

TOWARDS POVERTY
ALLEVIATION
PROGRAMMES IN
**NAGALAND
AND MANIPUR**

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Towards Poverty Alleviation Programmes in NAGALAND AND MANIPUR



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PREFACE

I have been following the courses of social, economic and political development in different parts of North East India for more than two decades. Besides I had an opportunity to more closely examine the social processes in North East India, for two years during 1975-77, as Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow. Though the present report is formally based on extensive tour in Nagaland and Manipur for about six weeks in 1983-84, at the instance of the Planning Commission, I have largely drawn upon the insight and understanding, that I could get about the region through my long contact and particularly through my earlier studies as Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow.

As the study was undertaken at the instance of the Planning Commission with the limited objective of evaluating the poverty alleviation programmes in Nagaland and Manipur, I have primarily focussed on the short-range issues involved in linking up the approaches and the programmes with the social structural specificities of the sub-regions and of the concerned communities. But I feel that in view of my long academic contact with the region, I also have the responsibility of providing a statement of perspective about the meaning of poverty, dynamics of generation and continuation of poverty and fundamental reorientation of approaches for removal of poverty in the region. I shall make an attempt in the preface. But I should make it clear that my analysis of the short range processes and my suggestions about the approaches at the programmatic level broadly conform to the long range contour, I am providing here at the conceptual level.

With the support of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, Madras Institute of Development Studies had organised three inter-disciplinary workshop on poverty in 1974, 1975 and 1976. The main theme of the first workshop was "who are the poor?". The participant Social Scientists accepted the definition of the poor as those "who lack the minimum requirements of food, clothing, shelter, medical and educational facilities".¹

The definition has been criticised by some scholars as rather narrow or as of limited use for operational purposes. We shall turn to these criticisms later. Here it is to be noted that even this narrow definition of the "poor" is considerably broader than the definition adopted in the plan documents. Poverty line has been defined in the sixth plan as the mid-point of the monthly per-capita expenditure class having a daily calorie intake of 2400 per person in rural areas and 2100 in urban areas. At 1979-80 prices, the mid-points are Rs. 76/- in rural areas and Rs. 88/- in urban areas. For operational purpose the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has decided that the target population should be identified from among the families owing or operating less than 5 acres of land and other families whose income *prima facie* is less than Rs. 3500/- per annum. This narrow approach does not lack in technical rationale. But the meaning of such an approach in terms of political sociology is more important.

Linking up poverty with level of living, Ganguly and Gupta observe that the level of nutrition seems to be the most generalized expression of the level of living in a country with a vast base of mass poverty."²

The usual practice is to identify some leading food items, such as cereals and to use a certain quantity of these as a proxy

1. Rao, B. Sarveswara and Deshpande, V.N. (ed.) : 1982, Statement of the participant Social Scientists Part I; Poverty : an inter-disciplinary approach p. 82, Madras Institute of Development Studies. Somaiya Publications Ltd., Bombay.
2. Ganguli, B.N. and Gupta, D., 1976 : *Levels of living*. p. 7. S. Chand & Co. New Delhi.

for the calorie requirements in terms of which the minimal level of living is generally indicated. The level of expenditure at which the minimum level of living can be attained is in its turn obtained from N.S.S. reports.³ Though such an approach is quite convenient for operational purposes, its serious limitations have been pointed out by various scholars. One of the difficulties is that some of the food items obtained from non-monetised sources are not adequately covered by the N.S.S. Then comes the question of the kind of prices that are to be used to convert physical quantities into values, particularly when calculations are required for different points of time.⁴

It is also interesting that though in line with the general practice Ganguly and Gupta have favoured level of nutrition as the generalised measure of the level of living, they have found that "there is a weak relationship between nutrition and a number of socio-economic variables which have a bearing on the development process and the levels of living".⁵ This finding seems to knock out the validity of the procedure of identifying the people below certain level of income (at which access to certain level of nutrition can be assumed to exist) as poor. But then there is a political dimension of it. As observed by Sen "it makes it worthwhile for public policy makers seeking credit for achievements in 'garibi-hatao' to concentrate on people just below the level $Y +$. Pushing them a little higher brings rich dividends in terms of this poverty measure, while the credit for pushing up even poorer people is likely to be zero in this measure unless they are pushed up quite a bit."⁶ The roles of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) primarily meant for marginal farmers, artisans, petty traders and other vulnerable sections of the

3. Kurien, C.T. : Economics and analysis of levels of living 1982(a). Some methodological problems in (ed) B. Sarveswara Rao and V.N. Deshpande, 1982 *Op. cit.*, p. 182.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Op. cit.*
6. Sen, A.K. 1974 : Poverty inequality and unemployment : Some conceptual issues in measurement, *Sankhya* Vol. 3 Quoted in Kurien, C.T. 1982, *Op. cit.*

population with inadequate resource base on the one hand, and of National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) primarily meant for the rural landless labour on the other, may be considered from this angle.

