed not only in relation to time and space but also in relation to each other. This directs attention to the inevitable question of how development goals can be realised in spite of these variations and uncertainties.

4.2 Development Through Decentralisation

Rural development initiatives and support have largely been a state preoccupation in India with some little involvement of non-governmental organisations. Questions of accountability and equity in situations where development is undertaken by agencies that are external to the beneficiary communities are therefore inevitable. While in principle decentralisation of development should render some degree of accountability in the state sponsored projects, in practice, many rural development programmes in India are not known to possess this vital characteristic. As a result the desire of large numbers of rural population to have a say in development process directed by the state remains largely unfulfilled.

Participation not only increases chances of rural people of benefiting from development programmes but also enables them to influence the process by taking various responsibilities. The general objective should be to achieve democratisation of the transformation of rural society. Clark (1991:16) notes that wider participation in decision making should be the key aspect of a decentralised or democratic structure. Sundaram (1986:2) observes that 'development is not a cluster of benefits "given" to people in need, but rather a process by which a populace acquires a greater mastery over its own destiny.' He notes further that development is not a program executed by the government but a social movement of the entire population though it is often initiated, guided and led by the government.

Collective action is advocated for in the design and execution of programmes to reflect peoples own point of view with relevant inputs from the state and other supportive agencies. Decentralisation does not imply fragmentation since the various actors contribute towards the realisation of a common goal in accordance with their abilities and means. Accountability is another factor which is implied in decentralisation. It means that different actors or agencies involved in the transformation of rural society in India raise certain demands and expect their fulfilment in a mutually reinforcing manner among themselves. For example a village

level worker or a representative of a village at the Block Development Committee is expected to submit to the scrutiny and evaluation of his performance by the community. The community in turn is expected to fulfil its obligations to the leadership by co-operating and performing its responsibilities accordingly.

Sethi (1990:1-7) argues that decentralisation devolves political and economic power outside the formal government machinery. The need for decentralisation is to correct the anomaly in centralised government decisions that do not adequately reflect the various needs and expectations of people in the country. Diversified power and authority enables people to contribute in identifying local needs and deciding the appropriate action to fulfil them. An advantage of decentralisation is that the usual intricacies and complications of government procedures are simplified and adapted to small groups and localities. The impersonal and remote official machinery is thus transformed into a personalised and close instrument of change. For example the details that are overlooked in macro plans and schemes made by the government are considered and scrutinised at a micro level by the beneficiaries.

Centralised authority and bureaucratic structure as applied in India's rural development is associated with massive regulatory mechanisms and policies that promote corruption, and inefficiency. It is therefore a costly type of governance and administration. Even though corruption and inefficiency is not unique to centralised government systems, decentralisation offers numerous alternatives among a number of local organisations to ensure that programmes do not fail in their entirety. Decentralisation provides opportunities for monitoring from diverse centres of decision and control so as to counteract any potential concentration of power. Sethi (1990:6-7) observes that decentralisation should endeavour to ensure that planning from below meets half way all programmes and strategies of planning from above. According to this observation the political decentralisation and planning from below should encourage the mobilisation of local resources by people's institutions in areas hitherto untapped by the fiscal and financial system. People would be inspired to contribute

labour and material resources to build social and productive services especially if their efforts are matched with resources provided by the state.

In summary it can be noted that decentralisation enables a community to incorporate democratic principles in planning and functioning than a centralised system. A strong sense of collective effort is likely to evolve when the social system is anchored on democratic structures so that accountability is established between the leaders and the led. This is evident from the acts of solidarity displayed by rural populations who amidst penury and day-by-day battle for survival, make extreme sacrifices to enable as many people as possible among themselves to have access to the limited resources. A possible explanation could be that the creation of wealth and resources in these circumstances depends largely on collective struggle. It stands in sharp contrast to the conventional idea that voluntary contributions can only be made by the rich from their surpluses.

Clark (1991)argues that there is a repudiation of the notion that the poor need charity and support from the rich and the state, given the evidence that the poor are not passive victims of circumstances but active players in the battles against suffering and injustice. He adds that acts of solidarity and sacrifice among the dispossessed rural people portray genuine motives that are largely absent in official and externally aided projects. These people know the capabilities of their communities and what needs to be done. To sharpen people's own potentials and equip them to enhance their capabilities should be at the core of every development plan.

