

Small Farmer's Development : An Anthropological Approach

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Rural development programme is based on the felt need of small farmers in Nepal. Nepal is basically an agricultural country where 95% of its population derive their livelihood from agriculture. Most of these people are peasants (small farmers) having land holding less than 1 to 2.67 hectare.

Nepal has initiated rural development programme with popular participation of the peasants in the decision making process. Rural development is formulated with some success in a very integrated manner. The concept of rural development programme and the requirements of people's need is a dynamic process and thinking, which is subjected to change and growth.

The main aim of the programme is to improve the socio-economic condition of small farmers (peasants). In order to increase their income and employment in a self-sustaining basis, peasants of same level of socio-economic status must be encouraged to formulate their own homogenous groups so that they themselves identify their economic activities thereby creating channalized road for their economic uplift-

ment. For this, their active participation is vital.

The problem of rural development of the Nepalese village people like small farmers need institutional approach. The utmost care should be attached to analyse the whole web of interrelationship - social, economic and political - which make the village community as single entity.

The village community in Nepal is socially stratified. Economy affects their life from the cradle to the grave. Their standard of living is very low and their per capita income is very much lower. Earlier researchers did not pay much attention to the problems of peasant's economy as they were not so much concerned with planning, execution and evaluation of welfare programmes. The failure of such planning was that peasant's economy was treated with isolation. It was forgotten that economy is only a part of the social system and all their economic actions are set in social framework. In such economic programmes, there exist a great many barriers, cultural, social and psychological. They ought to be understood

and then carefully remarked.

Economic co-operation was one of the most striking aspects of traditional peasant's labour in Nepal. Co-operative work is done by groups of all sizes and comprehends all kinds of tasks. Family, which is the primary social unit in every society must be a co-operative institution. The peasant community as a whole can equally be regarded as a co-operative unit; if it were not so, it would not survive. The voluntary association of group of men and women to complete a specific productive process must be gradually motivated.

Despite the disintegrating influence of mechanical age which threaten village economy, the peasant's life in Nepal still maintains its traditional way of culture, and co-operation in economic undertakings regulates economic relations in the village to a considerable extent. The co-operative work can be organised into three categories namely, family group co-operation, local group or village cooperation and the wider co-operative group consisting of an entire neighbourhood. But in SFDP selected SFGS are to be motivated for group co-operation. In such a group activities there must be the idea of cohesion and of common interest between units forming a group as well as between two or more groups following the same occupation and participating in the samekind of undertakings.

In all spheres of social life, in all efforts of peasants-co-operation, in the production and accumulation of cultural gains and achievements, we can always observe two fundamental interesting tendencies which manifest themselves with varying intensity in different phases of development. Firstly, there is a tendency which is conservative and stabilizing, which is expressed in a

propensity for the preservation and maintenance of existing social order. It is always based on the acknowledgement of previous experience and is essentially focussed on the past. The past, here, supplies a pattern for living and provides a model for peasant's action. Conversely, there exist a tendency which has grown out of doubt and dissatisfaction which is invariable conducive to social change. This tendency is often destructive and revolutionary vis-a-vis the existing social order, and has often been expressed in terms of a more or less violent opposition to, and negation of, the surrounding reality. This tendency is usually born out of the deep peasant's craving for new and better forms of social life, new moral truths and more adequate technical innovations. Such a vision of new life, forward looking, yet generated by concrete conditions of human existence, can become a powerful, driving force for peasant's action and participation to achieve their self reliance.

These tendencies reflects two fundamental needs of peasants existence: (a) that of the regulation and ordering of peasants relationships founded on a set of established norm and values, skills and capabilities, truths and experiences; and (b) that of the improvement of peasant's existence by securing greater mastery over the natural environment, by extending knowledge of the surrounding reality, by obtaining greater security and protection against hostile forces, by the reduction of peasant's effort by making group co-operation resting on a more balanced socio-cultural foundation.

Coherent social organization, self reliance and planned change among the small farmers of Nepal is the utmost requirements of HMG of Nepal. Planning is for technological and economic growth. Social and

cultural factors interpose in the operation of the factors of economic growth. As for example, motion of time and rhythm of living and working would influence productivity. In order to spell out, a good deal of empirical data is essential.

There should be some sort of relation between pattern and availability of saving but models are to be built on the basis of the empirical data to indicate what sort of consumption pattern would lead to accumulation of idle saving, under the prevailing condition of the culture.

Development involves a transfer of part of the working force from agriculture to secondary activities. In this case it is recommended to note if there is tendency of small farmers to migrate even to the short distance industrial or town area in order to have a little income. One should see if this economic pull is neutralized by caste tradition. But even when occupational mobility takes place, caste inhibition is not completely broken. It is only temporarily kept abeyance.

In the models of social structure following aspects should be taken into consideration: (1) caste and kinship, (2) religion (3) sect (4) education (5) occupation (6) social hierarchy and leadership (7) studies in change in family structure (8) decline in agricultural efficiency as a result of splitting of joint family. Here fieldworkers must note that is splitting of joint family had impact on agricultural production. (9) Role of specific beliefs and practices in determining the response of the peasants to specific attempts of project programmes.

Growth orientation in terms of econo-

mic, technological and socio-cultural factor is the focus of our interest. As all the aspects of life are inter-linked an integrated approach of development may be initiated with any of the areas of primary interest, as the vantage point, to gradually cover all the areas. Our strategy should be to carefully selection of the vantage point with reference to growth orientation.

Economic development is merely an increase in the output goods and services, while economic change is a change in economic roles and relations. Study in this regard should be focussed to see if the economic development takes place much quicker than economic change.

Economic development or growth can again be of two different orders. One is economic growth by development of local resources and talent, the other is economic growth by grafting of resources and talents from outside. Both these processes have their social counterparts. Growth by development of local resources and talent would imply induced shift in pre-established ends and a directed reorientation of value system. It requires consequently an intensive analysis of the existing relationships among the various aspects of culture - political, religious and aesthetic - before any kind of prediction can be made. We have to see if new skills injected injures the status and situation of those who possess old skills or whether it can be incorporated without injuring their status and situation. It is obvious that a good deal of insight in social dimension is necessary for the formulation of right strategy for the development of small farmers or peasants in Nepal.

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