

DR. AMBEDKAR'S THOUGHTS AND STRATEGY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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The present paper is an attempt to review the strategy of development in India in the light of the thoughts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

The paper is divided into three sections. First section takes a note of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's thoughts on development from his writings and speeches. In the second section the strategy of rural development in India is briefly reviewed. In the last section some suggestions are made to reformulate the strategy of rural development in the light of Dr. Ambedkar's views.

I

DR. AMBEDKAR'S THOUGHTS ON DEVELOPMENT

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's notion of development can be understood by analysing his views about socio-economic transformation of Indian society. He suggested a number of reforms to initiate the process of transformation in the structure of Indian society. These reforms can be broadly classified into two categories: (a) Reforms at the level of religious and customary sanctions behind the evils of caste and untouchability, and (b) at the practical level (Bharill 1977: 202).

(a) Reforms at the level of Religious and Customary sanctions behind Caste System and Untouchability.

Dr. Ambedkar was very critical of Hindu caste system and advocated for the abolition of castes and sub-castes from Indian society. In his view, the caste system had been responsible for the underdevelopment of a large section of population in Indian society and is the cause of the problems like untouchability and poverty (Ambedkar, 1946). He traced back the literature of ancient Vedic period and after (Ambedkar, 1946: 1948) and reached to the conclusion that the economic disabilities of untouchables were originated from the laws of *Manu-Smriti* which restricted equality of opportunity for certain sections of Indian society and converted Indian social stratification system into a closed system.

which social, economic and political mobility was highly restricted. Therefore, the first and foremost reform that came to Ambedkar's mind was the abolition of caste. He examined the suggestions already forwarded by others. He refuted the idea of abolition of sub-castes for abolishing castes because instead of abolishing castes it may turn castes into more powerful and mischievous (Ambedkar 1944 : 96). Similar views were also expressed by Ghurye (1969 : 406). He also refuted the strategy of allowing inter-dining for abolition of castes because according to him "there are many castes which allow inter-dining. But, it is a common experience that inter-dining has not succeeded in killing the spirit of caste and the consciousness of caste" (Ambedkar 1944 : 57). But he strongly advocated the idea of inter-marriage to abolish castes. In his view the real remedy lies in inter-marriages. In his opinion only fusion of blood can create a feeling of being kith and kin, and it may vanish the feeling of being aliens created by caste. In his own words, "where society is already well-knit by other ties, marriage is an ordinary incident of life. But where society is cut as under, marriage as a binding force becomes a matter of urgent necessity" (Ambedkar 1944 : 57). Therefore his contention was that the real remedy for the breaking of the caste is inter-marriage. Inter dining could only supplement it. But it was very difficult to attain this goal because inter-dining and inter-marriage are repugnant to the beliefs and dogmas which the Hindus regard sacred. Therefore the real problem lies in the religion rather than caste. He emphasized on the need of destroying the religious texts of Hindus, which gave sanction to the evil caste and untouchability.

Thus, in Ambedkar's view the caste system and religious sanctions of the Hinduism are mainly responsible for the evil of untouchability. In order to eradicate it mere abolition of sub-caste is not sufficient nor inter-dining can remove this phenomenon. Inter-caste marriages is the only solution of this problem but he was aware that religious ideology supports caste system; therefore, he rejected shastras (religious books) and suggested that these must be destroyed.

(b) Reforms at the Practical Level.

Ambedkar's scheme of reforms at the practical level was formulated after analysing in detail the various facts of the problem of untouchability and he had reached to the conclusion that since the high caste Hindus had nothing to gain but much to lose by the abolition of caste and untouchability, his reforms related to caste system would not be supported by these sections of the society. Therefore, after very careful consideration he adopted another strategy towards his goal. He stated that "the depressed classed think that the surest way of their elevation lies in higher employment and better ways of earning a living. Once they become well placed in the scheme of social life, they would become respectable and once they become respectable, the religious outlook of the orthodox is sure to undergo change

and if this did not happen it could do no injury to their material interest (Ambedkar 1945 : 110). He suggested a three-fold scheme of reforms which can be divided under social, political and economic heads.

