CHAPTER XIII

Section II

SOCIAL CHANGE

General Introduction:

It is one of the most important objectives of community development programme to change the mental outlook of the rural masses. In the Annual Conference of State Ministers of Community Development and Panchayat Raj, held at Srinagar in July 1965, the C.D. programme has been clearly defined as a programme of change. "The C.D. programme is essentially a programme of change. The impact of science and technology on our traditional society implies many stresses and strains and ferment. It is a painful process but it is a necessary process because unless we shake all our old modes of thought and behaviour and stream-line our minds, objectives and lives, we will not be able to make India a really modern nation which can take its place in nuclear age of today." 1 It has been already emphasised that awakening and prosperity of the rural masses is linked up with the problem of social change. It is with a view to bring this change that the programme has launched the programme of social education as an integral aspect of the programme. Now it is necessary to know to

1. A programme of Change, Kurukshetra, Conference Number, Aug. 65, p. 3
what extent the mental out-look of the villagers has been changed and the programme has brought about a process of integrated cultural change by transforming social and economic life. Generally it is asserted that the programme has not brought dynamic change in the rural society.

Dr. Carl Taylor, an American renowned expert on C.D. programme, also confirms the above statement when he says that "of course the programme was assumed to be a great programme of change in beginning but, as many Indian leaders said, after it had been operating for a few years that it had become a construction programme, an amenities programme and even an administrative programme. Referring to the struggle in Indian C.D. programme he interpreted it in the sense of a struggle to overcome the encumbrances which had burdened the programme with administration and, in a good many ways, robbed of its basic purpose of changing out-look and the life of millions of people."1

With a view-point to measure the extent of social change in the rural society, certain questions were put before the respondents concerning social issues and their answers were recorded in the present enquiry. In addition to this it was also tried to ascertain the attitude of the villagers towards community development programme, particularly to know their appreciation and understanding of the programme.

Attitudes towards Community Development:

In response to the question whether the C.D. programme was Government's programme or people's programme or both

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Government and people's programme, 65% answered that it was a Government programme while 25% described it as people's programme and 10% admitted that it was a programme of Govt. and people both. Thus the enquiry revealed that majority of the villagers considered the programme as Government programme and even after the 15 years of operation, they have not realised it as their own programme meant for their development. Those who considered it as Government programme agreed that the schemes of the programme were for rural welfare. The villagers were also asked whether programme was meant for the development of rural masses. Recording their answers more than 80% of the villagers agreed that the programme was meant for the development of rural community but simultaneously some of them also clearly mentioned that the fundamental aims of the programme were not achieved and the desired progress was not there in rural areas. Rest of the respondents could not answer the question and merely asked how new to answer the question. It means they knew about the programme but were not certain of its aims.

When asked to indicate if they felt within them an urge for better living, gaining knowledge and improving their villages after the inception of the programme, it is pleasing to note that more than 50% found an urge for better living and gaining knowledge. It clearly shows that their attitudes towards life has changed and they long for knowledge and better living. They realised that the villagers must be improved and developed. But the lacuna is that most of them did not realise that it was their own concern and ultimately they are the builders of their own destiny. They still desire for Government's assistance in their village
development activities and a spirit of self-help has not yet
developed in their minds, no doubt, a small section of progressive
type of people considered that they had better realised the spirit
of self-help and were aware of it. Only the problem was of able
guidance.

Finally the villagers were asked if they were
optimistic about the progress of their villages through block
agency. While answering the above question people seemed not to
arrive at the answer even after deep thinking hence their attitude
was not decisive but simply general in nature lacking scientific
precision. Most of the villagers interviewed expressed that to
some extent they hoped the progress of rural areas through the
block agency but not perfectly as more than 10 years of implemen-
tation of the programme could not convince them of achieving the
all round development of the villages, some of the villagers were
very critical of the programme in respect of developing the villages.
They told that they were given assurances of many activities and
achievements in their villages but most of them were not even
introduced and what so ever implemented, did not benefit them.