Despite massive expenditure through official and other external aid programmes, little has been achieved for large parts of rural India, that would compare with the achievements of people's powerful grassroots organisations. Clark (1991) stresses, however, that the voluntary organisations left to themselves can only succeed in creating islands of relative prosperity within a sea of want and dispossession. Thus the projects undertaken by these organisations should not be seen as ends in

themselves but as starting points of change. They should serve as demonstrations, catalysts, and vantage points from where a network of opportunities could be built.

From the above discussion it becomes apparent that development through decentralisation helps transform the orthodoxy that seeks to separate growth from equity and social justice. To a large extent, the quest for decentralisation of development is to enable the people in rural areas to think decide and act in the best possible manner to meet their needs and concerns.

4.3 Local Initiatives and External Intervention in rural Areas

Rural dwellers usually have knowledge of local problems and some ideas about how these can be solved. This knowledge however is rarely appreciated or recognised by those who intervene in the rural situations. In order to have dignified and honourable life, the rural people require motivation and guidance for self improvement and not suppression of their efforts and knowledge.

Voluntary organisations provide the most crucial means for self improvement through effective group action. Collective action is a safeguard against suppression and diffidence that hinders participation of the dispossessed in rural development in India. Local initiatives aimed at improving the living conditions of the people has to be supplemented by a strong legal protection framework and material support from the state and other external agencies.

Sundaram (1986:viii) attributes the special contribution of voluntary agencies in rural reconstruction to inspiring leadership and individualised style of functioning. This contrasts with governmental machinery which lacks individuality and specificity. Compared to official bureaucracies, voluntary organisations are smaller and have flexible structures that make them less inhibitive to change and experimentation with new ideas. Official programmes have limitations in establishing and maintaining direct contacts with the people whose living conditions need to be improved. This mainly arises from the demands of routine administration that have to be addressed

simultaneously with complex development needs. The need to combine state efforts and peoples own initiatives in transforming society according to Sundaram, (1986) arises from the two facts. 'The government has funds at its disposal but suffers from inadequate local knowledge whereas voluntary agencies suffer from paucity of funds, but possess intimate knowledge of local resources, needs and problems hence the need to complement each other.'

In spite of a strong government involvement in rural reconstruction in India and its vast delivery system, it still has a limited reach in extending provisions to every part of the society. This underscores the emphasis on the quantitative dimensions of change that is not matched with the requisite qualitative transformation. Collective action plays a significant role in stimulating development in its multiple dimensions within the rural society and in managing its impact. Such organised response to the needs of rural society should endeavour to correct two anomalies. The first is the idea that development is only possible when communities totally depend on the state and secondly the belief that communities should become as independent of the state as possible.

This justifies the role of voluntary agencies in providing links between communities and the state while changing the social and economic conditions of the rural people. Voluntary agencies operating on the basis of decentralised development decisions and control, help in spurring confidence and competence of local communities in the transformation process.

4.4 Voluntary Agencies in Rural Reconstruction

The importance of genuine and conscious participation of target population derives from their pivotal role in aligning social policies and programmes with community needs. Voluntary groups help correct the defects of the delivery systems of public agencies. According to Sundaram (1986:162), such is evident for example when

health facilities run by private practitioners thrive in rural India in spite of the presence of primary health care centres established by the government.

The structure of voluntary organisations is of special significance in augmenting and facilitating rural reconstruction. Three characteristics in the general structure of voluntary agencies can be used to illustrate their importance. The first relates to their scope of involvement with rural communities, the second deals with the mode of decision making and plan implementation and the third concerns their commitment to the set objectives.

The element of scope of involvement of voluntary agencies' in rural reconstruction focuses on filling the void created by inadequate leadership among the people. By inspiring local leadership, the agencies are able to help rural communities reduce their dependence on external leadership. Their intimate knowledge gained through close interaction with rural communities enables them to address and overcome the local impediments to social, economic and cultural changes in the rural areas. The needs of the deprived and disadvantaged are particularly projected in the programmes designed by voluntary groups in rural areas.