Gautam Mathur⁷ considers that "the problem of finding who the poor are is not a problem of dimensions of numbers regarding percentage of population from the bottom, because that dimension has been subject very much to the statistical investigator's opinion as to what should be called poverty." "The question as to what is adequate consumption is dependent upon what are the spheres of activity for which adequacy is thought to be important". "The nutrition and other consumption requirements and their form and composition of a standard which is thought to be necessary for a hardy farmer using ploughs may be thought to be much higher than those which might be considered adequate for a comfortable tractor driver, and the weight to be attached to one of the other depends upon the structure of the economy according to the strategy to be adopted wherein less mechanised or more mechanised techniques are stressed." Mathur suggests that rather than the definition of poverty, the main concern should be find out "why are the poor not well to do?" This question is of particular relevance for Nagaland and Manipur. The present study shows that some of the communities in Nagaland and Manipur have by tradition control of and access to rich resources, but they are not well-off. They are conscious of the fact that their level of living is not satisfactory, but it is difficult to say that they perceive themselves as poor. More frequently they perceive themselves as cordoned off from the benefits of their resources. The problem arises from the cognitive dichotomy of the state and the community about their respective relations with land and land based resources. While the state claims to be the owner of such resources, the community contests it. This was

7. Mathur, Gautam : The analytical dimensions of the problem of poverty in (ed) B. Sarveswara Rao and V.N. Deshpande, 1982. *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

taken to the court in Manipur and in 1961, the Judicial Commissioner gave his decision in favour of the community.⁸ Since then for own consumption and for some sale, access of the community to the resources in a restricted manner is not much interfered with; but both in Nagaland and Manipur the tendency is not to recognise the communal character of the resource as the basis for flow of developmental input. Generally development inputs in respect of specific resources are channelised through individuals and not through the community as such. It is only after the establishment of the Village Development Boards in Nagaland in recent years, that the community is being recognised as the resource-owning unit to a limited extent even for the flow of development input. This certainly is a break-through in the positive direction. But it is the finding the present study that a viable strategy of developing community resources on a significant scale without disturbing the basic relations of the community with the resources is yet to be worked out. It appears that one of the inhibiting factors is the recommendation of the National Committee on Backward Areas, set up by the Planning Commission favouring individualisation of communal lands for the sake of "progress". Whatever might be the wisdom of such an approach, the resources remain locked up and many resource rich areas have been classified as backward. One wonders whether, it is not a dramatic affirmation of the postulates advanced by Saberwal⁹ about the dynamics of perpetuation of poverty. He avers, firstly that the elites perceive the poor as incompetent. They do not consider the mass of the poor to be competent to protect their own interests. Secondly, the poor find themselves treated as incompetent. "All consequential structures of decision and performance are organised so

8. AIR 1961 Manipur 31 (V48 C10) Y.N.R. Thulampad, J.C. reproduced in Appendix xxviii Demographic and Socio-Economic profiles of the Hill Areas of North East India. B.K. Roy Burman 1961 Census Office, The Registrar General of India.

9. Saberwal, N. Satish, 1982 : The poor as incompetent people in Poverty (ed.) B.S. Rao and V.N. Deshpande. *Op. cit.*

that those who control and operate these structures are separated, by formidable protocol, from the bottom 40, or even the 95 per cent of the population." Finally, the society is so organised as to keep the poor incompetent. "The key element of this organisation is very great variation in the pattern of property holdings."

In the specific context of the Hill Areas of North East India many suggest that any attempt to build up the strategy of development based on common property resources, is to move against the avalanche of market economy of the contemporary world. In this, the approaches of many scholars and political practitioners of Marxist orientation, and of their counterparts of liberal platform seem to converge.

Barun De and Nripen Bandopadhyay, known to hold Marxist perspective, have observed that "in the North Eastern Region, where British rule followed Inner Line policies for its strategic needs of building buffers against either the Burmese or the Chinese, there are to be found tribes which have maintained autarchy vis-a-vis plains economy... but what is to be more noted is the fact that while these tribes lived on the verge of tea-plantation areas of India, they have consistently and historically refused to participate in the plantation labour force". In the same paper the authors have projected the breakdown of communal land system, under the impact of the market forces almost as inevitable.¹⁰ Another scholar, Misra,¹¹ has provided considerable information about the prevalence of private ownership in the Hill Areas of North East India including Nagaland. In the light of such information he concludes that "the economy of the tribal societies in North East India may be said to be a little more rural and agrarian, and hence more backward, than in the rest of the country." This however is a

hasty conclusion. In examining the institutionalised relationships with land, rights of access, control, management, succession by birth, as well as rights of inclusion or exclusion of any category of population from the enjoyment of any of these rights with or without sanction of any over-riding politico-legal authority are to be considered. It has been pointed out in the present appraisal study that even in the last century or early part of the present century communal ownership represented by right of inclusion or exclusion of any category of population from the enjoyment of the rights of use of the resources in one form or the other existed side by side with individual prerogative. A deeper probe will show that through exogenous politico-administrative intervention, individual functionaries tended to subvert the communal rights both during the colonial period and the post-colonial period. But side by side with the same, resistance to such subversion also went on through internal political processes within the communities.

Leaving aside the tribal communities of North East India, with fairly developed agro-forestry technologies, even among the most primitive tribes communal systems and individual prerogatives have been found to co-exist all over the world. Hence the empirical evidences of the contemporary situation, should not be taken as the pointers of an inexorable law of the disintegration of the communal system. It is not necessary to consider the socialist countries for obvious reason. What is more significant is that even in some of the capitalist countries common property resources are not only statutorily protected but also integrated in the production and marketing systems. In New Zealand, despite increasing urbanisation (about 50 per cent of the present population) the occupation of ancestral land and its development for agriculture remain important issues for the Maori.¹² The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 recognized the ownership of the country by various tribal groups and guaranteed the continuing possession of those

10. De Barun and Bandopadhyay, Nripen, 1982 : An approach to the study of tribal economy; (ed) K.S. Singh : *Economics of the tribes and their transformation*. Concept Publishing Co. New Delhi.

11. Misra, Bani Prasanna, 1982 : Kirata Kanyokinesis-an introduction to the political economy of the tribal societies in North East India in (ed) K.S. Singh, *Economics of the tribes and their transformation*.