In general, the villagers have not formed the
attitude that C.D. programme is their own programme but on the other
hand they assert that since the Government is out to develop the
rural areas, it should do every thing without seeking any contribu-
tion from the people. Only small section of people view the
programme in proper perspective and most of them are still ignorant
about its nature and content. A critical type of attitude has
developed among the villagers due to heavy expenditure in certain
phases of block and no specific benefit accruing to them. The faith of the villagers about the utility of the programme has withered away due to the withdrawal of the post of B.D.O. in the State and they have come to the conclusion that the programme has not succeeded in its objectives hence withdrawn. Thus there were different type of attitudes among the people. The Seventh Evaluation Report of the P.E.O. has rightly remarked that "people's reactions... are not yet generally favourable to the growth of self-reliance in village communities which is the primary aim of C.D. programme. The majority of the villagers do not regard it as their own programme and seem to rely mainly on the Government to affect the development of the rural areas. The basic philosophy and approach of the programme are therefore, inadequately subscribed to by the people."

**Social Change:**

Progress is a complex process, both economic and social. In fact, the causes and effects of socio-economic changes are essentially inter-related, while economic progress brings in its train many social changes, social changes in their own turn too, hasten economic progress. It is why C.D. programme aims at tackling the vital issues related to social change confronting the village community along with the activities of economic development in the rural areas. Today our village community suffers from many social stigmas and it is a fact that the present economic and material backwardness is due to various social factors and from the very beginning the programme has been assigned the important role of
finding solutions to these social problems. The rigid caste structure and the social distance between one caste and another rules out any major united community effort, in the real sense, for the development of the community. It is an admitted fact that the conservative, orthodox and rigid attitudes of the village people hamper any appreciable and speedy agricultural and economic development.

Various social evils and superstitions make it quite difficult for the village people to lead a healthy and happy life. "The caste system and other rigid social institutions superstitions and beliefs, all leading to a sense of other-worldliness bring inertia and inaction." 1

In the present study the village people were interviewed on some important social issues in order to know the change in their social values and attitudes the programme has brought about. First, there was the question of purdah system. Most of the villagers could not follow the question and demanded the explanation of the term. The response was quite heartening as more than 70% were against purdah system. They asserted that due to the social education campaign by the blocks and visits by lady social education organisers and lady V.L.Ws. and organisation of women in the villages the purdah system had greatly vanished. The low class of people told that purdah system was not possible in their communities as women were required to work in the fields for their livelihood. A very wise and witty answer was given by one respondent in Katni block. He told how could Indira Gandhi become

the Prime Minister of India if there had been purdah system. Only very few belonging to old age group favoured the purdah system on the pretext of preserving their social values. Thus it gives an idea that the purdah system had greatly reduced and women can play an effective role in the development programme.

Then the villagers were asked to express their opinions on dowery system in marriages. Most of the people were in favour of dowery and told that it was the sacred duty of the parents to give it to their daughters but they also, at the same time, believed that there must not be any force or compulsion for the dowery to be given to a certain extent, rather it must be within the resources of the parents. Though different type of answers were given on this social issue, the general conclusion was drawn that the people still firmly believe in dowery system and regard it important part of the marriage. It was also reported that sometimes there was specified monetary demand for dowery from the side of bridegroom and marriages were performed after the parents of the bride agreed to fulfill the demand of dowery. Sometimes there was bargaining in settling the same.

On the issue of the marriage of girls after 15, a good number of persons welcomed the question and told that it was quite necessary to marry them after the age of 15 years, they admitted that previously there was custom of marrying the girls even before crossing the 10th year which was not a healthy custom. In their view it was necessary for the girls to attain a sense of knowledge and maturity before marriage to make their family life better. Some educated persons and leaders also favoured it on the
ground of family planning. But marriage after 15 was objected by some old and aged people. They told that they were not going to follow the customs of city life in this respect. They believed that marriages after 15 would give rise to some social evils in the villages and traditional values of village communities would be put to an end. Any way, majority of the villagers interviewed favoured the marriages of girls after 15 years which is a healthy sign of social transformation. However, it was also reported that even today the marriages were performed in early age and there was no any legal actions against these marriages and it was suggested by some people that such marriages must be stopped.

Then, there was the question of girls education. The enquiry revealed that girls education is now getting popularity in the rural areas and villagers have started sending their daughters to primary schools. In the present survey more than 65% of the respondents expressed liberal views on the issue of girls education rather they emphasised the need of it in the present time. In the primary schools too, the number of girl students on roll has increased compared to previous years as mentioned in the block reports. But, as reported by the villagers, they were not in favour of giving higher education to the girls as they believed that women must be confined more to household affairs for which primary education was helpful enough. It may be also mentioned here that quite small section of people opposed girls education as they did not think it necessary. In their view, there was no utility of giving education to girls. They rather expressed wonder when the issue of girls education was emphasised. It can be concluded that majority of the
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people interviewed in the selected area are in favour of girls education and old and traditional belief of keeping the women aloof in breaking down. The above statement was also confirmed by the reports of adult literacy classes in which women participated though small in number.