Lack of interest associated with official or government sponsored development is minimised or eliminated through voluntary action and locally guided transformation. Contrary to the notion that development can only occur where self interest is suppressed, voluntary agencies have shown that self interest is important for deeper understanding of local needs, problems and resources of rural communities. According to Sundaram (1986:174), the role of voluntary organisations in increasing involvement of the local people in development can be assessed from their use of day-to-day values and preferences of the people in designing programmes, whether they concern adult education, universal literacy or nutrition. In a similar way voluntary organisations are crucial in mobilising rural dwellers for diverse causes such as increase in wages, regulation of working hours, abolition of degrading practices and institutionalisation of collective bargaining.

The second structural dimension of voluntary organisations that is crucial to rural transformation is the general mode of decision making that they adopt. Unlike in official bureaucracies where several strata impede quick and effective decisions, there are usually few layers between the leadership and the general membership in voluntary agencies. This minimises the distance between those who make decisions and those who implement them. In some cases the executors and planners are also the ultimate beneficiaries of voluntary action and programmes and this reduces the chances of mismatch between plans and their implementation. This can be termed as the benefit of proximity between planners and executors.

Cost benefit assessments in voluntary agencies are also least hindered by elaborate bureaucracy and this is important for mid course corrections. In this manner, there is an allowance for immediate response to contingencies and crises. Evaluations take place concurrently with implementation thereby avoiding the pitfalls of post-mortem diagnosis that cannot help restore the programmes to the right course in case of derailments. They also offer simple and relevant institutional and organisational structures for meeting the needs and aspirations of rural communities.

The third level of advantage due to voluntary organisations' involvement in rural reconstruction pertains to their commitment to plan objectives. Sundaram (1986:182) observes that voluntary agencies provide an alternative delivery system of services and support to the rural populations especially where the government and the official delivery system is inadequate or defective. Quoting from the report of the Planning Commission of 1978, he notes that;

> The general lesson of experience so far is that because of leakages
> in delivery systems and ineffective administration, rural programmes
> fail to improve the distribution of income... Whether the large
> resources will have the desired equalising effect will depend on the
> extent to which the organisation pressure of the beneficiaries
> counteracts the weakness of the administration and the opposition
> of vested interests.

In pursuit of issues of concern to the rural people, voluntary agencies confront discomfort and hardships in order to find solutions to the problems of development unlike in official programmes where there are deliberate attempts to avoid these challenges. Finally the policies and strategies of voluntary agencies are not as susceptible to manipulations and even stoppages with political changes as would be the case with the state sponsored projects.

4.5 Setbacks to Voluntary Organisations.

Voluntary organisations have limitations in rural development that can be categorised as; (i) arising from ,means of resource mobilisation and distribution; (ii) related to linkage and co-ordination with similar organisations and official agencies and (iii) related to leadership and motivation.

(i) In the first case, the state is endowed with the legal machinery and authority to raise resources in a sustained manner through taxation, fines and other penalties, an advantage which voluntary agencies do not have. According to Sundaram (1986:196), the latter have extremely limited capabilities where massive human and financial resources have to be generated and utilised. They are therefore only equipped to operate on a limited, demonstrative and pilot basis. Due to this limitation of voluntary agencies in resource mobilisation and utilisation, the ultimate responsibility for district or block level planning and development is borne by regular administrative machinery. The state agency performs the implementation, co-ordination and regulatory functions in rural reconstruction.

The idea of voluntarism is also eroded by the levels of comforts and advantages some of these agencies offer to their workers in form of salaries, houses and perks. Most of them are attracted by these comforts and are not genuinely concerned with the plight of the deprived. A test of commitment comes with a threat to the perks which usually prompts workers to abandon the organisations and the cause of the

underprivileged. Voluntary organisations also tend to concentrate in areas where there is sufficiently developed infrastructure. Consequently, there is neglect of areas with less developed infrastructure and with little resource endowment. Just distribution of resources and commitment to the needs of the underprivileged is therefore compromised.

Concern with the spread rather than deep penetration of the benefits of projects among the rural people leads voluntary agencies into the trap of statistical fallacies. Numbers of funded projects, seminars held and staff in the field replace tangible evidence of real improvements in social and economic life of the rural people. In some instances voluntary agencies are also affected by the evils of misuse of funds, corruption and inefficiency as in the case of rural co-operatives discussed in chapter three. They are also not free from entanglement in local politics and influences of power centres that is often reflected in the distribution of resources.