12. Kawharu, I.H., 1979 : New Zealand : Mori incorporations-introduction in Trends in Ethnic Group Relations in Asia and Oceania UNESCO ISBN 92-3-101603-2.

lands, the tribes wished to retain. The Native Land Court Act 1894, instituted a simple system whereby the owners of a piece of Maori land could be incorporated by an order of the Native Land Court. When the Maori Land Court issues an order incorporating the owners of a piece of land, the owners then become a single legal entity much like an ordinary corporation or company. A committee of management is elected by the members. The committee may for instance engage in farming and afforestation as well as being empowered to raise finance or the security of the land or livestock, generally act on behalf of the owners as a whole. Since the Second World War, there has been a rapidly growing interest in the system and more and more incorporations have been formed.¹³

In Peru the land rights of the indigenous peoples are legally recognised by the national government and are even instituted in the Peruvian Political Constitution. There are communities whose irrigated lands are privately managed, whereas the dry lands and natural grasslands are communal, there are also communities where the dry and irrigated lands are communal while the natural grasslands are private property. The AYNICA and MINKA communal forms of work inherited from the pre-hispanic times are generally practiced in both types of communities, and in the same way, these communities maintain their pre-hispanic social, political and religious organizational patterns.¹⁴ In the early 70's the Yirriketa people in Australia attempted to convince the court that the Anglo-Australian common law incorporate a doctrine of 'communal native title' whereby aboriginal communities could assert inherent right to land. Justice Blackburn recognised that the aboriginals did have complex legal system but that he was bound by a decision of the Privy Council in England in 1889.

13. McEwen, I.M., 1979 : Tenurial changes and development of laws relating to incorporation. Trends in Ethnic group relations UNESCO.

14. Mejia U.O. *et al.* Land rights of the indigenous peoples and international reforms and systems of land tenure: Report of international N.G.O. conference on indigenous peoples and the land : Palais de Nations, Geneva, 15-18 Sep. 1981 Organised by N.G.O. Committee on Human Rights.

He also questioned the doctrine of communal native title; but the issue has never been treated in the High Court of Australia. An attempt to raise the fundamental issues in 1979 failed for other reasons, though two justices were prepared to consider that these were arguable.¹⁵

Similar information are available from several other countries as well. These negate the widely held view, particularly among many Marxists of the inexorable law of development leading to disintegration of communal system under capitalism for a subsequent reintegration under socialism. It is however to be noted that not only at the empirical level, even at the theoretical level, such teleological perception of history is not held by all. Both Marx and Engels seem to have entertained a more flexible approach. In 1874 Engels had recognised the possibility of favourable transformation of the communal system into a higher form avoiding the intermediate stages of bourgeois property. In 1882 in the preface to the Russian translation of the Communist Manifesto signed by Marx and Engels it was affirmed that the then contemporary Russian system of communal ownership could serve as the starting point for a communist development. "It however appears that many Marxists have not uniformly fallen in line with this perspective".¹⁶

Recently Victor Sheinis and Anatoli Elyanov from Soviet Union, have gone into the issues involved in the developing countries in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁷ "The reorganisation of the economy that has been going on in the developing countries for the past few decades is unprecedented in scale and intensity in the economic history of most of them". "In most countries, successes were achieved on the basis of extremely unequal,

15. Nefflehem, G. (International Commission of Jurists Australian Section) 1981 : Aboriginal land rights in Australia in Report of International N.G.O. conference on Indigenous peoples and the land 15-18 Sept. 1981.

16. Carr, E.H. 1970/1972 Studies revolution. The Universal Library Grosche and Durlup, New York.

17. Sheinis, Victor and Elyanov, Anatoli, 1983 : Developing countries in the 1970-1980's Asia and Africa March-April Mezhdunarodnyee Kniga (32/34) Smolenskaya Sennaya Moscow, U.S.S.R.

spotty development which affected archaic traditional structures to some degree or other, but did not always penetrate them entirely". "The reorganisation of backward social structures within various modes of living, their adaptation to radically different, higher forms of social life (from an economic, social and cultural point of view) is extra-ordinary complex. Therefore, it would be wrong to think that serious economic and social disproportions can be eliminated within the present generation. Extremely diverse systems exist in the developing world, and they will probably remain for a long time". "The complexity of these problems is irrefutable proof that the criterion of capitalist profitability—is beginning to lose its former role. Reality demands a broader and more far-sighted approach to evaluating technological progress, including ecological, resource-wise, social and other aspects of development as well as purely economic ones". "The great number and stability of symbiotic forms of socio-economic organisation differing, not only from developed relations of capitalism or socialism but also from each other,—will probably provide a large number of variations within the framework of both alternatives". "But the probable path of these developing countries which will progress in the foreseeable future, from mixed to modern bourgeois society is not a simple repetition of the stages passed through by Western Europe and North America".

In this matter the experiences gained in Soviet Union itself are worth noting. After the revolution in the areas "populated predominantly by peasants, cultivating their own land and drawn into commodity-money relations, Kislak and aul (village) Soviets were set up on a territorial basis". "In the areas with predominantly patriarchal-communal relations, peasant Soviets usually came into existence on a clan, tribal or ethnic basis". While, this somewhat smoothed the way for transformations in as much as "they were initially effected in the traditional institutes the population was psychologically accustomed to", the Soviet leaders were also conscious of the fact that "latent in the same traditions was the danger of identifying new socio-political structures with clan-communal

relations". They encouraged measures for democratisation of internal power structure of the communities and of the functioning of the clan Soviets over a length of time.¹⁸

Though political framework and political culture of the country as a whole and of the communities in North East India, are very much different from those of U.S.S.R, one should not miss the point that social transformation takes place by taking advantage of the existing social structure (by taking the bull by the horns, as it were) and not by turning one's back on it.

