PREFACE

Much of the misconception in appraising India's experience with planning and development might have been avoided if sociologists had concerned themselves more actively, both at theoretical and empirical planes, with interpreting the time, effort and strategy required to change a traditional society to a modern society oriented to science and technology. Yardsticks for measuring India's developmental progress have been largely adopted from Western experience, primary emphasis being on statistical datagathering and comparisons between India and the developed countries; that may have little relevance to analyse the transformation.

Furthermore, there is a tendency to avoid taking into consideration in an explicit manner the influences of perceived interests of privileged dominant groups, on the conception of reality and theories. Its being taken for granted and as raising no problems of its own has resulted in relegation of the issue to the periphery of practice of sociological research.

Such biases are no less prevalent in the study of development and directed social change in general, and diffusion and adoption research in particular. It would be our effort to sketch out a critical position, so as to serve as a forewarning against possible pitfalls and to avoid too hasty and definitive conclusions.
In the problem-solving context in which much of diffusion-adoption research has developed, the need to predict outcomes of various innovations has relatively impeded direct considerations of scientific conceptualization and formalization of a wider theory of development and social change, and its place in the developmental planning and programmes. Too narrow a conception of development itself takes our attention away from facts about the nature of the prevailing socio-political and socio-economic systems that are themselves prejudicial to all pervasive long term development strategies.

Earlier diffusion researches have been concentrated in America and West European countries, and the present trend in the developing countries like India is to find out applicability of the same generalizations here (Mookherjee, 1976, p. 136). The generally accepted pattern of diffusion-adoption of a new practice or any innovation (as propounded by Lionberger and followed by Rogers and others) within a farming community is that an innovation is first adopted by a few pioneers (i.e. who are sufficiently educated and rich, and can take risks) and then it is rapidly spread to the majority of the farmers. Such approach justifies and legitimizes the concentration of efforts and investment on selected areas for selected rich farmers (Barraclough, 1971, 52).
But this approach is rarely valid in case of underdeveloped and developing societies. In such societies, the village community consists of a minority who are able to adopt an innovation and need only to be made aware of its potential benefits, and a vast majority of small farmers who lack the means needed to make adoption possible. They are unable to devote any part of their meagre resources to the purchase of the inputs required for innovation. Furthermore, in a highly hierarchical rural society, dominated by a small clique of large farmers; the small farmer's access to information is limited, partly due to illiteracy and poverty leading to ignorance and incapacity (Arnon, 1981, 256-58), and partly due to nexus between politician-administrator-large farmer sharing the benefits. These issues have been conceptually and critically analysed in the first chapter of the dissertation.

The research techniques of diffusion studies have traditionally bound them to investigation of "slices or cross-studies of the process at one point in time" (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971, p. 194). This has led to "slow-motion analyses" which hold a slice of process stationary while observing the dynamics of diffusion. While the methods are legitimate, the ritualistic attitude makes it sterile. In order to formulate a statistically manageable hypothesis, too few of the variables affecting the process under investigation, are included (i.e. elite nexus, in-built bias against under-privileged etc. are excluded).
One pays too high a price for irreproachable methodology, if one knows beforehand the questions and alternative answers, and considers the task finished when the questions have been answered and interpreted. Such posture seems administrative rather than intellectual, leading to the tendency to pepper 'pure' concepts with a few empirical evidences. This, in turn, leads to the practice of treating inconsistencies and anomalies in terms of aggregated statistics that conceals more than reveals. In a way, methodology becomes a substitute for a serious attempt at comprehending and discovering solutions to social problems as such. However, we are clear in our mind that awareness of these meta-theoretic and conceptual problems is not the same as finding adequate solutions to them but that is the first necessary step in that direction.

Various aspects of research methodology forms the second chapter, that also examines the complexities of the area of study.

There appears to be only a modest empirical confirmation of the sociological notion that structural properties influence human behaviour. The dominant diffusion researches have been concentrating on structurally trivial issues, though theoretical reasoning and direct observation have long suggested the plausibility of positing social structure as a causal variable in explaining adoption
behaviour (Gartrell, 1977; Rogers, 1971; Van Den Ban, 1970 etc.). Thus, diffusion research has acquired a situational rather than structural approach, raising questions about the constancy of elements in a system. Questions about where the boundaries can be drawn to show how much, for whom and what sort of change there has to be are avoided. However, there are some studies linking power distribution and adoption (Rao, 1969; Stanfield & Whiting, 1972; Freeman et al., 1982). Some studies in India have attempted to correlate village characteristics with adoption behaviour (Dasgupta, 1968; Fliegel et al., 1968; Sandhu & Allen, 1974). It has been suggested that the empirical literature on institutional behaviour and innovations represent, at best, "sophisticated storytelling informed by practical theoretical insights" (Ward, 1972, pp. 179-90).

Despite innovation being taken as an aspect of change, it suggests a non-processual view of change. It sees change as a series of events, placing maximum significance on the occurrence of an event (i.e. adoption) for the first time rather than its conditional and consequential ramifications (i.e. need for additional inputs and its socio-economic implications, ecological restrictions, problems of acceptance, effects on employment and the ability of small farmers to share the benefits of new technology) (Arnon, 1981, 293).
Viewing innovations as the use of new resources or old resources in new ways could be nothing more than background information for a thoroughgoing understanding and anticipation of attending societal change. It is obvious that after a certain number of similar innovative decisions have been put into practice, they are no longer considered innovative. Questions are frequently asked in terms of who are the first to act in a new way, how they are likely to be followed, and how long it will take till everyone does the same. Some ad hoc theory on value-orientation (i.e. achievement motivation, innovativeness etc.) towards innovations then predicts that the same rules are to be followed with respect to other innovations. Nevertheless, it leaves us gasping when initial actions are not followed by a widespread acceptance and adoption.

Moreover, the innovation diffusion researches have implicitly displayed a certain degree of 'pro-innovation bias' leading to negligence of studying the consequences of innovation (McAnany, 1984). There has also been a 'source-bias' (a tendency to side with the promoting agencies) leading to the practice of 'individual-blame', rather than 'system-blame' (Rogers, 1986 a).

Similarly, by uncritically adopting the concept of adoption outside its specific historical context, one
heuristically draws crippling limits to what to look for, and consequently lowers the level of analysis on which to work. This is hardly helpful to understand changing systems, though it may somewhat help to investigate into the sociology of imitation and the sociology of communication. Such attempts underplay the influences of socio-economic pressures. It leads to somewhat compatibility explanation (i.e. relating change in milieu to change in values and vice versa) of acceptance or rejection of innovations. But a post hoc ergo propter hoc argument is often the result. It leads to concentrating efforts to seek facilitating or inhibiting factors - bio-social, socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-psychological. These issues have respectively been analysed in the third and fifth chapters based on interpretation of empirical evidences, while the fourth chapter consists of related aspects of communication behaviour.