

4. DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMMES OF PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Objectives and Importance

Over a period of about seventy years number of rural development experiments and programmes were conducted in India. Long before the introduction of the Government managed extension system at the national level in 1952, there had been sporadic attempts in developing the rural life. Knowledge of the early extension efforts shall serve as a useful background in understanding the development of systems of extension in India.

The early extension efforts had two distinct patterns. First, there were attempts by some benevolent persons and private agencies to improve rural life. Second, attempts were made at government level to initiate some projects to solve the pressing problems in agriculture.

When these experiments were conducted there existed certain conditions like, agriculture was the primary occupation to a large percentage of population, extremely low purchasing power, lack of application of science and technologies, lack of understanding about the natural resources especially the flora and fauna of the region and their commercial usage, lack of socio-economic organisations, etc. These realities are to be remembered before understanding the past rural development works. When these experiment were conducted, colonial rule was existing.

Merits and Demerits

These programmes and experiments were conducted at different points of time, in different regions, and under different politico-socio-economic conditions. They varied in area, population coverage, financial and other resources. They were designed according to the policy makers perception of problems and needs of people. Therefore common evaluation is not possible and each experiment for programme is to be studied independently for its approach, performance, effectiveness against the stated objectives, etc.

The projects had one or the other shortcomings which may be summed up as follows:

1. Most of the efforts were based on individual initiative.
2. Government backing and financing were not forthcoming.
3. All attempts were isolated, uneven and discontinuous.

4. Staff were mostly inexperienced and untrained.
5. Plans and programmes were ill-defined and unbalanced.
6. Need for proper methods and skills for approach was not realised.
7. No evaluation was carried out, hence the results were not known.
8. Association and coordination other development departments were very limited
9. Involvement of the people in planning and execution i.e. finding out the problems and their solutions was very limited.

Sriniketan Project (1914)

Shri Rabindra Nath Tagore wanted to develop a centre to extend his ideas on education in a rural setting. During 1914 he established a rural reconstruction institute at Sriniketan involving youth from a group of 8 villages. It maintained a demonstration farm, a dairy and poultry unit, an outdoor clinic, a department of cottage industries and a village school. These agencies were to treat the villages as their laboratory to identify problems and test their ideas. The villages were expected to approach these agencies through the village workers to obtain solution of their more pressing problems. These social workers lived in the villages and worked with the people.

At Sriniketan centre, agriculture, dairy and poultry were the foremost activities. Scheme of land development and tree plantation were given due importance. Experiment on paddy, sugarcane and cotton were undertaken. Improved seeds, vegetable seedlings, fruit grafts and saplings were distributed. New breeds of cattle were introduced. Local artisans were trained in cottage industries. Other activities were village scout movement, village developmental council, health, cooperatives, circulating library and village fairs.

Drawbacks

1. This institute could not get Government help and support.
2. It could not do research work and hence the programmes remained limited to those 8 villages only.

Economic Conference of Mysore

This programme was operated in Mysore state of the present Karnataka in the year 1914-1918. The objectives were: 1) achieve all round progress, 2) bringing related economic

development, and 3) give first priority to agriculture. District and taluk committees with the respective revenue officers were the officials responsible with a chairman. The officers of the development departments and the selected non-officials were members.

The committee surveyed the needs and possibilities, listed them, fixed the priorities and suggested the means for attaining them. But this programme was discontinued due to the immense work load to the officials and non-involvement of the people in the programme.

Marthandam Project (1921)

During 1921 under the auspices of YMCA, Marthandam project was started at Travancore in Kerala by Dr. Spencer Hatch, an American agricultural expert specialized in sociology. Fundamental aim of this programme was five fold development of physical, spiritual, mental, economic and social, Dr.Hatch implemented an all round development in agriculture, public health and education.

In this centre prize bulls and goats, model bee-hives, demonstration plots for improving grain and vegetable seeds, poultry with prize laying hens, a weaving shed, etc. were maintained.

It also worked for improving literacy. On weekly market day it set up a portable tent with teaching equipments, and exhibits with better poultry and livestock. The centre also promoted the cooperative. The society developed the improved breeds of egg layers and good bees. It assisted the people for marketing their produces through cooperative organisations. In 1939, the egg selling cooperative society become a self-governing body. Another society 'honey club' was also formed. This society cured the honey brought by villagers and marketed cooperatively. There were bull clubs, weavers' clubs, etc. These cooperative organisations are still continued by YMCA and the rural development is taken up intensively.

Sarvodaya Movement

It was a Gandhian concept and evoked great enthusiasm in Bombay since 1948-49. The main features were simplicity, non-violence, sanctity of labour and reconstruction of human values. It aimed in raising the standard of living, scientific development of agriculture, promotion of cottage industries, spread of literacy, medical and health facilities and the development of village panchayats.

Gurgaon Project (1920)

Towards the end of 1920 F.L.Brayne, an Englishman, was posted as Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon district. After his assumption of the charge he studied the area by touring and observed that the people were extremely poor, dirty and unhealthy, with no conscious desire for any better because they had no idea that anything better was possible. After seven years of study he developed a scheme called "The Gurgaon scheme" with the following objectives:

- to jerk the villagers out of their old groove and convince them that improvement is possible;
- he must be laughed out of his economic and unhealthy customs and taught better ways of living and farming.

He took the whole district as the field of operation and approached the area with every form of propaganda and publicity.

Under his programme village guides were posted in each village, who acted as the channel to pass on the information to villagers. The programme introduced improved seeds, implements, methods of cultivation, etc. The activities introduced by Brayne were:

1. A school of rural economy to train the village guides in 1925.
2. A domestic school of economy to train groups of women under women and children welfare work in 1926.
3. Health association, which ran five health centres in the district.
4. A women's Institute at Gurgaon to manage the ladies' garden in Gurgaon.

As the village guides were not technical men, only very little could be achieved.

Indian Village Service (1945)

Arther T. Mosher of New York and B.N.Gupta established it in 1945. The objectives were to assist village people to realise the best in their own village by developing individuals, volunteer leaders and local agencies, and establishing them to be effective in helping themselves and others. It was mainly to assist the government in villages.

For the realisation of these objectives the organisation adopted the techniques of personal contact, informal group discussion, use of volunteers, demonstrations, use and production of visual aids, exhibitions, tours, dramas, books, periodicals etc. It was financially supported by the contribution and donations.