CHAPTER-I

THEORITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

The concept of development is neither new nor old. It is a continuously changing and dynamic concept. Since the beginning of civilization, it has been taking different shapes and dimensions. The nature of development as seen in the early 1990's differ considerably from that seen early in 1950 or from that in the 19th century. As far as the concept of development is concerned, it is ambiguous in different countries or nations. Nowadays most of the modern states have turned into welfare state and the term 'development' has been determined accordingly. In reality, democracy is based on the importance of development. The National Planning Commission in India came into existence with the sole objective of establishing a welfare state through democratically planned social and economic development of the country. Hence, in India both the National and State governments have been taking various steps, plans and programmes for the development of urban areas in general and rural areas in particular.

Literally, the term 'development' means a change or move from worse to better. In other words, it means growing maturity to a fuller extent in any respect. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the term 'development' means the action or process of developing or being developed. Various writers in various ways have defined the concept of 'development'. Many have defined 'development' in terms of increase in nations' economy, some others include social improvement in it and still others think of it in terms of increase in the capacity of political system. Thus, it is a complex phenomenon comprising many dimensions –social, political, administrative and so on. According to Colm and Geiger, 'development' means change plus growth. (Gerhard Colm and Theodore Geiger "Country Programming as Guide to Development", in Development of Emerging Countries: An agenda for research (Washington: Brookings Institute, 1962, page- 47.)

In a paper presented to a seminar, Dudley Seers argued that development involved "the realization of the potential of human personality" and went on to suggest that this was best achieved through the "reduction of poverty,
unemployment and inequality'. Alternatively, "if one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all the three have, it would have been strange to call the result 'development' even if per capita income doubled"


In the 19th century up to the World War I, development meant economic development in West Europe and North America including Japan and Russia. During that period, economic development was the core of National development. After 1914 and before World II, various significant events like World war I(1914-1919), Russian Revolution (1917, The High rate of inflation (1919-1921), the rise of fascism in Western Europe, the Great Depression 1930 etc took place. These significant events and other social and cultural changes shook the foundation of 19th century individualism. As a result development took a new phase and dimension.

After World War II, the independence of former colonies has been one of the important events to mark independence from dependence. This has been true in most of the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and other parts of the world. Many of them have awakened from long oppressive colonial and foreign rule. In these countries, there is the aspiration of Nation building and rapid socio-economic progress. This period marked the technological revolution. Rapid social and economic changes have been found in developing countries.

It is today, not limited to the meaning of purely economic development, but extends to political, social, cultural and spiritual upliftment of the community as a whole.

In brief, development is a process of improving the well-being of the people. It is about raising the standard of the living conditions of the people, improving their education and health and opening out to them new and equal opportunities for a richer and more varied life.

Thus, 'Development' is a universal concept in which the whole world is caught up. National development is the major goal of the countries, which have independent status after World war-II. Achievement of National development is
the greatest challenge to the world community to-day. Like the developed countries, the developing countries also want to be modern. Their major task is the reconstruction of national development. They have also high ambition of National development. However, ambition alone does not solve the problem of underdevelopment. The government of a particular country has to struggle hard to develop their economy, increase the capacity of political system, and revitalize the administrative system to achieve their main goal of development.

CONCEPT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

To achieve national development of a country, it is essential to have rural development. It is the pre-requisite of urban development too. It is now largely recognized that national development is incomplete without rural development. It is in fact an inevitable ingredient of national development. Any development programme is incomplete if adequate provisions are not made for the upliftment of the rural poor. In this context, the importance of rural development can never be ignored.

Rural development is an old concept but has been evolving with new contents and fresh concerns. Different scholars have defined the concept of rural development differently. Some said it as change; others hold it as both change and growth. Someone like to say that rural development needed to be conceived as a dynamic process directed towards transforming the entire society, embarking together its social, economic, political and administrative aspect for an all-round, balanced, upward change.

In the paper “On Having Appropriate Technology For Rural Development”, Dr. S. Choudhury and Mr. B.D. Singh, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Varanasi, B.H.U. expressed their views in this way --- “Development also means the participation of the people in the determination of their environment. What is true of general development must also be true of rural development. In the light of this, vision of development is not just a question of economics, agricultural self-sufficiency, and hardware or of a technology transfer.
Development is of the people with their proper capacity for imagination, creation, choice, responsibility and decisions with their environment”.


Nowadays “rural development” is defined as “a strategy to improve the economic and social life of a special group of people, the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and landless.”

(World Bank: Rural Development (Sector Policy Paper) p -3)

In the words of B. Mukherjee, Rural Development has been described as “a process of change from traditional way of living of rural communities to progressive ways of living, as a method by which people can be assisted to develop themselves on their own capacity and resources, as a programme for accomplishing certain activities infiels concerning the welfare of the rural people as a movement for progress with a certain ideological content.”

(A Simple Study of Indian Administration: Dua and Sachdeva AJANTA PRAKASHAN, DELHI-6, 1968, p-360)

Nowadays, the objectives of rural development are not restricted to any single department, but spread over several such as, to raise agricultural output, create new employment, improve health and education, expand communication and provide housing. Hence, it can be defined now in terms of an improvement of economic and social life of the rural poor.

