CHAPTER - VIII
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In the previous chapters the problems and prospects of development of resources in various fields in the three selected districts of Bolangir, Kalahandi and Phulbani of Western Orissa have been discussed in detail. In this discussion the main focus of attention has been to examine the technical feasibility of developing the various available resources consistent with economic costs. This assessment reveals that there are neither prospects of any visible spectacular development based on rich resources such as iron ore, oil, etc., nor the region provides any locational advantage for other heavy investments in industries. The economy is likely to continue to depend largely on agriculture for a long period to come. However, this does not mean that the development prospects are dim. As a matter of fact, agriculture which at present sustains the largest percentage of population (79%) has prospects of reasonably fast development provided the extension is radically geared to the specific needs of the particular type of agricultural development envisaged in this dissertation. As a matter of fact even the development in other fields such as industries and tertiary sectors will mainly depend on the agricultural development. In the sphere of infrastructure, while power development does not offer any serious problem, special attention
will have to be paid to the development of adequate transport facilities. The main directions of development in different fields are discussed below.

In spite of the region falling in a high rainfall zone the erratic nature of the rainfall renders the region susceptible to frequent droughts. Normally, for agricultural development, irrigation is looked upon as the key factor for sustained growth but curiously enough though these districts receive high rainfall on an average in the year, the possibilities of irrigation expansion are rather meagre. This is on account of the undulating terrain and absence of suitable locations for storage work. Most of the agricultural land falling in the high and medium elevations does not allow construction of wells on any large scale. Even after exploiting the available irrigation potential in the form of improvement of tanks and lift irrigation in low lying areas, the total irrigated area would be hardly 12 per cent of the cultivated area. Therefore, the entire strategy of agricultural development in this region will have to concentrate on improving farm output under unirrigated conditions.

At present cultivation is largely confined to the rainy season. Most of the irrigation currently available is also used during this season. The cultivators are not used by and large to grow a second crop. This means that the farm produce harvested in one season has to sustain the agricultural population for the whole year. It is this factor which has depressed the economy of the region. The obvious solution, therefore, for improving the economy is to
introduce a second crop in the region. Technologically, the land
is suitable for the cultivation of several crops during the rabi season.
But this practice is not common and for various reasons discussed
earlier the lands are left fallow beyond November-December. Therefore,
the extension agency must take up this task of popularising the
cultivation of a second crop. It should teach the cultivators as to
which crops can be grown in different types of land in varying
elevations and soils and the suitable seeds should be made available
to the cultivators. Instead of wasting efforts on a large number of
programmes which are of doubtful utility for this area, it would
be better to concentrate on bringing larger area under multiple cropping
every year. In terms of the efforts required in this direction the
benefits are likely to be considerable from this measure. The State
Government should continuously carry on research on evolving drought-
resistant varieties of various seeds suitable for different parts of
this region. With these measures it should be possible to bring
about 60 per cent of the net sown area under double cropping.
However, to what extent this level of development can be achieved,
will depend on the capacity of the extension agency to persuade
the cultivators and the response of the latter to this measure. If
this target is not achieved in the next five years, the programme
will have to be staggered accordingly.

With regard to minerals, the region has deposits of
coal, iron ore, manganese ore, bauxite and limestone. However, many
of these deposits are of small size. Taking into consideration the
demand both at the national and state level and the economic
viability of the units that could be set up based on these local reserves, no mineral-based industries are possible in this region.

In the industrial field the existing units belong the small scale sector. There is not a single large or medium scale unit in the three districts put together. Even among the existing small scale units, the important ones namely rice and oil mills suffer from excess capacity. Several units had to be closed down in the past two years because of the inexperienced management. In view of the lack of resources it is not conceivable to develop modern industry to any significant extent in the backward region where demand is naturally limited. The best line of development under the present circumstances would be to concentrate on the setting up of industries in a few promising fields in the selected market towns which could meet the requirements of the region around them. The district possibilities exist in the field of processing agriculture produce such as rice bran, fruits and sisal fibre. Though the region has a large forest area, the important products are only bamboo and timber. Bamboo is already leased to mills outside the region and timber is mainly used for railway sleepers and is sent out of the region as such. A few saw mills, a seasoning plant and a unit for plywood could be set up based on the remaining forest produce. On the demand side the agricultural development is likely to require quality implements and a few cold storages. The emphasis has to be on modernising the existing cottage units by introducing the use of power as the electricity is taken to more and more villages.

