PREFACE

We have had development models. But the theory of development is not the same thing as theory of poverty. A model of development is not necessarily a model of eliminating poverty.

Indian experience in combating poverty brings out the inadequacy of model of growth that neglects the parameters of distribution. Increasing capital accumulation alone may well improve growth rates but signally fails to secure an equitable sharing of the fruits of growth. Poverty in India is in fact structurally determined and requires the necessity of redistribution of productive assets as a precondition for the success of anti-poverty programmes. In fact poverty is not only a problem of economics of production but of sociology of distribution as well.

Both the anatomy and the physiology of poverty in India have to be studied in a wider frame of reference which would be more empirical and less abstract, more micro-sociological and micro-economic and less macro-sociological and macro-economic. It is now quite obvious that poverty is a case of plurality of causes and heterogeneous intermixture of effects. We should not only identify the causes of Indian poverty but also grasp how these causes act and react on one another. What we require is identification of the hard and soft points of agrarian social, economic and political culture. Thanks to the efforts of field-oriented social scientists that newly emerging picture of Indian society is in close proximity with social reality.
We have to probe its institutional-structural sphere-culture of poverty a colourful range of social structural arrangements and institutional complexes. One of the myths perpetuated by the power elite is that the problem of poverty and the problem of development cannot be solved together.

In this study, poverty focussed rural development has been examined and a critique offered. The IRDP is, in fact, grounded in the rhetoric of radical change; it is not oriented towards radical or structural change. It is a reformist version of the conventional paradigm. Here we have examined the 'trickle down' approach. Growth, distribution, poverty and inequality have been analysed particularly in the context of social stratification factors-caste, class and power. It is a fallacy that the 'trickle down' does occur with time, that achieving high growth rates is an essential prerequisite for holistic development and that inequality may increase initially but decreases as growth and development proceed.

The problem of poverty is attributed not only to economic but to sociological factors. The conventional theory seeks to redirect investments towards target groups to increase their purchasing power and thereby resulting structural change i.e. a change in the composition of demand, production and employment rather than a prior redistribution of assets to effect basis structural change and create conditions of equitable access, but the strategy under IRDP accords deference to existing power structure, preempts the possibility of its success in poverty alleviation and structural change. The primary effort under this approach is towards more effective neutral intervention and economic manipulation. The success of projects
is measured in terms of amounts disbursed and areas and the aggregate number of poor families covered. Thus the targets appeared to have been surpassed even without fully reaching the 'target group'. The question who really benefits, how he benefits and why he benefits is seldom investigated with any thoroughness. This is the very contribution of this study.

Poverty in Indian experience seems to be a consequence of power structure, the inegalitarian economic and social structure determined primarily by the land holding pattern. Efforts are made to shift the power structure without shifting the power structure. This set of factors prevents the percolation of benefits and the access of weaker sections. Without alteration of these factors and without the organisation and participation of the rural poor, the benefits from development schemes will continue to be drawn by the better off despite projects like IRDP.

The net impact of the new policies is to integrate the poor into the existing order rather than seek to change the structure that produces poverty. The present strategy is retroactive rather than proactive and consequently reformist and incrementalist of status-quo oriented-unlikely to succeed effectively in eradicating the problem of poverty. Naturally, the impact of the policy has been feeble.

The approach under IRDP is not capable of alleviating poverty and of bring about structural change. Its success will depend on the ability to deal with the power structure and the forces acting to retain and further existing power structure. Unless the structure is considered as problematic and measures taken towards promoting participative culture of the poorer sections in determining the course of development strategies the existing approach will remain at the level of rhetoric and will serve to strengthen the existing imbalances.
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