CHAPTER - V

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

AND

CONCLUDING REMARKS
1. **Opening Remarks on Social Planning**

We have had enough evidences in the preceding chapters that suggest a need of social planning or an exercise of social engineering methods to change the present institutional structure of the society in general and tribal farmers in particular. Social planning aiming at changes in the attitudinal and belief system of a community largely uses educational methods, formal and informal, directly by contact and indirectly by mass media and many other programmes planned for accomplishing its ends.

Notwithstanding the need for social planning there have been conflicting opinions about its desirability on one hand and its feasibility on the other. As token arguments we quote J.W. Ivy who writes:

The belief that education can lead in social reform is a form of wish fulfillment thinking based upon the assumption that social life can be rationalised and that the social process can be rid of its irrational elements and brought under the control of a previously established plan. Such a belief is not a product of scientific observation, but of the "faith" as naive as any inherited by man.¹

W.G. Sumner, a great social Anthropologist, writes:

The great stream of time and earthly things will sweep on just the same in spite of us ... Every one of us is a child of his
age and cannot get out of it. He is in the stream and is swept along with it. All his science and philosophy came to him out of it. Therefore the tide will not be changed by us. It will swallow up with us and our experiments... That is why it is a great folly of which a man can be capable to sit down with a slate and pencil to plan out a new social world.  

R.E. Park visualises changes in mores, folkways and institutions by "crisis". These changes are rapid and radical. The crisis theory maintains that under certain circumstances, habits, mores and folkways are recognised by people to be no longer useful as ways of meeting situations and needs, and after a brief period of amoral disorganisation, people come together to build up a new type of socially acceptable behaviour or such a new folkway develops naturally without discussion and organisation. The political process can only proceed in a relatively orderly way in so far as it generates an environment capable of providing a certain degree of order and discipline until a new equilibrium has been achieved and the changes which the new programmes initiated have been assimilated, digested and incorporated with the folkways of the original and historic society. To Park, therefore, it seems that planned methods to change the folkways, mores and institutions are more or less futile. William Ogburn also holds similar views. To Ogburn, the tremendous flow of the society cannot be changed by man's intentional efforts.
Ivy, Ogburn, Park and Sumner write the same what, translated into a more familiar terminology, economists mean by "Laissez faire". Now, as it is known to all of us that "Laissez faire" amounts to suggest two things simultaneously: First, that what is natural is inevitable; and second, that what is natural is also desirable. Thus what these sociologists and anthropologists hold is the belief in the inevitability and desirability of the mores, folkways and institutions prevailing in different communities. If it is so, naturally, there is no need for planning — nor planning can turn a single stone.

Nevertheless, economists have abandoned the idea and ideal of "Laissez faire" long back. Hence, the practice of economic planning for development. However, economic planning has been much more conservative in its approach than it should have been. Models of growth and strategies of development have grossly been formulated in terms of economic variable and economists, like Schultz, have tried to interpret every social fact as an economic phenomenon. Even educational planning, a major component of manpower planning, has been geared to be viewed as a tool for estimating the requirements of trained personnel of different categories to be felt by the growing industrial sector and programming to meet these needs such that
the demand can be met by the supply. Educational planning has never been considered by economists as a tool for moulding institutions and making attitudes of the society more conformal to development.

Some sociologists and anthropologists vehemently oppose the idea of deliberate attempts to mould the institutions of any community. They are afraid that existing institutions changed by superimposition of "foreign" institutions will render the system dysfunctional and disturb the social equilibrium.

However, there are sociologists and economists who entertain the feasibility of social planning. To quote Myrdal:

Recognising the folkways and mores ... and having a desire to change some of them in one direction or another, we should be interested in studying the range and degree of inertia; all the exceptions to the folkways; the specialisation of groups; the conflicts (between persons and within persons); the changes, the flexibilities, and the manageability of some factors in the social system; instead of stressing and exemplifying the great overall inertia. On the practical plane we should make not only the negative inference that a plan for social change should expect to be time-consuming and to meet strong resistance, but also the positive inference that it has to direct its attack on certain points where the mores are weakest and where people are already
beginning to question them (or have divided conscience with respect to them). We should also infer that it should not attack them directly but should create situations where the people themselves will strain the mores.\footnote{5}

The above quotation from Myrdal evidently offers a number of suggestions for social planning for modifying the belief and attitude system of farmers in conformity with the requirements for agricultural development.