At the social level, he considered education, organization and agitation as three main tools for the social upliftment of the depressed classes and used these three words as a slogan of his movement. His views about the words may now be discussed briefly.

Education: Ambedkar believed that the mental lethargy, the recoiliation with suppression and satisfaction from the present among the depressed classed could only be shaken off when they were given education. Education would open a window for them as to how the world was progressing and how backward they were. In his view this state of the depressed classes is because of two reasons, namely, lack of knowledge and lack of power. To procure knowledge education is necessary. He was quite aware about the fact that the education may only serve as a means of achieving social justice if it is applied to the lower strata of the Indian society. It would raise their spirit of rebellion. They were supporting the caste system because of their ignorance. Ambedkar was confident that once the eyes were opened they would be ready to fight the caste system. He pointed out the fault of the then policy that though education was being given on a large scale it was not given to the right strata of Indian society. If education is given to that strata of Indian society which has a vested interest in maintaining the caste system for the advantages it gives them, the caste system will be strengthened. On the other, if education is given to the lower strata of Indian society which is interested in blowing up the caste system, the caste system, will be blown up" (Bharill 1977 : 215-16). Therefore, from his perspective, education was foremost need of the depressed class. Keeping this idea in mind, he demanded a certain percentage of seats in schools, colleges and public offices to be reserved for the untouchable. Later on when on 29 August 1947, the Constituent Assembly appointed him as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee he tried his best to protect the interests of the depressed classes in the Constitution of India.

Organisation: Ambedkar tried to organise the untouchables to agitate against the social evils like caste and untouchability. He made some serious efforts in this direction under the banner of *Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha*. The objectives and aims of the Sabha were declared in a nutshell - "Educate, agitate and organise". He also published his weekly the "*Mook Nayak*" as the "*Bahishkrit Bharat*" in order to popularize the issue of abolition of untouchability and to awake public conscience.

Ambedkar also established a political party by the name of Independent Labour Party on 15th August 1936 which was joined by his colleagues and followers.

Agitation: Ambedkar not only made serious efforts to organise the depressed classes but side by side he also continued agitation which included a number of activities ranging from *Satyagraha*, to submitting memoranda, appeals, letters interviews, delegations and the like. He considered *Satyagraha* as most effective form of agitation.

At the political level, Ambedkar also suggested a number of measures for the development of the depressed classes. It includes adequate representation in the government services, their representation in the State Assemblies and Parliament through constitutional provisions. He also emphasized on the need of establishing separate settlements for the scheduled castes.

Ambedkar's scheme of reform in the economic sphere included his ideas about small land holdings, rural industrialization and his conception of state socialism. In fact the loss of economic power created a situation of helplessness for these castes against the twice-born castes of Hindu social system and their exploitation at every level pushed them back to the status of downtrodden class. Therefore, in Ambedkar's view gain of economic power is an essential condition for the progress of the under-privileged classes of the society (Ambedkar 1946 : 45-51). He visualized better prospects for untouchables when they became economically better off with adequate political power in their hands.

Ambedkar considered farming as the most important industry of India. He had written a paper entitled "Small Holdings in India and their Remedies". In this paper, he examined the problem of small land holdings in India and their remedies. The major problem in this regard was that out of the vastness of land under tillage, so little land was cultivated in proportion to India's population. Thus, a large part of agricultural population was idle, superfluous and exerted a great pressure on land. This pressure was the chief cause of the sub-division of land resulting in small holding, and the accruing inefficiency of Indian agriculture. Another factor responsible for this feature was the law of inheritance amongst the Hindus and Muslims.