Turning to a non-socialist country, in Greenland where hunting and fishing communities have been absorbed within the boundaries of Danish Welfare State by a constitutional amendment in 1953, pre-existing Eskimo tradition of community food sharing, solidarity, cooperation are encouraged side by side with the state support of mainly private enterprise.¹⁹

While this rapid overview confirms that in certain situations development strategy based on communal ownership and management of resources can be empirically viable and historically a positive factor, irrespective of the political system, it does not mean that communal system should be automatically lionised without a close look into the arrangement of its internal structural elements as well as into the pattern of articulation of the same with the external world. In this connection particular attention is to be given to the following aspects²⁰ :

I. Context and situational bases for perception, maintenance and changes in the identified-structure of the community.

18. Andreyev, Igor, 1983 : Soviet experience of establishing peasants Asia and Africa March-April 1983.
19. Jensen, Bent, 1983 : Experimentation stock, taking and paradigmatic development in the Welfare State of Denmark : Proceedings of IDPAD Seminar. The Hague 13-15 June 1983 Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi and Institute for Social Science Research, The Hague.
20. In formulating the issues, apart from my studies in North East India, I have drawn considerably upon the various papers contributed to the IADP Seminar : I am thankful to ICSSR Delhi and ISSR, the Hague the organisers of the seminar.

- II. Community resources with particular reference to number, financial assets, social organisation, values and behavioural norms, education and skill.
- III. Mobilisation aspect covering morale, motivation, leadership, cohesiveness and ability to adapt to or cope with new stress situations.
- IV. Epistemic correlates of ideas to ensure self-regulation of the community. Particular attention is to be given to (a) perception of various dimensions of freedom and inter-articulation of the same with class relations, and (b) correspondence between duties and rights.
- V. Extent of direct linkage of the organs of power at the community level with the masses and their actions and the manner of articulation of the same with state power or with a--political systems of regulation of community life transcending the community level.
- VI. Pattern of relationship of struggle for status of women, disadvantaged ethnic groups and other segments of population with struggles for reordering the pattern of ownership, management and control of or access to resources.
- VII. Extent of subordination of private enterprise and private initiative to public interest.
- VIII. Network constituted within the community and outside by production, exchange and life-cycle rituals.
- IX. Meanings assigned by respective communities to analogous elements of social structure, changes taking place over time and space and extent of inter-community convergence or divergence in such changes.
- X. Inter and infra-community communication structure with reference to content and with reference to the role of the gate-keepers of the media in diverse situational contexts.

Information on many of these aspects in respect of the communities of North East India is not adequately available. But some relevant information was noted during the present study. For instance, among many Naga tribes, in addition to land under occupation of individual households, there are clan and village community lands. Every member of the community has access to the resources of those lands under varying conditions which again differ from community to community, but which have not been codified. The corporate nature of relationship of the community with the resources is symbolised in the system of collection of Naga commission. Even when a tree belonging to an individual for which royalty is chargeable, is sold, the village community is entitled to a payment. Till 1977, there was no uniform rate in this matter. By a notification issued in May 1977, a uniform rate of 20 per cent of the royalty, was introduced throughout the state. It is collected by the Divisional Forest Officer and paid to the villager through the Deputy Commissioner.

In the Hill Areas of Manipur, the communal land system exists in broadly two forms. In the areas mainly inhabited by the Naga tribes much of the land and other natural resources are owned, managed and controlled by the traditional village councils in the interest of the community as a whole. In the areas inhabited by Kuki-mizo group of tribes, where all members of the local community have access to communal resources, the chief enjoys some prerogatives. Among some tribes in Nagaland also such prerogatives are found to exist. Where the members of the chief's family try to take up entrepreneurial role taking advantage of such prerogative, a quasi-monopolistic trend in the utilisation of common property resources set in, leading to political disaffection among the commoners, which in the long run erodes away the operational base of new productive enterprises. What is however significant is that among many tribes of this group, control of common property resources by the chief versus the commoners has become not only an ideological issue but also a symbol of identity. In Manipur, Chief's prerogative is considered to be

a symbol of Mizo-Kuki identity; management of resources by the village community as a whole through village council, is considered to be a mark of Naga identity. In this ideological tussle, many communities are discarding their Mizo-Kuki affiliation and coming over to the Naga fold. This trend is gaining momentum; and this is an indicator of the viability of community system in the modern context. Another aspect to be kept in view is the persistence of reciprocity and redistributive mechanism within the community centering the clearance of the jungle, maintenance of public conveniences, agricultural operation, large scale fishing, ceremonial hunt, house-building and life-cycle rituals. These facts are of considerable importance for analysing the mode of production²¹ (which means in a restricted sense "a combination,—which is capable of reproducing itself, of productive forces and specific social relations of production which determine the structure and form of the process of production and the circulation of material goods within a historically determined society") among the hill dwellers of North East India.

For designing the short-range strategies of development these information are useful in other ways also. Before passing on to them, brief references will be made to some of the relevant concepts.