2. **Some Guidelines for Agricultural Planning**

An outline of Institutional planning may be developed on the suggestions given by G. Myrdal. First, we have to look into the range and degree of inertia of institutions in our study village and also in the study region. A closer scrutiny of the data collected by us reveals that degree and range of inertia in sending their children to schools is the least among the tribal households. Those who do not send their children to school or those whose children drop-out may fall into three categories: first, those who are not very aware of the possible advantages of education; second, those who are too poor to afford the expenses, may be very little, in educating their children; and third, those who employ their children in farming and other productive activities. By providing sufficient and suitable facilities and motivation, these farmers can
certainly send their children to schools. Rise in the literacy rate will automatically alter their institutions. Our analysis has suggested us that literacy is a very important factor in promoting productivity and intensive utilisation of agricultural resources. Hence the first line of attack should be based on universalisation of education.

The next variables in which we have found lesser degree and range of inertia are subsistence cultivation and Rabi cropping. Now, cultivation of crops to sell in the market will not go far if farmers cultivate cereals. Cultivation of cereals will cause a stronger inertia. Then the way-out is to promote the cultivation of vegetables, potatoes, etc. It suggests that suitable policies for motivating them to cultivate vegetables, potatoes, etc. may be formulated and by means of extension activities these policies can be effectuated. Rabi cultivation cannot be promoted unless there is irrigation facility available to the farmers. Cultivation of vegetables and potato also is not possible without irrigation facilities. It is to be noted that the irrigation facilities are not at all developed in the study region. Almost the whole area depends on rainfall to raise crops. Such a state of cultivation as permitted by rainfall is conformal to subsistence cropping,
dependency on the mercy of nature, fatalism and other-worldliness. Development of irrigation facilities may be a suitable policy to fight out these obstacles to agricultural development.

On the face of it, development of irrigation facilities and promotion policies for popularisation of the cultivation of vegetables and potato, etc, do not look like a measure of institutional planning. But it should be borne in mind that institutional planning comprises of anything and everything that is programmed for changing the attitudes of the people — they work directly or indirectly is no matter of importance to the Institutional planner.

So far the inertia of the belief in unearthly causes of good and bad harvest and belief in necessities of festivities are concerned, they are quite strong and pervasive. It will be difficult to attack them directly. But we hold that cultivation for market, Rabi cropping, irrigation facilities, and educational development together will weaken the belief in the unearthly causes of productivity and in the long run, it will weaken the belief in necessity of festivities also. Of course, festivities have nothing to do with productivity as such. If they can use better seeds, adopt better agricultural practices and apply
better inputs, there is nothing against festivities. But they may ultimately be aware of the fact that festivities that lead to indebtedness are harmful. We hold that poli­cies suggested here will, in the long run, be effective in making the institutions more conformal to agricultural development.

It is to be noted that Ahu and Bao cultivations are done by the broadcast method, while Sali is cultivated by the transplantation method. The broadcast method is corre­lated with the tribal belief that women's broadcasting the seeds in the field fetches richer harvest. Thus, Ahu and Bao cultivations go with the festivities, rituals and associated belief of the tribal farmers. As a matter of fact, broadcasting is an inoptimal agricultural practice. To change this practice the farmers may be suggested to cultivate paddy by the transplantation method. If the elderly persons of the village can be convinced, it would be very easy to change the broadcasting method to the trans­plantation method. Nevertheless we understand that it will not be very easy to convince the elderly people of the tribal villages.

In case of the non-tribal farmers, we have found that they transplant the paddy seedlings when they are
almost five weeks old. Agricultural scientists suggest, however, that the transplantation of seedlings should be done when they are about 3 to 3\(\frac{1}{2}\) weeks old. Seedlings older than 4 weeks transplanted in the field yield lower. It seems that most of the farmers are not aware of this scientific fact. There is another difficulty in this regard. Transplantation is possible only if the field is ready for transplantation. The field can be made ready only if there is enough water available in the field. On account of untimely rainfall, it is not always possible to make the field ready for transplantation while the seedlings are 3 to 3\(\frac{1}{2}\) weeks old. The farmers have to wait for rains and in this process, sometimes they transplant the seedlings early and at other times quite late. This problem can be solved only if the irrigation facilities are guaranteed. Thus there is a need for the development of irrigation facilities.