As far as the concept of development in rural area is concerned, M.K. Gandhi once drew a picture of an ideal village. He said, “An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation and built with material available within the radius of five miles of it. The cottage will have courtyard-enabling households to plant vegetables for
domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lands and streets will be free from all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs, and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship by all and also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing cattle, a cooperative diary, primary and secondary schools, in which industrial education will be a central fact and it will have panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grain, vegetable and fruits and its khadi”.

(Oberoi C.P: “Afforestation in Rural Development Art” in The North East Times, 30th Nov, 1992.)

From the above, it is understood that the term rural development is confined not only to economic, political and social but also spiritual upliftment of the community. The concept of rural development is comprehensive. It aims at achieving the enrichment of quality of life covering all aspects – social, economic, cultural and spiritual. Rural development is, therefore a strategy to help the poor section of the rural society to improve their livelihood by increasing their income through additional employment.

Thus, rural development is a wide concept. It embraces every aspect of the economic as well as the social life of the rural poor. From the economic point of view rural development indicates increase in income, education, health service, good housing etc. among the weaker and poorer section of the rural society.

In addition to the economic betterment, the rural development aims at raising the quality of life of rural people in totality.

Rural development covers all aspect of human development, such as – social, economic, cultural moral and spiritual development. Ecological development has also direct relation with economic development of the rural people. Ecology means the surrounding elements like – plants, air, water and other living things. Real development of the rural people is possible only when a suitable environment prevails around them. Natural environment also helps in determining the ways of development of the rural communities, because a man can construct a piece of the environment for himself and this has widespread impact upon his life. For example, the cottage industries, which are established
by the rural people for their economic development, have a direct correlation to the minerals found in that area. In the same way rivers, seas, flood, earthquake, mountains storms, rain animals and vegetation are the natural factors, which influence the rural community in the process of development.

Rural development is a strategy, which aims at integrated development of the people living in the rural areas. In this case, Sharma and Malhotra viewed rural development as, “a systematic approach aiming at total development of the area and the people by bringing about the necessary institutional changes and by delivering a package of services through extension methods to encompass not only the economic field i.e. development of agriculture, rural industries etc, but also the establishment of the required special infrastructure and services in the areas of nutrition, education and literacy, family planning and other basic amenities etc- with an ultimate objective of improving quality of life in the rural areas.”


In brief, as a concept, rural development means all-round development of rural areas with a view to the betterment of the lifestyle of the rural people. In the purely economic sense, it covers development of the agricultural and allied activities and social facilities, besides development of human resources in rural areas.

As a phenomenon, it is the result of interaction between various physical, environmental, technological, economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors in the rural areas of a nation.

As a strategy, the rural development is the approach or operational design to bring about the desired change in the socio-economic and the cultural life of the rural people.

Hence, rural development considers the both agricultural and non-agricultural aspects of rural life.
Thus, rural development is a multi-dimensional process, which includes the development of socio-economic, socio-cultural and political conditions of the people living in the rural areas and ensures their participation in the process of development for complete utilization of physical and human resources for better living conditions. It extends the benefits of development to the weaker and the poorer sections of the society, it enhances both the capacity and the ability of the administrative and socio-economic development agencies and agricultural marketing units working in the rural areas.

As far as the political development of the poor section of the rural area is concerned, it can undoubtedly be said that the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the poor people of rural areas should be lifted from the pit of political backwardness. In addition, they should be made politically conscious so that they are able to take part in all welfare activities directly or indirectly.

Regarding the various kinds of rural development schemes and policies undertaken by the government, political development is also important and helpful for their implementation.

India is a country with a maximum number of villages. In most of the villages in India particularly in Assam, a large number of villages are under the curse of lack of education and political backwardness too is a major problem. They are still unaware of the schemes and policies taken by the government for their development. As a result, they are deprived of the benefit from these developmental schemes. Moreover, the element of corruption has taken its roots in the administrative authorities. The bureaucrats often influence the district and block level units and the development officers. Because of the lack of proper education as well as political consciousness, they cannot place their reasonable demands in front of the authorities. As a result, development among the poor section of the rural society lags behind comparatively with the plans and programmes of the governments. Thus, the conditions of the rural community as a whole have not been improved up to the desired extent though there is room for it.
Rural development is therefore, a complex phenomenon covering all aspects of human development. It is to ameliorate the conditions of people, specially the poor community in the rural areas. The development aspect of the poor community includes mainly health, agriculture, industries, housing and education. For the all-round development of the poor community, government should take steps for proper implementation of the development programmes in every nook and corner of the villages. Without proper implementation, the basic objective will not be achieved. The government should give top priority to the rural sector in preparing plans and programmes for the country's development. The various development departments of the state government should also take steps to implement the programme in the poor community in the village area properly. The development blocks should also take active role in this field. The villagers should also remain vigilant about it.

In the light of the above discussion on the issue of rural development, efforts will be made to highlight the rural development programme launched by the central government and the related departments in order to uplift the living conditions of the rural poor. In addition, the role of the development blocks, particularly in the Golaghat sub-division will be brought into light in this work.

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