Kurien²² has drawn attention to the fact that "much of liberal economics is based on the assumption that ownership patterns of resources do not affect the use of the services of the resources. Secondly, in what is considered to be the norm in liberal theory, the use of resources is also not governed by power. The absence of the consideration of power in decision making regarding the use of resources is achieved by assuming that there is such a wide diffusion of power in the system that power is matched by power". He further observes "In its explicit recognition of ownership and power in the treatment

21. Goddell, Maurice; 1977 : Perspective in Marxist Anthropology, p. 18.

22. Kurien, C. J. 1982 (b) : Limitation of economic analysis for evolving strategies for eradication of poverty in (ed) B. S. Rao and V. N. Deshpande *Op. cit.*

of economic problems and in placing poverty in historical perspective, Marxism stands in sharp contrast with liberal economics. But in its close identification of power with property, Marxism also became postulational. Much of Marxist analysis proceeds 'as if' ownership of property is the only source of power in the system". It is not proposed to consider here, whether Marxists always consider power as a spin-off of property. Only to keep the question open, a note may be taken of what a Soviet Social Scientist Andreyev²³ has to say in this regard "Parliamentarism in an undeveloped representative democracy could not effectively become a sufficiently effective means of awakening peoples, that had been oppressed and suppressed for centuries, to independent activity. It objectively led to bureaucratism and false self-government exercised behind the screen of communal traditions". At the empirical level, the situational appraisal in the hills of North East India and for the matter of that, in many other tribal areas of India, bring out the fact that as an aftermath of the colonial rule and fall-out of the prevailing international economic order, discordance between right of ownership and exercise of decisive power may become progressively sharper at the local level. In that case, ownership of land may not be the key determinant of production; control of infrastructure and of state power at the national level have much more important role to play. This is reflected in the context of the model schemes approved by the state in Nagaland and Manipur for being implemented in the pursuit of the poverty alleviation programme. Most of the items in these model schemes seem to be oriented to serve the needs of the urban and national market. But it seems that not much thought has been given to make up "the inadequacy of the production of goods (in the system as a whole) required for basic consumption" of the poor, though, there would be a general agreement that mass poverty hinges to a large extent on such inadequacy.²⁴ Besides, if one goes by Chayanov's

23. Andreyev, 1983. *Op. cit.*

24. Kurien, C.T. 1982(b) *Op. cit.*

postulation²⁵ of labour consumer balance between the satisfaction of family needs and the drudgery (or irksomeness) of labour, one would find it difficult to overcome an uncomfortable feeling that the population concerned are being pushed along the slippery slope of "powerlessness", and thus the prerogatives they might enjoy through ownership of resources are being eroded away. This feeling, along with a general appreciation of the platform espoused by Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi that "the task of social and economic development would ever remain a far cry unless the programme by their own impact had led to the development of leadership in the village community and stimulated the growth of its human resources" made it imperative to examine the institutional arrangements at the local community level for implementing the poverty alleviation programmes. It was found that while in Nagaland an imaginative beginning was made through inducing the traditional village councils to set up Village Development Boards, in Manipur, the structures of decentralisation and organisation of power were empty of content. But as the objective conditions differ very much as between the plains and the hills, two different types of approaches have been suggested.

Turning to the content of poverty alleviation programme, there would be a general agreement that the society itself must be taken into consideration.²⁶ Misra²⁷ speaks of three types of society in the analogy of the earth sciences (a) porous (b) permeable and (c) impermeable. "In porous society, investment to raise the level of living of the people, percolate downwards, upwards and sideways, so that every individual benefits almost equally from it. This leads to greater participation of all the people, in the productive activities. None progresses unless all

25. Thorner, Daniel, 1980: A post-Marxian theory, of peasant economy; the school of Chayanov in *The Shaping of modern India*, Allied Publishers Bombay; 1980.

26. Dasgupta, Sugata, 1961 : History and philosophy of social work in India; (ed) A.R. Wadia, Allied Publishers Ltd. Bombay.

27. Sarana, Gopal and Halbar, B.G. 1982 : Indicators of levels of living an anthropological perspective in (ed) B. S. Rao and V.N. Deshpande *Op. cit.*

progress, and cooperation rather than competition becomes the basic philosophy of life. Surplus production gets recycled for mutual benefit". "In a permeable society, developmental investment is monopolized by a minority, part of it percolates down to a variety of middlemen vertically and horizontally linked with each other on the one hand and with the monopoly groups on the other. A majority of the people have no direct access to these investments, they come down to them as residuals through the middlemen. Greater investment means greater monopolization and further strengthening of the social system through the institutionalization of what was earlier discrete individual activity." "The third type is one, where almost nothing percolates downwards. It is completely monopolized by the uppermost stratum of the society". Though the terms adopted by Misra from the earth sciences can be improved upon, the descriptive typology provided by him is useful. By and large the communities in the hill areas of the North East come under the first category. They cherish egalitarian ethos; and there are significant movements in favour of functional egalitarianism. This is reflected in the operative norms of the Village Development Boards. But it is not only the long-running ethos, but psychic needs and pragmatic consideration that seem to inform the activities of many at these Boards.