He emphasized on the need of industrialization of India and he considered it as a universal remedy for the economic ill of the depressed classes. In his own words, "If we succeed in spurring off the idle labour in non-agricultural channels of production, we will at one stroke lessen the pressure and destroy the premium that at present weighs heavily on land in India. Besides, this labour when productivity employed will cease to live by predation as it does today, and not only earn its keep but will give us surplus and more surplus is more capital. In short, strange though it may seem, industrialization of India is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problems of India and also, it is evident, of the untouchable landless labourers" (Ambedkar 1918 : 19). His argument for the industrialization of India was perhaps influenced by convergence theory of development which claims

that "the process of industrialization produces common and uniform political, social and cultural characteristics in societies which prior to industrialization, may have different historical backgrounds and social structures (Nicholas et al. 1984 : 53).

Ambedkar advocated for the ideal of state socialism in order to achieve the goal of industrialization. His firm belief was that only state socialism rather than private enterprise could ensure rapid industrialization of India. He was not very hopeful about the results of tenancy legislation or consolidation of holdings because most of the untouchables were landless labourers. Therefore, the land reforms would be more beneficial for the upper and middle order of castes while depressed classes (untouchables and Shudras) would remain downtrodden. He had drawn up a complete plan of the type of state socialism he desired for India and incorporated it in the memorandum he submitted to the Constituent Assembly in 1947 (Ambedkar 1947: 14-16).

In brief, Ambedkar's notion of development may be said two folded. On the one hand he wanted to modernize the illiterate masses through the process of education which may inculcate in them rational scientific values so that their ignorance can be removed. This will also help in removing constraints created by religious ideology and caste system. On the other hand, he was in favour of rapid industrialization of the country so that surplus labour from agriculture sector may be transferred to industrial and service sectors. In his view land reforms may not be proved much effective until there is a redistribution of land in favour of the depressed classes. Thus, he emphasized on cultural modernization and industrialization of the Indian society in his strategy of development which has been a dominant theory of development in the social sciences.

II

STRATEGY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

After independence one of the major tasks before the independent national government was to formulate and execute the plans for restructuring the Indian society. The immediate step in this direction came with the abolition of the instruments of exploitation like Zamindari and Rayatwari land tenure systems which had been responsible for the collapse of the Indian economy. In the First Five Year Plan (1952) the laws regarding tenancy right and ceiling of land holdings were implemented. This enabled the tenants to get back their land from the clutches of rentiers. The other major steps for restructuring the rural community were the innovations of Community Development Programme, Panchayati Raj and rural co-operatives. Moreover, social movements like Bhoodan and Gramdan were launched by eminent social reformers like Vinoba and Jai Prakash Narain.

1. Community Development Programme

The community development programme introduced in 1952 was an attempt at a systematic and integrated rural development in the country. The basic objective of the programme was to serve the rural people and to reach as large number of them as possible. The programme put into operation the concept of making a multi-purpose functionary responsible for all rural development programmes at the grass root level so that it can meet the needs of the rural households. Thus, for the first time, the office of the village level worker (VLW) supported at the block level by a team of various subject matter specialist was introduced and the community development block was made a unit of planning and development. For all the rural development programmes at the block level and for the block level functionaries, the Block Development Officer was supposed to act as a coordinator. By the end of Second Five Year Plan every village in India was brought under this scheme, the major items included in this programme were related with the following eight categories: (1) Agriculture and related matters, (2) Communications, (3) Education, (4) Health, (5) Training, (6) Social Welfare, (7) Employment, and (8) Housing. The programmes adopted to cover these items may be classified into following four categories: (a) Constructional programmes (include roads, culverts, drains, pavements, school buildings, community centres, dispensary, houses for poor villagers and drinking water sources); (b) Irrigation schemes (wells, pumping sets, tube wells and tanks); (c) Agricultural programmes and (d) Institutional and other programmes (Youth Club, Women's organizations, Community centres, etc.) (Desai, A.R., 1978 : 613).