Like the girls education the villagers also favoured learning domestic arts and crafts particularly by young girls. In the enquiry 85% expressed their views in its favour. They agreed that after the inception of the programme in the villages the women had learnt knitting, sewing and embroidery. But very few ladies participated in these programmes as most of the women had no sufficient time to learn these arts and crafts.

It has also been one of the aims of social education to remove the caste distances prevailing in the rural communities. Unless all sections of the people are treated equal and untouchability removed, the benefits can not reach to each and every body participating in the programme. With this end in view, the villagers in the survey were asked whether they were against caste restrictions and programme had led them to change their social behaviour. The enquiry revealed that still today the people believe in caste rigidities as 55% favoured caste restrictions based on religious beliefs and sanctions. There were caste differences in the villages under study and elections were fought purely on caste basis. In all the villages, it was observed that caste consciousness and caste patriotism were quite common. In fact caste system is very common not only in the villages under study but also in all other parts of the country. Commenting on
the caste structure of India, Kingsley Davis has stated that, "As long as the village predominates, caste will be hard to eradicate since it is now deeply rooted in the religion and morals of the Hindus." 1

But it was also reported by the villagers that after the inception of the programme and spread of education the caste rigidities have gradually weakened and the feelings of untouchability have been removed to some extent. The credit also goes to Government of India for following a vigorous policy to eliminate caste differences and adopting far reaching measures to raise the social and economic status of the depressed classes. The name of Mahatma Gandhi can not be forgotten in this respect. It was noticed that educated and progressive group of people did not believe in caste restrictions and followed quite liberal views. The low classes of people have also recognised their status in the society and have started reading the benefits of development programmes, as their rights. In short, there are signs of lessening the caste differences in the villages though caste system prevails even today.

On the issue of midwife's service most of the people could not follow the question though they were aware of the opening of the Primary Health Centres and sub-centres in the rural areas. But the people hardly utilised the services of midwife in such centres as only 15% of the people were in favour of midwife's service. Most of them believed in the local methods of delivery and rather doubted the efficiency of such mid-wives. They also complained that proper facilities were not available in

1. Quoted by R. Dutt. and Sundharam in "Indian Economy" p. 163
health centres and maternity centres where they existed and were not equipped with necessary requirements. Very few of the respondents reported that only in emergency cases they utilised the services of mid-wives. Thus the survey indicated that service of mid-wives at the time of delivery have not become common and popular in the villagers.

The villagers were also asked if they were in favour of village latrines. Under the programme of health, measures and sanitation, some types of village latrines have been propagated in the villages but response in this direction has been very poor. Only 30% expressed progressive views on the issue and they belonged either to educated class or rich families having broad outlook. The villagers have not shown interest in appreciating the need for latrines and they follow the age-old habits. They have not even used the latrines seats they were provided. Those who refused the village latrines also criticised the same. Then there was the question of space and sufficient water to keep these latrines clean in the villages. In a nut shell, the villagers did not find any utility in village latrines.

When asked about the castration of bulls, they replied that recently they had taken to the improved methods though most of them believed in local methods of castrating the bulls. The favourable reply was given by only 60% which meant that most of them had started adopting improved methods of animal husbandry. The people reported that they carried their bulls to out-lying dispensaries and veterinary hospitals to get them castrated.
Thus, on most of the social issues described above, favourable opinions were expressed by the villagers interviewed. It shows that there has been great social change and new ideas have replaced the traditional way of life and traditional patterns have been, to a great extent, remodelled according to the needs of the newly emerging economic society. It can be said without any hesitation that the development of the rural communities depends on the speedy transformation of old social institutions which are not conducive to economic progress. Without the necessary changes in the social institutions, capital investment and new technology will not have equivalent results. It is, in this sense, that social change may be regarded as both the means and the end of economic development. It is necessary, therefore, that social institutions and religious and cultural patterns change suitably so that there may be rapid progress in rural India.

It is hopeful sign that community development programme has brought about many changes in the mental outlook and social values of the people living in the villages and the villagers have started appreciating the new social values for the common good. Though there is some opposition to the new ways of thinking and adoption of new social institutions, particularly from the old and orthodox people who still desire to cherish the old beliefs and traditional social values, it is hoped that these old beliefs would gradually disappear giving way to new social values favourable to economic progress.