Each Board has a fixed day and hour of the month when it meets at a public place. Apart from the members, any adult belonging to the community may attend it. The objective conditions that are taken into consideration are lack of production infrastructure (e.g. some villages are to be reached by 2 or 3 days' walk from the nearest jeepable road; negligible development of irrigation facilities almost all over the state; hardly two or three centres of veterinary assistance in some districts) side by side with lack of social infrastructure (e.g. absence of potable source of water in about 80% of the villages; absence of medical facilities within 20 km. for more than 30% of the villages). In this context coupled with the presence of socio-cultural mechanisms of sharing and redistribution of some surplus within the community, unencumbered by hierarchical

implications, it is improvement of the level of living of the community, rather than raising the income level of individuals, which has been perceived to be more important by the Village Development Boards. While in this matter they have been more prompted by the signals at the grass-root level, one wonders whether their performances would not have been better, had the insights of the studies being done on a global scale determining the parameters of level of living, relevant to diverse situations been communicated to them.²⁸ The strength of the community ethos comes out from the fact that in many cases while for satisfying the procedural norms laid down by the Planning Commission, financial assistances under Integrated Rural Development Programme have been extended in the names of individuals, these have been utilised as joint ventures of the community. It is of particular interest to note that of late there is a tendency to shift from production infrastructure and social infrastructure, towards joint production enterprises with the fund available with some of the Village Development Boards. This seems to be a spontaneous development and requires to be closely monitored. If such joint production enterprises at the community level function satisfactorily and strengthen the endogenous redistributive mechanism radical reformulation of the whole approach to poverty alleviation will be needed. But as will be discussed later this will also require a complete overhaul of the administrative culture that has become firmly entrenched in the country in the post-independence period.

One aspect of the functioning of the Village Development Boards deserves to be nestled with understanding of fellow human beings. Even social scientists have the right to be human.

Many of the Boards have been found to spend large sums raised by them on religious festivals and recreational activities.

28. U.N. Committee of experts 1954, 1961, International definitions and measurements of levels of living; discussed in Levels of living. B.N. Ganguly and D.B. Gupta 1976, S. Chand & Co. N. Delhi.

This phenomenon can be best understood in terms of the conceptual framework advanced by Oscar Lewis. He speaks²⁹ of 'culture of poverty'. "There is a great deal of pathos, suffering and emptiness among those who live in the culture of poverty. It does not provide much support or long range satisfaction and its encouragement of mistrust tends to magnify helplessness and isolation". "It is a world of its own which exists in the fringes of 'respectable' society which is class-scatified, highly individual and capitalistic?". As discussed earlier it is not so much poverty in terms of individual income, but poverty in terms of levels of living and a sense of powerlessness" of "alienation", which is the dominant feature of the social situation in this region. Hence it is more relevant to conceptualise the process as "culture of marginalisation" or as "culture of pluralism" as hinted by G.K. Lewis for the latter formulation.³⁰ However, whether it is perceived as "culture of poverty or of "marginalisation" or of "pluralism; in this concept 'the quality of relationship among people in society and quality of life of its individual members acquire importance".³¹ In assessing quality of life, as suggested by Botez and his colleagues³², along with income, housing, work, education, such aspects as attachment to collectivity, attachment to family, friendship patterns, personal prestige, non-substitution, political resources and action should also be taken into consideration. This perspective is in line with the humane formulation of Oscar Lewis³³, which tells us that "Even the most poor people

29. Lewis, Oscar, 1968 : La Vida A Puerto Rican Family in the culture of poverty discussed by Gopal Sarana : Attack against poverty some methodological suggestions from Anthropology on poverty (ed.) B.S. Rao and V.N. Despande, 1982, *Op. cit.*

30. Lewis, G.K. 1967 : Culture of poverty or poverty of culture. *Monthly Review* vol. 19 No. 4 116 West 14th Street. N. York.

31. Gopal Sarana 1982, *Op. ci.*

32. Botez, Mihaic, *Sisesti Ileana Ionescu et. al.* 1979 : Preliminaries on a comparative analysis of the various view-points on the quality of life : The United Nations University. (HSDRGPID-16/UNUP-78)

33. Lewis, Oscar, *Op. cit.*

cease to be member of the subculture of poverty when something gives them hope, and develops a feeling of identification with larger groups. Such a situation may develop through a religious or revolutionary movement". The abandon with which some of the Village Development Boards have gone in for festive performances and other congregational activities should be perceived as an expression of their anxiety to overcome the 'culture of marginalisation'. Signs are however already there to suggest that this is a transitional phenomenon. Man first lives in mankind. Once he feels assured of his mooring, he starts the restless quest to recreate his universe.

The most important thing about the formation of the Village Development Boards, is that, this is the first step, pavid and halting although, towards recognising that after-all the people may be "competent" to manage their own affairs. This is a liberating experience;—hopefully more for those in authority, than for the people themselves.

Once the first step has been taken, one cannot go back on the long march ahead. At present all Village Development Boards are hedged by bureaucratic protectionism. If it continues too long, organic growth of the Boards will be arrested. The experiment of handing over resources to the village level organisation to a sizeable extent, so that the people at the grass root level can plan their development within certain loosely defined parameters and execute the same, should not end in ossified institution building; but should be the launching pad for an intellectual-moral movement for self-management of the people, keeping to the broad national goals. In the long-run the appropriate functioning of the Village Development Boards, will require reinforcement by appropriate social philosophy in the historico-ecological setting of the region. For this purpose, intimate interaction of the intellectuals and the academics particularly of the younger generation and the broad mass of the population will be needed. At the national level such interaction has been envisaged in the Sixth Plan. Besides, the Expert Group set up by the Planning Commission in 1981, to review the anti-poverty programmes in the Sixth Plan has observed

that "there is need to associate academic and research institutions with the work of rural development in a much more organic and continuing manner than in the past".³⁴ Advantage of such statement of intention should be taken to bring in qualitative change in the functional setting of the Village Development Boards in Nagaland and of the analogous institutions which have been suggested in the main body of the present study for the plains and hills of Manipur.

Apart from the long range intellectual-moral reinforcement that the Village Development Boards are expected to get, the involvement of the youth and the intellectuals, may help to re-examine some of the existing approaches and strategies in a dispassionate manner.