Sundaram (1986:209) also observes that too much dependence on external funding is responsible for the 'high mortality' rate among voluntary agencies. When such funds dissipate or are withdrawn before the full implementation of projects, the activities of these agencies are forced to stop. Sometimes the groups pick up alternative activities for which funds are available. The tragedy is that these new activities may not necessarily be relevant to the local needs and conditions and occasionally the voluntary agencies are not competent to undertake them. He notes (1986:211) that external funding agencies such as multinational corporations support only programmes that have direct or indirect benefits to their operations. The conditional support extended through such sponsorship encourages voluntary organisations to give false information or present wrong pictures of rural India in order to maintain the inflow of funds.

Aligned to the dependence on external sources of funding and support is the problem of 'limited project' approach. This ties the activities of voluntary agencies to specific projects approved and mostly determined by the funding agencies. Viewed

against the requirements of rural society in India, this restriction deprives the programmes of the desirable flexibility and choice. A possible conclusion from the above observations is that the motives of charity, service and welfare are not pursued under value neutral conditions. They are generally underpinned by political and other predilections of the voluntary agencies as well as the interests of other external benefactors.

(ii) The second set of drawbacks to voluntary organisations relate to the co-ordination with similar organisations and official agencies. Due to lack of linkage or co-ordination with other voluntary agencies, many such organisations fragment and spread their operations to a wide variety of fields. Their focus and effectiveness is thus reduced. In the same way pressures from competing social, economic and political interests increase structural contradictions and reduce the effectiveness of collective action in transforming the conditions in rural areas.

Ambivalent relations with government and official agencies usually aggravate the inadequacy and uncertainties of inflow of funds and other resources to the voluntary agencies. Antagonisms and frequent conflicts with local political interests detract voluntary agencies from the activities that would help improve the conditions of rural people in India. Sundaram (1986:203) notes that when voluntary organisations succeed where government efforts have failed, then the fear of exposure in poor light may trigger acrimony towards them from the government authorities. Such acrimony is usually exhibited in obstructive controls by the official bureaucracy. Generally subtle but sometimes overt attempts are made to manipulate financial aid to voluntary organisations to favour those that are considered to pose no challenge to the official bureaucracy. The manipulation of the criteria of selection for government financial support significantly affects the voluntary agencies and reduces their capacity to render useful and efficient services to the rural communities in India.

(iii) Leadership and motivation is the third important factor that determines the resilience of voluntary agencies against adversities. The experience of most voluntary

agencies show that they are largely dependent on charismatic leadership and when these fade, especially with the exit of such leaders, their activities halt. Crisis of leadership in rural reconstruction programmes could have a negative impact on community enthusiasm towards projects and is generally reflected in fragmented loyalties or factionalism.

Another leadership problem relates to dependence on persuasion to develop rapport with local populations. Its negative effect is usually the reluctance by leaders to introduce professionalism so as not to alienate the people. Even though persuasion is used to generate rapport it may inadvertently result into side-tracking of professionalism. Voluntary agencies usually may not have the requisite skills and resources to rectify the mistakes. It is important, however, to point out that the failure to motivate people in rural India can be linked to the substitution of enticement for responsibility and involvement. When people are given enticements instead of responsibilities, they quickly lose confidence in the projects particularly when the favours cannot be sustained.

Geographical dislocation is another factor that curtails the effectiveness and reduces the relevance of voluntary agencies. Some of them have their headquarters and operation offices located in urban areas away from the rural people with whom they claim to work. This contradicts their claim of empathy with and intimate knowledge of the rural people and their problems.

Another leadership handicap observed by Sundaram (1986:200) arises from the expansion of spheres of operation both in terms of geographical coverage and the number of projects undertaken by voluntary agencies. This could push them towards institutionalisation and bureaucratisation. The result is a steady diminution of genuine voluntariness. Often it is compounded by inadequate and only symbolic participation by the beneficiaries in the management of voluntary organisations and their negative inclination towards self help programmes sponsored by these agencies.

The structure of many voluntary agencies is such that there is no clear distinction between the workers and the leaders. This denies them the benefit of adequate and effective supervision. Wherever there are clear leadership structures, the positions devolve to the most influential people in the community. In some instances individuals may hold leadership positions in several organisations at the same time. This affects their commitment to the goals of any particular organisation. Leadership problems are aggravated by the vague objectives of some agencies. This impinges on their relevance and effectiveness as instruments of change.