The impact of the community development programmes has been a subject of analysis and evaluation for a number of social scientists (Dube, 1958; Carl Taylor, 1958 and Oscar Lewis, 1958). They have attempted to assess the nature of the impact of this programme on the life of the rural people. The major weaknesses of the programme as pointed out by Carl Taylor are as follows:

- (1) The Government machinery had not assimilated the true spirit underlying the entire programme. The programme was operated more as an executive assignment. The administration of the programme was predominantly based on aid from and reliance on the government. The involvement of the people in the programme was lacking.
- (2) The government machinery relied more on propaganda and spectacular results rather than on group work and voluntary creative participation of the village people.
- (3) The advantages of the improvement were taken by the large cultivators while the small peasants, artisans and agricultural labourers could not get much from the programme. As a result, the programme widened the gulf between the rich and the poor cultivators. It made artisans

and agricultural labourers relatively more handicapped than the cultivators and therefore created greater inequality in the rural community.

Thus, the community development programme could not bridge the gap between the rich and the poor but conversely it widened the gap between the rich and poor sections of the village community.

2. Panchayati Raj

The rationale of introducing Panchayati Raj was to create elected and organically linked democratic institutions at the village, block and district levels and entrust them with all the planning and development activities. It was intended to make community development programme a people's programme with government's participation. In 1957, the Team for the study of Community Projects and National Extension Service, popularly known as the Balvantrai Mehta Committee, was appointed to suggest measures to correct the drawbacks in implementation. The Committee recommended as a way out the formation of a hierarchic three-tier system of rural local government to be called 'Panchayati Raj'. The three-tiers are the gram panchayat at the village level, panchayat samiti at the intermediate level, and Zila parishad at the district level. At the village level, all States decided to have direct elections to the village panchayat, but at the intermediate and the district level variations have been found in their organization. "The power of these bodies varied from state to state as a consequence of the structural and operational variations in the pattern of panchayati raj institutions" (Maheshwari 1985 : 53).

In three tier system of panchayati raj, the real locus of political power is at the middle tier i.e., with the Samiti President. He is the key figure in the whole set up. He can easily influence the authorities at the block and the district levels. Gray (1978 : 537) observed that "they (samitis) consist almost entirely of members of the dominant land owning castes, whatever the political affiliations of the members concerned. More (high) caste, more land, more money, more education are still the requisites for political success. Thus the Panchayati Raj institution also became the instrument of getting various advantages from the development programmes for the land owning and high caste people of the villages. But one of the positive sides of the Panchayati raj was that it initiated democratic processes at the grass-root level in the form of elections and the villagers come to realise that they have a vote for use and that it is something which has a value because it represents a choice. Thus the aim of decentralising political power at the grass root level was partially achieved but the twin aims of arousing popular enthusiasm for rural development has been less successful. The problem of ensuring people's participation in decision making processes and developmental activities is still a vital issue. The dominance of land owning castes in social and political life has been a major obstacle in the process of rural development

3. The Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP)

In 1950's agricultural yields were very low and it became apparent that agricultural production was not increasing quickly as was expected. On the other hand, pressure of population was increasing at a much faster rate. The country was thus compelled to feed its population by import of foodgrains. In 1959 India invited a team of American experts to suggest the strategy for an immediate augmentation of agricultural production. The accepted recommendations were packed into what came to be known as the intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) which went into action in 1960. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) incorporated the IADP and observed that this programme was to be taken up in one district in each State. Its purpose was to contribute both to a rapid increase in agricultural production in selected areas and to suggest new innovations and combination of practices which could be of value elsewhere (Govt. of India, 1961 : 316). The IADP was designed as a pace setting programme which would demonstrate how to augment production more rapidly and as a path-finding experimental programme which would develop innovations, fresh ideas and procedures for wider adaptations in agricultural development (Maheshwari, 1985 : 73).