Our sample data reveal that in Mohaijan Missing Village there are 102 cattle (bulls, cows and buffaloes). In Sonari there are 137 cattle, and in Bodhakora there are 82 cattle. Farmers of Mohaijan village do not use dung manure. Thus the dung in the village is wasted. This waste can be stopped by convincing the farmers the possibilities of higher yield if they use the dung as manure. In the
traditions of Mishing tribals, there is nothing against using dung manure in the field. They can easily be convinced to use dung manure. What is required is to suggest them how to accumulate dung, make compost and carry them to the field. It is expected that they will not take time to adopt this practice. Among the non-tribals also, the use of dung and organic wastes as manure is not very universal. They can, however, be promoted to adopt this practice. If dung and organic wastes can be used for making compost at a universal level and used as manures, agricultural productivity in the study area can be greatly enhanced.

3. Concluding Remarks

Now before we close our study, we want to present a summary of the work done. We recollect that in Chapter I we introduced the problem taken up by us for investigation. It has been: to study the differences in agricultural practices carried out by tribal and non-tribal farmers and impact of these practices on the performance of the agriculture sector of the Block of Lakhimpur. We did discuss why we want to study our problem by a particular methodology. We made an elaboration with regard to the possible odds against our methodology and pointing out the weakness of the alternative methodology we justified our own methodology and stand to approach the study.
For our study we selected three villages from Lakhimpur Block. One of these villages is solely inhabited by tribals, the other is solely inhabited by non-tribals and the third village is inhabited by tribals and non-tribals both.

In Chapter II we presented an expository introduction to the villages (selected by us), together with a general introduction to the area of our study. The characteristic feature of our study area is that about 96% of the people are engaged in cultivation. Farming is traditional, mainly subsistence oriented. The major crop grown is paddy. The intensity of cultivation is very low. Irrigation facilities are not developed. The region is prone to frequent floods on account of several rivers and rivulets criss-crossing the whole stretch of the area.

The study of our sample villages revealed that there are two different kinds of agricultural practices in vogue. One type of practices - characterised by broadcasting method of sowing seeds of Ahu and Bao variety - is popular among the tribal farmers. Tribal farmers have their own system of attitudes and beliefs regarding method of cultivation, use of inputs, the causes of good or bad harvest etc. The other type of practices - characterised by trans-
planting method of growing sali variety of paddy—is popular among non-tribals. The non-tribals often use organic manures. Among the tribal farmers and non-tribal farmers there are marked differences with regard to family size, literacy rate, land per capita owned by the farmers and their attitude towards use of inputs and the whole practice of cultivation.

In Chapter III, we made an investigation to know whether the tribal farmers can be discriminated with the non-tribal farmers with regard to a number of variables. We found that indeed they can be discriminated. The status of being a Mishing tribe, literacy rate and per capita cultivable land at the disposal of the household were found to be the most important discriminant variables.

In Chapter IV, our main concern was to assess the impact of a number of variables on productivity and intensive utilisation of land. In the process of investigation we constructed two indices of attitudes and agricultural practices. We found that certain attitudes are highly correlated with the type of agricultural practices adopted by the farmers. We also found that literacy rate, the index of attitude system and the practice of cultivation can significantly explain agricultural productivity and intensity of utilisation of land. This analysis corroborated
our stand on the relevance of institutional variables in determining agricultural performance in the study villages.

The implications of our findings in Chapters III and IV are suggestive of certain policy guidelines for agricultural development. Our main suggestions are to develop irrigation facilities in the area, to provide more facilities to universalise education, to promote the interest and readiness of the farmers to cultivate non-cereal crops, to motivate use of organic manures and to adopt the practice of transplantation in place of broadcasting of paddy seeds.

In view of the scope and limitations of our study we could not go into the details of institutional planning in particular and overall planning for agricultural development in general. Since the scope of study is limited to the assessment of the effects of different agricultural practices on agricultural performance, we may not be expected to go into details to formulate an elaborate policy for agricultural development of the study region. Nevertheless, we have made some observations on a suitable agricultural policy. We hold that a detailed study for formulating agricultural policy of development of our study region is needed and this need calls for further research work on this line.
REFERENCES