Other destabilising factors in the operations of voluntary organisations arise from their exclusion of particular segments of rural communities by virtue of their project choices. Fertiliser and seed distribution projects for instance presuppose ownership of land, a factor that is negated by the presence of large clusters of landless people in rural India where ironically such schemes exist. Such discrepancies are associated with concentration of decisions in the hands of a few dominant and influential people. Views and concerns of the young, the poor and the uninfluential are overlooked or suppressed. Leaders are often drawn from outside the beneficiary communities in spite of the efforts of voluntary organisations to avoid it. Development of effective local leadership that could counteract the neglect of certain significant views and needs in rural society in India is thus hampered.

The sustained pursuit of goals of rural reconstruction among voluntary agencies is also affected by their inability in many cases to attract and retain qualified people. This exacerbates when there are gross disparities between their pay and those in other services. Finally, by projecting themselves as protectors of the deprived people's interests and hence their 'mouth-piece', voluntary agencies overlook the importance of involving the people in decision making, implementation and evaluation of programmes.

4.6 The Divergence of Paradigms

An illustration of divergence between the conventional and the alternate paradigms of development and reconstruction of rural society in India is based on two distinctive forces. One is the internal or endogenous agency and the other is the external or exogenous agency. A critique of the conventional paradigm is based on its strong advocacy for external agencies to transform rural society in India. This is referred to in this analysis as the 'outsider' inclination. Its main drawback according to Rahman (1994:216-17) is the hierarchical structure that divides society into 'superior' and 'inferior' categories of people. The 'superior' section, he argues, is considered 'qualified' to guide, control and determine the 'inferior' section's development. This accelerates the growth of organised domination. The 'superior' construct knowledge that [is] addressed to and supposed to guide their policy and action towards the 'inferior'. Rahman insists that the generation of knowledge in this paradigm is a specialised professional function that is discharged by prescribed methods which the latter observe from a distance without getting involved.

In contrast, the endogenous paradigm begins by rejecting the notion that development can be 'delivered' from 'above' or from 'outside'. Though external elements may stimulate and facilitate change, forcing local communities towards external standards is the very antithesis of development. Rahman (1994:219) bases his endogenous development argument on the principle that human quality of people is independent of their economic condition and this quality can even shine and inspire under the most trying conditions.

Democratic societies rely on elected representatives to decide and act on behalf of the people. It means that the representatives can and often do determine the fate of entire communities and nations. These representatives are often influenced by the ideas of intellectuals in the field of development and a process is triggered off that does not necessarily coincide with the perceptions of the 'represented' people. The good intentions normally expressed in the intellectual language of development in many

cases fail to grasp the mind of the people who should benefit from the introduced changes. Rahman offers the following explanations for this condition: '....I suggest, also [that] the single most important intellectual error in many otherwise committed efforts towards social change for people's liberation is to seek to indoctrinate the people in a vertical relation with them, and give priority to structural change over liberation of the mind.'

Often a large number of men and women in rural India are neither seen nor heard by the government officials, professionals and other development experts schooled in alien systems. Social and economic development of rural India, however, depends on an adequate understanding of the mind of these millions of people. It is Rahman's contention that the mind represents the living spirit of the people and steers human action. An insight into the people's mind can be obtained therefore through voluntary group activities and their responses to stimuli in the socio-economic environment.

The significance of collective initiatives for local development is that beneath every effort there is an idiom that not only applies to the people's context but also allows for effective communication within the corporate group. Thus the power of the individual to realise certain goals in life is enhanced through collective negotiation and struggle. This contrasts with the popular view in conventional development that is analogous to a vending machine[25] where the outcome is dependent on a fixed combination of inputs. Rahman (1994) describes such a conception of development as the consumerist view, which sets certain consumption standards and tries to influence the culture and aspirations of society to match these standards. A counter view is that human wants are not static and they have to be defined and re-defined continuously in the dynamic context of evolving possibilities of what the people could create for themselves.

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[25] This idea compares with the concept of control orientation advanced by Doug Porter et. al. 1991, p.93.

4.7 From Transgression of Boundaries to Convergence of Paradigms.

From the above discussion it is apparent that exogenously introduced change can only occur in rural society in India at the expense of endogenously determined change. This in a way approximates the argument that externally induced change corresponds with liberal competitive and individualised conception of change in society whereas the revolutionary, endogenously determined change is inspired by collective and altruistic tendencies in society. This necessitates an inference that there is a tendency towards transgression and clash at boundaries leading to value displacement when two opposite forces come into contact with each other. Hence the assumption of incompatibility between exogenous and the endogenous variables in process of rural reconstruction in India.