Currently in the poverty alleviation programme a very great emphasis is given on commercialisation of agriculture and other productive activities. Studies by Parthasarathi³⁵ in a semi-tribal Boya Village of Andhra shows, how under conditions of primitive accumulation, commercialisation in the form of an impressive shift to groundnut crop led neither to development of land, nor to the improvement of the well-being of the poor in the village, while wealth accumulated in the hands of a few households. In North East India itself after referring to the early attempts to introduce cash crops like rubber, coffee, black pepper and cashew in the fertile middle slopes of the hill areas, Wadia³⁶ observed that without the cultivation of food-crops, it would not be possible to introduce any other cropping system. The National Committee on Backward Areas appointed by the Planning Commission in its report on North East India, has however failed to adequately take note of the implication of this

34. Quoted in the Newsletter of the Indian Association of Social Sciences Institutions. vol. 1 No. 4. July 1984.

35. Parthasarathy, G., 1978: Indian village studies and the village poor (ed) Biplab Dasgupta, Village studies in the third world; Hindustan Publishing Corporation (India) Delhi-7.

36. Wadia F. K. 1980 : Control of shifting cultivation in the North Eastern region (ed) J. Mathew; Tribal Economy of North East Region, Spectrum Publication Gauhati.

information. Independent academics and intellectuals are expected to monitor in every cultural-ecological niche, whether the right balance between commercial and subsistence oriented production is being maintained.

In addition, there is a more basic issue to be taken care of Elinor Graham³⁷, draws attention to what he calls 'politics of poverty'. "It is useful to locate welfare-state programmes on two scales, vertically and horizontally. The vertical scale of our imaginary axes indicates at one end whether the poverty stricken are singled out of the total society as objects for special aid or, at the opposite pole, social services and income payments are provided to all as a right of citizenship. The latter method is followed in most of the Swedish Welfare Programmes. Family payments, old-age pensions, and health services are provided for all members of the society regardless of their financial position. Most United States welfare programmes, including those proposed under the War on Poverty are located at the opposite pole : programmes are focussed at the particular low-income category and need must be proven in order to receive aid". "Certain important implications follow from the need based and service-oriented nature of War on Poverty programmes. First, separation of the poor from the rest of the society by means of need requirements increases the visibility of the low income earners. This is a 'war' on poverty—the very nature of such a proposal requires an exposure of 'the enemy' in its human form. In addition, separation of the poor creates a donor-donee relationship, whether it exists between the income-tax paying middle and upper classes and the low income earners, or the social worker and his client. In the context of American Social Philosophy, such a situation enhances the self-image of the well-to-do and places a stigma of failure and dependency upon aid recipients. Above all, it is the 'American way' to approach social-welfare issues, for it places the burden of responsibility upon the individual and not upon the socio-

37. Graham, Elinor, 1965 : Politics of poverty (ed) B.B. Seligman : Poverty as public issue : The Free Press, New York.

economic system "Graham also adds that the social service orientation of the War on Poverty is activity and job creating for middle and upper classes." "The War on Poverty, its programmes and ideology, are a response to the demands of an educated 'new class', it provides a legitimate outlet for the energies of a group that poses a greater threat to the political system and moral fabric of the society than the inadequately educated poor who are the official objects of aid". The observation of Graham with reference to U.S.A. is not wholly applicable to India; but it is not wholly inapplicable also. In fact, already there are suggestion³⁸ in India that satisfaction of minimum needs should be attempted primarily through re-scheduling the production technology and the terms and conditions of production and that there should be progressive reduction of the role of welfare measures. Some of the community organisations in Manipur and Nagaland in their functioning have indicated their awareness of the issues involved. Some of the Village Development Boards of Nagaland also seem to have instinctively moved in the direction of overall reorientation of production, rather than making their own people objects of charity. If the intellectuals and the academics closely interact with the people at the grass-root level for augmentation of the quality of life, it will be to their own benefit as well. Perhaps, they will be able to teach a few things to the illiterate mass; but they will also learn the rhythms of "continuous today" and "questioning tomorrow" from the people.

I thank Sri D. Bandopadhyay, Advisor Planning Commission, for initiating the present study. Also I thank Dr. B.N. Suhay, Jt. Advisor Planning Commission and Sri Madhukar Gupta, Deputy Secretary Planning Commission for the assistance they rendered to me, whenever needed. The Governments of Nagaland and Manipur extended to me, all courtsey and cooperation. I thank them. Particularly I thank Sri S.C. Jamir,

38. Roy, Burman B.K., 1981 : Strategies of tribal development (ed) L.P. Vidyarishi, *Tribal development and its administration*. Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi.