In 1964, the concept of IADP was extended to other districts under the nomenclature of the Intensive Agricultural Areas Programme (IAAP). Although, this new programme followed the concept of IADP but its staffing pattern was reduced in intensity. Moreover, certain facilities like soil testing laboratories, workshops and investments were also lacking at the field level. The centrally laid down criteria for the selection of the districts were not met in full, even though IADP was launched in some of the best districts in the country. The selection process often was inspired by ascriptive criteria. As the programme entailed heavy public spending, politicians actively lobbied for the inclusion of their constituencies. Politics emerged as a variable of significance in the selection of districts. It was again, primarily under political pressure that the somewhat diluted IAAP was put into operation (Maheshwari 1985 : 75).

Thus, initially IADP and IAAP both had shown little sign of achieving their principal target of augmentation of agricultural production. The food problem in the country became more severe as a result of continuous drought from 1964 to 1967. In 1964, India imported as much as 10 million tonnes of foodgrains from the USA. In such a difficult situation the IADP was linked to the New Agricultural Strategy (NAS). This was a well-synchronised package programme involving action at many levels and sectors of activities. The programme made serious efforts to generate the farmer's own interest in agriculture by means of the promising him an incentive or a remunerative price for his produce. In order to control the market forces, institutions like Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Warehousing Corporation were set up to buy grain at the officially announced price and to storage it respectively. The programme was well supported by the institutions of

Agricultural research centres like Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), and Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI). Agricultural Universities began to set up and they were made responsible for education, training and research in agricultural sciences. In order to meet the problems of developing high yield variety seeds suitable to Indian conditions and to regularise the supply of these new varieties institutions like National Seed Corporation (NSC) and State Farm Corporation (SFC) were set up in 1966. Simultaneously arrangements were made for the irrigation and supply of the fertilizers. The New Agricultural Strategy was put into operation in 1966 and as a consequence, the IADP got a shot in the arm, as it was equated with the success of the strategy. The 'Green Revolution' was the result of dissemination of the new technology in the field of agriculture.

The organisational set up employed for IADP was of the Community Development Programme. However, there were certain additional organisational and personnel inputs which were made available for the implementation of the programme. The project personnel including the district collector, were made responsible as they were to be appointed for a five year term and their promotion was to be based on the successful handling of their part of the programme. This was one of the features of this programme which may have a number of implications for the success of other rural development programmes in a developing society.

The IADP accompanied by the introduction of new Technology in agriculture had disrupted the traditional rural socio-economic structure. The benefits of the programme were received mainly by those farmers having commendable size of the land and other material resources and left small and marginal farmers completely unaffected if not worse off. But India's options at this point of time were extremely limited. This aroused a concern for the marginal man and in the process, the Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA) was born.

4. Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers' and Agricultural Labourers Agency (MFAL)

The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) expressed concern for both sub-marginal farmers and agricultural labourers and emphasized on creating supplementary occupations and other employment opportunities for them as a vast section of the rural society was adversely affected from the Green Revolution. The schemes to improve the condition of small and 'Sub-marginal' farmers were sanctioned during 1970-71 but in most cases the programmes began to be implemented during 1971-72. In order to administer the programmes two new agencies-the Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA) and the Marginal Farmers' Development Agency (MFAL) were set up as corporate and autonomous bodies to work at the district level.

The basic objective of the agencies was to raise the earning capacity of the target groups through various programmes related to the improve-

ment in agriculture, subsidiary occupations etc. The focus of SFDA was directed towards intensive farming which MFAL emphasized on the provision of subsidiary occupations and other employment generating programmes. These schemes were to be prepared in co-ordination with technical departments of the State Government.

The SFDA was an agency whose main function was to serve as a catalyst and to provide subsidies to small and marginal farmers on their institutional borrowings for agricultural activities.

The projects mainly emphasized on crop husbandry (it includes intensive agriculture, multiple cropping, introduction of HYV, horticulture, development of minor irrigation, soil conservation, land shaping and land development) with an emphasis on the adoption of dry framing practices and water harvesting methods in rain fed areas. Subsidiary occupations like mild production, poultry, piggery, and goat and sheep rearing were also under taken by the agencies.