From the above discussion of collective action and self support through voluntary organisations, there is a broader need for integration between the external and the internal agencies of change. Thus a partnership between the 'insiders' and the 'outsiders' is indispensable. There are distinct benefits to be derived from a synergy of popular movements for people's self advancement and the external support agencies such as the state. For example, wherever voluntary agencies have conducted experiments, adopted new methods and strategies or pioneered in any field of socio-economic transformation, the state has been able to draw some benefits and vice versa.

In most development analyses, the state is vilified as the force of regression and stagnation in rural society. A re-examination of the role of the state in rural reconstruction in India not only reveals a structure with immense powers that invite bids to take over its control and promote private interests, but also genuine efforts to promote national and collective interests. From a different point of view it is only a matter of conjecture that external agencies are incapable of comprehending the realities of rural society and therefore its development needs. It is also important to note that factors of development have to be viewed in a correlative or interactive and not in a displacement perspective. An assumption of independent role of 'outsiders' or

'insiders' would be to overlook the important fact that development cannot take place in political, technical, cultural or administrative vacuum.

To establish a point of convergence between these diverse forces and factors becomes imperative for any holistic analysis of change in rural India. An illustration of this logic of interaction can be drawn from a common interest that overrides individual or separate wills, interests, values and preferences.

Fig. 2 Choice Convergence in Corporate or Collective Action
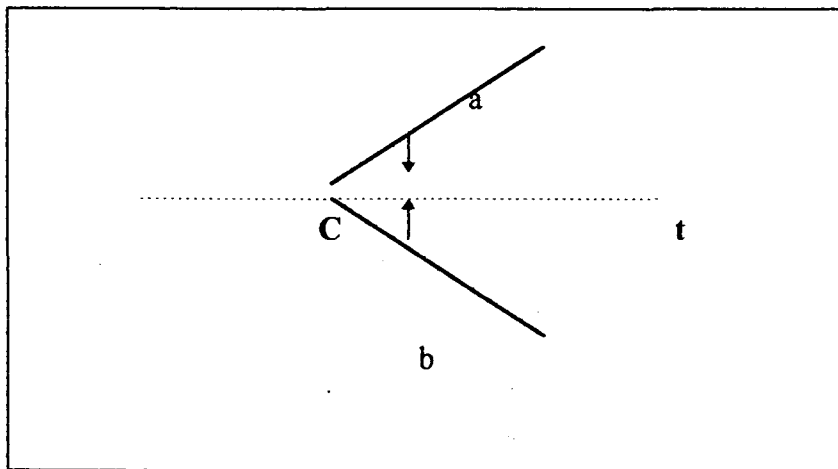
From the figure the lines **a** and **b** represent the correlates of social action and change as typified by a dialectical situation in which members of society either individually or collectively have to exercise choice. This could be a choice between traditional and modern mode of conduct, pursuit of individual or collective interests or the action by internal and external agency in social transformation. C depicts the core institutional structure around which social organisations such as a farmers' co-operative, the Panchayat system or Community Development programmes are formed. The dotted line t represents the line of transcendence which is the basis of corporate action that reinforces the common interest represented by C. It is also the indicator of the direction of change in society at any given moment or situation.

The point of convergence can be located, not at the level of maximum benefits to the largest number of people, but the maximum possible sacrifice or forgone choice in the interest of collective good. Corporate action for example would be made possible at a point of maximum possible chance of decision and control that the external agency is willing to grant the internal agency and vice versa.

As Ramachandran (1990:107) argues, misperceptions about the process of change in society are rooted in the assumed mutual exclusivity between theoretical positions. Assumptions about independence of institutions and individuals in planning and implementation of programmes ignores the possibility of interference and influence between them. A rethinking on development would therefore treat equity and social justice as essentially two dimensions of a wider process of change.

Chapter Five

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The administration of development in rural society in India takes place within a composite empirical situation portraying multiplicity of values, identities, and institutional orders. The idea of transition from one socio-structural order to another as say poverty to affluence, rural to urban or underdevelopment to development still remains firmly entrenched in the lacuna of theoretical opposition. It is this opposition and the means to overcome it that has been addressed in this study. The presence of a wide range of variables in rural India requires that the crucial link between them be established in order to comprehend the nature and trajectories of change.