The two important infrastructure facilities for development are power and transport. Bolangir and Kalahandi have already been
connected with the State power grid and Phulbani is also planned to be connected with the grid soon. This would remove the power handicap of the area. Instead of unplanned rural electrification programme on a wide scale it would be better if the power is extended to the areas where there is already evidence of its requirement. Priority should be given to bring the transmission lines to the areas where lift irrigation has been suggested and in the selected growth towns as stated above. Development of Indravati, a multi-purpose project which would generate power on a big scale, can be considered from the point of view of the needs of a wider area than of these three districts. Therefore, its development has to be thought of by the State Government either for the State needs or for the needs of the adjoining states. The other important economic overhead, viz., transport has to some extent retarded the development of this region in the past. The region has very little railway track and one important line passing through the area serves more the outside region than the direct traffic needs of this area. The only means of transport is the inadequate road system. But since the region is criss-cross by numerous rivers, rivulets and streams, the road development is very costly because of the need to construct several bridges. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the road system not only for providing the basic amenity for the movement of man and material but also for serving the marketing needs of the agricultural areas where intensive development is expected to take place. The market towns suggested above must be suitably connected by proper roads.
Another aspect which requires attention is the special development of the tribal areas in this region. So far the economic activity of the tribal people is not much different from that of the non-tribal people. These people have taken to normal cultivation of crops but in Phulbani district where tribals are of sizeable number, the undesirable practice of shifting cultivation still continues to substantial extent. In order to wean away the tribals from the harmful practice of shifting cultivation, a number of colonies were established, by the State Government during last plan through 'Indira Aabaasa Yojana' by providing houses, agricultural land, implements, etc. to the tribals. However, the tribals did not respond to the scheme adequately as they were reluctant in giving up the conventional methods of cultivation and settle in the plain areas. Even those who were persuaded to live in the newly formed colonies deserted these colonies after some time on account of the absence of irrigation facilities. In addition, the State Government has undertaken soil conservation programmes in the tribal areas so as to rationalise shifting cultivation. This scheme has been successful to some extent and the tribals are gradually giving up primitive methods of cultivation. Many of the tribal people are employed for picking kendu leaves, bidi making, road construction, etc. The literates among them find employment in the forest department and tribal schools. Although a few of them have these types of jobs and the majority of them work on land, their economic status is not at par with that of the non-tribals. The main reason for this situation lies in the peculiar social customs and orthodox practices widely
prevalent in their community. Much of their earnings is spent on community feasts given on rituals of birth, death and marriage and for counteracting any breach of tribal law. This keeps them under perpetual debt of the money-lenders whose lending rates are unusually high. Though the tribals grow rice, vegetables, millets, maize and spices, they use these either in exchange for utensils, clothings and other consumer items or in payment of debts. For day to day food requirements they depend on wild fruits, roots and hunting. Even some of the wet lands under their possession have passed on to the money-lenders in spite of the legal restrictions to the contrary. While on the one hand the Government is trying to introduce welfare measures for the tribal people on the other hand it is complained that the lower officials of police, forest and revenue departments harass the tribal people taking advantage of their ignorance and helplessness. Due to inadequate transport and marketing facilities, the tribal people get very low price for their produce and have to pay high prices for their purchases. As a matter of fact, the economy is not yet monetised and most of the transactions are still carried on through the barter system. Thus the socio-economic backwardness of the tribal people is a cumulative result of their customs, their exploitation by money-lenders and petty officials, and isolation from the outside of the world.

To improve the economic condition of the tribals, the State Government has undertaken a few steps. For example Ashram schools have been started in many localities where tribal population is
predominant. These schools provide education to the tribal children at the middle and high school levels. Seva Ashrams catering to the education at the primary level have also been established. Some of these are residential institutions where the tribal children are constantly under the guidance of teachers and thus they get used to a different atmosphere than what is prevalent in their own society. The Government also awards stipends to tribal children for training in industrial training institutes. However, these measures touch a very small section of the tribal people. As the programme expands, it is expected that literacy rate will rise and the people will give up some of their expensive social customs. But this will take rather long time. The programme of road development and market towns suggested earlier is likely to break the isolation of the tribal areas and expose the local people to modern forces thereby helping in their integration with the rest. With regard to agriculture, the gradual persuasion from shifting cultivation to settled farming through terracing, settlement of these people in reclaimed land under soil conservation measures and extension of co-operative credit and marketing would go a long way in removing some of their present handicaps.

So far, the Government has depended on official agencies for introducing welfare measures in the tribal areas. It may be stated that the development of the specially backward people, such as the tribals, not only depends on the well-conceived schemes but to an appreciable extent on the right agency to implement. Unless that agency is properly motivated to the task of uplifting the
backward classes, it will not be possible for it to win the confidence of the tribal people. Since this class is steeped in ignorance and tradition, the agency must properly understand the needs and aspirations of these people, should sympathise with their lot and move in a very cautious and understanding manner while introducing various welfare measures. Therefore, it may be worth-while to try involving such school teachers and other local leaders who command respect of these people in the implementation of the tribal programme so that the various schemes may achieve the intended results without causing any friction or delay.