In June 1974, the distinction between the two agencies was abolished and a single agency of SFDA-MFAL came into existence. The agency was set up in selected districts. Its organisational structure consisted of a governing body with a small executive staff headed by the district head. Its members were the heads of sectoral department which were closely concerned with its programmes. The financial institutions like the Land Development Bank, Central Co-operative Bank and Zila Parishad were also represented along with some non-officials. The major functions of the governing board were (a) to prepare the project report, (b) to formulate detailed schemes for the benefit of the target groups and execution of these schemes with the help of sectoral departments and (c) to serve as a platform where the problem faced in the execution of the schemes could be discussed and solutions devised. At the State level, SFDA-MFAL functioned under the overall control and supervision of a State Level Coordination and Review Committee which consisted of senior officers of departments, closely connected with the activities and programmes of agency.

But due to bureaucratic bottlenecks and lack of sufficient credit facilities the programme could not do much for the upliftment of the small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. Moreover, fallacies in identification of beneficiaries and delays in release of subsidiary and loan facilities have also been major drawbacks of the programme.

5. Integrated Approach to Rural Development

In mid-seventies, a more comprehensive strategy envisaging direct attack on poverty was adopted which was basically different from the earlier approach to rural development - the 'integrated rural development' approach as against the 'sectoral development approach'. The sectoral development approach tends to divide development into departmental activities and

responsibility for development are perceived as administrative responsibilities. But the integrated approach to rural development emphasises on spatial development. In the sense, that it concentrates on the development of a given area not the development of a sector. As its major thrust is the development of a given area, the development programmes are based on development of local resources and based on local needs, local aspirations and local potential. Moreover, it gives more emphasis on micro-level planning rather than centralized macro level planning at the national and the state levels. Thus, the integrated rural development launched in 1979 tended to decentralize the development planning at the district and block levels. Apart from its emphasis on the area development, it also concentrates on certain target groups i.e., poor sections of the society. Thus, integrated rural development has two major components: (a) area development and (b) beneficiary oriented programmes. The Programmes in the first category have mainly focussed on development of infrastructure and local resources. It includes Minimum Needs Programme (MNPI), Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Hill Area Development Agency (HADA), Integrated Tribal Area Development Programme (ITDP) and Desert Area Development Programme (DADP). While the programmes of the second category aim at reaching benefits to the poor directly by creating productive assets for them. Presently it includes Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) with its components TRYSEM and DWCRA and Jawahar Rojgar Yojna (JRY) and other state sponsored programmes of similar nature.

INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: IRDP represents a combination of schemes in different sectors of rural economy such as crop production and minor irrigation in agriculture, animal husbandry, development of women and children, social forestry and a number of self-employment programmes in secondary and tertiary sectors through Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment (TRYSEM) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Area (DWCRA) and developing industry, service and business activities in rural areas. IRDP is essentially an anti-poverty programme aimed at increasing the productivity and income of weaker sections of rural population which constitute the target group of the programme. The major emphasis is on raising employment, output and income of selected individual households. Since the approach under IRDP is to assist the poorest of the poor first, the assistance is given to the rural families of target group having annual income below the cut off line of Rs. 4,800/-. Families with an annual income upto Rs. 3,500 are assisted first. The families in Rs. 3,501-4,800 income bracket in a given gram panchayat have to be assisted only after the coverage of the families having annual income upto Rs. 3,500/-. The target group consists of small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and rural artisans etc. whose annual family income is below the "cut off" line (Govt. of India 1991 : 5-6). The programme has provided special safeguards for SC and ST (at least 50%), women (at least 40%) and physically handicapped (40%).