An analogy can be drawn between rural society in India and a mosaic. Each part represents unique values, wills, experiences and aspirations yet has meaning only when viewed against the totality of the situation comparable to the larger society. In this regard it is submitted that binary opposition as an analytical framework for social transformation in rural India is empirically untenable. An alternative approach is thus identified as structural continuum such that between two extreme positions there are diverse possibilities with the centre representing the point of transition from one structural form to another. This replaces the dichotomous understanding that presents values and commitments in opposing and irreconcilable positions.

Diverse interpretations of social phenomena arise from the different tools and methods adopted to observe and present reality. Such differences of values and plurality of social forms do not nullify the truth presented by any one social paradigm. Fraser and Campolo (1992:295) argue that through the logic of transcendence, the either-or perception of social change is replaced by the both-and perception. It means that the different levels of analysis and interpretations like say between the factual and the normative or the traditional and modern does not suggest complete exclusion or inclusion of aspects of each other. For this matter social change is considered to

include the known and the unknown, the predictable and the unpredictable and also the general and particular elements.

The theoretical treatise on change in society concentrate on one or the other dimension of the process but hardly pay attention to the connections between opposite categories. Instead of interaction between diverse positions, what is exhibited is apparently irreconcilable theoretical standpoints. The synthesis discourse followed in this study is an attempt to establish such a link so as to address the constraints associated with dichotomies which offer only two options in any given scenario. For example change is generally explained as either having a modern or traditional, liberal or hegemonic, and egalitarian or hierarchical orientation. Often it is restricted to the known, predictable and familiar parameters. This leaves out the unfamiliar, the unknown and unpredictable dimensions. A complete picture of such a complex process as rural reconstruction demands that a clear connection be established between these diverse characteristics which are essentially components of the same social systems. The gap in understanding of social processes can be attributed to the limitations of paradigms that present models in opposition to one another. Moore (1965:3) attempts an explanation for such limitations in social understanding:

> Uncertainty and lack of precise predictability arise from the *complexity of dynamic patterns-* that is, from a rather large "error" factor owing to the number of interplay of uncontrolled variables. The difficulty is in some measure intrinsic to the kinds of actions and events, of patterns and their alterations, with which we are dealing, for all science deals with standardised interrelations, with recurrent sequences and has only a limited capacity to predict unique combinations and events.

The first step towards evolving a new perspective of rural reconstruction in India is to challenge the existing assumption that all variables are related in a cause-effect structure and can be controlled in a predictable manner to achieve desired objectives. Considering the emphasis on dichotomy and the inherent conflicts and contradictions in rural reconstruction efforts, special attention has been given to cross-factor analysis in this study. The idea of a continuum is utilised to show that a social

system can be understood in terms of increasing or decreasing complexity and varying structural levels. Given the possibilities of co-existence of characteristics attributed to different structural categories, discontinuities can be located not in cultural types but in socio-structural order as discussed in chapter one. Taking the example of the interplay between the micro and macro variables, it is argued that, far from contrasting between 'an insect's eye-view' and 'a bird's eye-view', the focus should be on a dialectical rather than dichotomous analytical framework.

The use of duality that is so entrenched in social analyses is known to highlight one side and downgrade the other side of the duality. It has been pointed out, for instance, that the secular is contrasted with the sacred, the private with the social and material with the spiritual. Closer to this bifurcation, is the use of method of comparison and contrast to qualify or disqualify ideas and values which often results into the adoption of reverse processes when making decisions on social change. For example, where hitherto decisions have been handed down to the people from high administrative levels, change is considered to imply completely reversing the direction of flow of decisions. Another consequence of dichotomous approach to change is that social justice is assumed to be tenable when competition is restricted or stopped. The aggregate social conditions such as egalitarianism, universal socialism or capitalism and liberalism proposed in these theories stress on attributes but not relations between 'opposite' qualities and values. Guy Berger (1992) has drawn attention to the futility of seeking grand and universal theories of development that would cover all modes of production and embrace all possibilities of human relations. When social categories are treated as mutually exclusive, it is for example not highlighted that modernisation does not necessarily result into obliteration of tradition. In the same way, it is recognised that a good strategy of development would not deny genuine and legitimate private interests in favour of collective interests. Ideally, the collective and individual interests should be mutually reinforcing. Collective interests usually surpass the whims and manipulations of individual interests yet remain relevant to each member that

constitutes that whole. Competing interests do not reduce the importance of these needs to the individual. The collective interests are represented by the choices and preferences expressed in institutional set-ups. As argued above, contrary to the notion that development can only take place when self interest is suppressed, voluntary agencies have shown that self interest is important for deeper understanding of local needs, problems and resources of rural communities.