JAWAHAR ROJGAR YOJNA (JRY): In the year 1989-90 an intensive wage employment scheme named as Jawahar Rojgar Yojna (JRY) was introduced which later also merged the earlier schemes of wage employment namely National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). The expenditure under this programme is shared between the centre and the state on 80:20 basis in contrast to 50:50 basis of NREP and 100 per cent central assistance of RLEGP. The programme expects to provide fuller employment opportunities to at least one member of each family living below the poverty line. The primary objective of the programme is to generate additional gainful employment for the unemployed and under employed persons both men and women in the rural areas. The secondary objectives of the programme are the creation of productive community assets for direct and continuing benefits to the poverty groups and to improve the quality of life in the rural area. The target group of the Yojna are the people below the poverty line. But the preference would be given to SC, ST and women. The works can be taken up for execution under this Yojna during any part of the year whenever the need for generating employment is felt.

The most ambitious programme IRDP has been the subject of criticism among the social scientists on a number of grounds. Rath (1985) criticised IRDP on the basis of the following grounds: (1) IRDP is not an integrated programme in the real sense of the term as it does not integrate resources based on sectoral planning with household based planning. It is merely a household based plan whose main focus is on identification of the rural poor and preparing a plan for these individual beneficiaries; (2) The Antyodaya approach of IRDP which aims at giving self-employment to the poorest households of rural society is not a realistic approach as these households are the least capable of taking up self-employment. Most of these households are of the aged and the handicapped or of the poor who have little enterprise or risk-bearing capacity. Studies of IRDP have shown that these households have faced the worst in various schemes; (3) The subsidy element of IRDP has encouraged corruption in rural areas and has raised indebtedness of the poor in many cases; (4) Gains of IRDP have not percolated to the lowest levels as a very low percentage of beneficiaries (hardly 18.7 per cent) have crossed the poverty line; (5) Our economy does not have enough assets for distribution to the poor under IRDP. Consequently many times assets with very low productivity were given to the poor under the programme. This not only does not help the poor, but it positively harms them.

On the above grounds Rath (1985) concludes that "the strategy of IRDP is largely misconceived. In fact, it is capable to help only a very small number of people. Putting more burden on this approach will discredit the line of attack, generate wastage corruption and ultimately cynicism. In a multipronged attack on poverty this approach surely has a legitimate place,

but it can not be the mainstay of such a programme" (Rath 1985 : 245). Therefore, he emphasized on concentration massively on wage employment generation rather than self employment programme. Hirway (1985) agreed with Rath on most of his grounds and distinguished between two categories of the poor (1) those who have at least some asset or have some skill, education or enterprise to take up self-employment, and (2) those who neither possess any asset nor have any skill or enterprise, education, etc. to take up any activity independently. She is of the view that the former category should be given assets for self-employment while the latter should be offered wage-employment. These categories should be treated separately by suitable policy measure. But unfortunately, IRDP clubs both the categories in one and expects even the second category (in fact gives them top priority by using Antyodaya approach) to take up self-employment. IRDP in her view, over-emphasised self-employment as a measure for poverty-alleviation but on the other hand, Rath under-emphasised the need of the self-employment. She warned that over-emphasis on wage-employment may also produce similar results. Because the problems of non-percolation and corruption are originated from our socio-economic structure. These problems can not be checked without bringing desired structural changes. Thus, the strategy, of rural development should be such which can generate gradual structural changes in socio-economic fabric of our society.

In fact, the interference of political leaders at micro level planning of the programme is not fruitful but most harmful (Hirway, 1978). The major weakness of our rural development strategy has been the adhocism which prevails in the micro level planning of the programmes (Maithani and Singh 1987 ; Singh 1992; Singh 1993). The problems of political pressure and corruption can be minimised by strengthening the planning component of our programme. In fact district level and block level agencies are not well equipped with the personnels who have been trained in rural development planning. No effort is made to develop a cadre service in rural development administration. Most of the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA) are left in the hands of the officers deputed from the sectoral departments. Because of their affiliation to the parent department they are not interested in learning the basics of rural development planning because they think that after 2-3 years they will be called back in their parent department and this training would not be useful there. Moreover they also bring with them the culture of their parent departments which does not suit with the spirit of the rural development programmes.

III

The review of the strategy of rural development in post independence India suggests the major weaknesses of our rural development programmes have been lack of political will on the part of our political leaders to initiate measures for structural changes in the social and economic fabric of the

society. The strategy of rural development has been based on improvement approach rather than transformation approach which put emphasis on the redistribution of land in favour of depressed classes and a socialistic form of agriculture with rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of the rural society. Another weakness of rural development in India has been the problem of rampant corruption in the bureaucratic set up which has been institutionalised in our society. In the state of weak planning component the chances of political interferences and corrupt practices in rural development planning implementation increases. Moreover, there is lack of trained personnels at District and block levels who can undertake the difficult task of rural development.

In the light of Dr. Ambedkar's views on development, it can be said that in post-independence period our strategy of rural development has been suffered with a kind of adhocism. We have not made any serious attempt to modernize our rural population particularly weaker section through massive programme of education which could have been the first and foremost task after independence. Even after more than four decades our half of the population is illiterate. Naturally, most of the illiterate [Organisation] persons would be from the depressed classes. Without rational and scientific education the cultural backwardness and vicious circle of caste system can not be broken down. Secondly, our rural development plans hardly made efforts for rapid industrialization of the rural areas. We have been giving more emphasis on the development of agriculture and allied activities rather than agro-based rural industries. The programmes like IRDP not only fell through to eradicate the poverty from rural areas but also led towards corruption and cynicism.

The strategy of rural development in India may be reformulated in the light of following suggestions: (1) There must be serious effort to educate the rural population of the country at war level. There is a need to reformulate National Education Policy for this purpose. The education of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should be on the top priority; (2) As an immediate step to tackle the problem of rural poverty more emphasis must be given on wage employment programme rather than self-employment programme; (3) A service cadre in rural development administration must be developed in due course of time; (4) The planning component must be strengthened in rural development programme. The personnels engaged in the task of rural development should be well-trained; (5) The non-government agencies of high reputation should be involved in the planning and implementation of the rural development programmes at different levels; (6) The process of industrialization (at small scale) in rural areas should be initiated at a faster pace so that the pressure on land can be decreased and more and more population can be shifted to industrial and service sectors.

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PEASANTRY AS A CLASS: SOME QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

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The peasant question has been attempted from a variety of angles in various disciplines. In a sense it could be said that now the status of research on peasant is multidisciplinary in nature. The richness of literature on peasant question on the one hand makes it a more lively question for discussion and research, on the other hand makes the question pretty harder to answer. Broadly speaking the literature on peasant studies originates from three broader areas. Firstly, the peasant question had its roots in the anthropological studies in U.S.A. and elsewhere in the early 1950s. Anthropologists-manily cultural anthropologists who were trying to study "other cultures" when noticed that their subject matter alongwith the concept of "little community" is disappearing fast-both in form as well as in content, they shifted their attention towards the study of "peasant society". This shift could be easily located in the work of Robert Redfield (1956). For cultural anthropologists this was a new area which they had discovered for their studies. Robert Redfield defined peasantry as having three characteristics like: (1) it is a part-society with part-culture, (2) peasantry is related to the outside world through elites and (3) peasants take agriculture as a way of life. Here the emphasis on the "cultural" component of peasantry could be seen. The main question which they discussed was that the cultural whole which was clearly visible in "little community" is now replaced by "part culture" - the other half being located outside peasant society. A number of village studies on this pattern appeared in India too at the same time i.e. at the beginning of 1950 and this trend later continued for at least two decades more. Some of the important studies were: M.N. Srinivas (1952) study of village Rampura in Mysore, S.C. Dube's earlier study (1955) of village shamirpet in Andhra Pradesh, his latter study (Dube 1958) of some villages concerned with Community Development Projects (C.D.P.), B.R. Chauhan's study of Ranawat Ki Sadri in Rajasthan (Chauhan 1967). The trend of a single village study continued although with some different questions and emphasis in Andre Beteille's study of Sripuram village in Tamil

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