A challenge is also directed to the assumption that rural communities either have wrong ideas or lack them altogether and that their poor conditions can only be altered by injecting correct knowledge or expunging from them old and incorrect ideas. This argument provides the basis of paternalism in development practice and easily leads into the trap of 'interventionism'. Rural communities are treated as empty slates lacking both adequate knowledge of development and proper aspirations. Logically, systems of knowledge are altered in the course of development but the contention arises from the tendency to supplant programmes and ideas into rural communities without proper orientation to the local knowledge systems. This vending machine approach so common in conventional development projects, treats the outcome of reconstruction as dependent on a fixed combination of inputs and confuses transfer with transformation.

Having examined the shortcomings of dualism and dichotomies, attention has equally been directed to the fundamental principles of change that need to be highlighted. The fundamental principles referred to in this study relates to the dynamics of the core institutional structure in a given community or society. This pertains more specifically to the underlying basis of persistence and regularity in social systems. Moore (1965:6) notes the significance of such underlying principles or static propositions in describing and analysing social change. Such static propositions give an insight into the possible trajectories of change since it entails detecting orderly properties in the transformations of behaviour patterns or social structures.

From this study it has been found that the basic static proposition indicates that the core institutional structure must undergo a transformation for any significant change to take place in rural society in India. For example 'detribalisation' takes place when there is an intrusion by non-tribal people and culture into the tribal zones. Where the core institutional structure is the mode of production then the Weberian definition given in chapter two above comes back to mind. Thus a phenomenon is economic only insofar as and only as long as *our interest* is exclusively focused on its constitutive significance in the material struggle for existence. This gives a clear indication of wide variation in value and significance of phenomenon, economic or otherwise, under different circumstances. One readily realises that economic variables as used here cover far wider domains than simply their instrumental or material value. Thus the acquisition, distribution and use of material requisites of life becomes an important factor in the investigation of change and transformation in rural India. The location of any social actor within a given structure is undoubtedly linked to the extent of access and control of the material requisites of life. This focus on the instrumental dimensions of economic phenomena does not preclude their expressive or social attributes. This argument is in consonance with Guy Berger's (1992:18) assertion that while development is an economic concern, its explanation needs to be more broadly social. It follows that even though rural communities may want to base their decisions and choices on utility, calculation, and scientific rationality, they cannot ignore customs, beliefs and traditions. Social decisions are based as much on rational ideas as on emotions, and influenced by sacred as by secular ideas.

Since most scientific analyses of society express simple static relationships that give a more or less photographic or cross-sectional view of phenomena, it is submitted that a combination of the static and dynamic perspectives is necessary to comprehend complex social processes. The static perceptions are suited to controlled, experimental conditions but cannot adequately explain most forms of natural relationships and occurrences. Programmes of transformation based on diametric opposition between

agencies, values and interests tend to focus on homogenisation and uniformity of social systems. The objectives of transformation are set in terms of achieving regular patterns of interaction and behaviour. The movement towards similar attributes and interests seem to be the ultimate solution to social and economic limitations and deprivations.

Given that complete and total displacement of identities, interests, values, and wills is not ordinarily feasible in society, an exploration has been made in this study to identify and explain the interrelations between opposed social phenomena. It is maintained that in rural reconstruction in India the various factors involved would have considerable autonomy and independent variability. These can hardly be represented accurately through aggregated or generalised concepts. The composite discourse employed in this study suggests that a context specific social-prism can be derived so as to project the diverse spectra of human values, needs and aspirations at a common point such as that which triggers corporate action. Hence the cross factor approach would be an appropriate strategy in rural reconstruction efforts in India as a means of resolving contradictions and conflicts in empirical situations and addressing dichotomies in the methods of understanding.

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