Chief Minister of Nagaland and his cabinet colleagues; Sri Rishang Keishang, Chief Minister of Manipur and his cabinet colleagues for the time they very graciously spared for discussing the findings of the present study. Also I would like to personally thank, Sri I. Lonkumar, Chief Secretary, Sri Daniel Kent, Development Commissioner and Secretary Planning, and Sri L. Colney, Agricultural Production Commissioner and Secretary Rural Development, Government of Nagaland, for extending to me administrative support in a massive manner. In Manipur Chief Secretary Sri D. Barua could spare time for a useful discussion and Principal Secretary Sri K.D. Menon took the trouble of coordinating my programme personally. I am beholden to them—Sri P.L. Thanga, Secretary, Rural Development, Manipur extended to me not only his administrative support, but intellectual partnership. I cannot thank him enough. Dr. Tiwari, Principal, Agricultural College Medziphema, Nagaland and his colleagues gave their enthusiastic support to the study. Besides, Sri Lanu Imchen, Lecturer of the college carried out field studies on my request. My thanks are to Dr. Tewari, Sri Imchen and their colleagues. My long discussions with Sri A.M. Gokhale, Secretary Education, Nagaland and Sri Kikheye, Additional Deputy Commissioner Kephire, who were associated with the Village Development Boards in their formative stage, have helped me considerably to see the growth of the institution in perspective. Discussions with social workers like Sri Natawar Thakkar, Sri Aomeri and with a personal friends like Sri D.K. Zeliang have given me better understanding of the dynamics of inter-related development of Village Councils and Village Development Boards. Similarly in Manipur, discussions with personal friends like Sri L. Achao Singh, a veteran leader of the people and Sri M.K.P.B. Singh, ex-chief minister of Manipur kept me posted with current developments in the rural areas of Manipur plains and hills. I cannot tell enough of the contribution of Prof. Gungmumei Kabui, of Manipur University, in the formulation of my thoughts about North East Region as a whole. During all my study tours in Manipur, including the present one, he

has inspite of many personal difficulties, graciously made himself available to accompany me almost everywhere. None has shared my intellectual agency and world-view more than him. And in this, he has been encouraged by his family including his wife, his father and late mother. To thank Prof. Kabui and his family is to thank myself.

Last but not the least, I am to thank Sri Imkanglemba, Research Officer, Department of Rural Development Nagaland, who accompanied me all through my tour in the state. In addition to the information provided by him based on his own studies, his insightful observations have been extremely useful. Sri Laba Yamben carried out field investigation for the present study and accompanied me in my visits to the interior of Manipur. His commitment and enthusiasm should take him a long way in the service of the people. I thank him; also I thank Sri Ibohal Singh, Director L.S.G., Govt. of Manipur, who on a very short notice organised my enquiries at Tamenglong and personally accompanied me to the field.

As mentioned at the outset I have drawn considerably on the insight I got about the region earlier as Jawahar Lal Nehru Fellow. I avail of this opportunity to thank Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Foundation. I also thank my colleagues in the Council for Social Development, particularly my P.A., Ms. Madhur Saxena, for extending all cooperation.

B. K. ROY BURMAN

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On an assignment from the Planning Commission, I undertook a rapid study of Poverty Alleviation Programme in Nagaland and Manipur.

The term of reference was as follows:

“The objective of the study would be to suggest modifications in the guidelines issued by the Government of India, with respect to the IRDP*, NREP**, RLEGP***, in the light of the special features obtaining in the areas of study. The main features that shall be examined in this regard would cover the following:

(I) Patterns of Land and Asset Ownership

This will cover aspects relating to assistance in the primary sector under the IRDP, question of security wherever the loan may be in excess of Rs.5000 and the management of asset under IRDP.

(II) Review of the Flow of Credit

This will cover aspects relating to availability of banking infrastructure, and questions of flow of credit to institutions as differentiated from individual loaning so as to suggest suitable system in this regard.

*Integrated Rural Development Programme.

**National Rural Employment Programme.

***Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme.

(III) Organisational requirements

This would cover the existing administrative and community organisations at the block level and the district level with a view to examining the existing methodology of planning and implementation of the programmes and making recommendations of strengthening reorganisations etc. Issues relating to horizontal and vertical coordination will also be studied.

(IV) Infrastructure

The position in respect of programme specific infrastructure such as training facilities, marketing, raw-materials support, availability of assets according to beneficiary preferences etc. will be examined.

(V) In respect of the special employment programmes a study of the schemes being taken up and those which would be appropriate for the areas under study would also be looked into, apart from the other constraints in respect of these schemes in terms of the existing guidelines.

(VI) Existing socio-economic situation will also be studied with a view to assessing the appropriateness of the concept of poverty and beneficiary identification, as laid down in the guideline for IRDP.

As the Planning Commission had already commenced the task of preparing guidelines for different sectors of planning for the Seventh Plan, I was required to complete the study in four weeks.

While I have been fairly closely following the developments in North-East India for more than two decades, it is obvious that a study with so wide term of reference in such a short time as indicated, cannot but be of the nature of a rapid over-view. It can raise a number of relevant questions, but it cannot be expected to answer all.

In connection with the present study, I visited Manipur during 24th January 1984 to 26th January 1984 and again during 14th February 1984 to 19th February 1984. Also, I visited Nagaland during 27th January to 29th January 1984 and then 7th February 1984 to 13th February 1984. A list of

places and institutions visited by me and of functionaries and persons interviewed is furnished at Annexure 1.

The focus of the study being poverty alleviation, it is necessary to examine at the outset the socio-economic situation in the two states, so as to be able to assess "the appropriateness of the concept of poverty and beneficiary identification as laid down in the guidelines for IRDP".

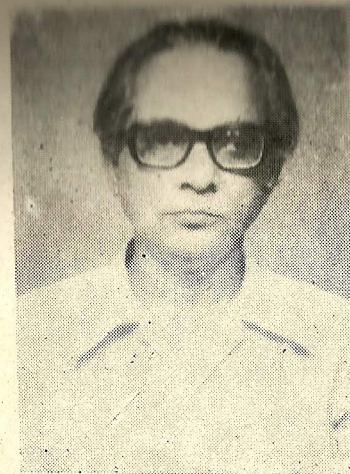
On the sponsorship of the Planning Commission, Prof. B. K. Roy Burman studied the Poverty Alleviation programmes in Nagaland and Manipur. Apart from the short-range issues involved in linking up the approaches and the programmes with the social structural specificities of the sub-region and of the concerned communities, Prof. Roy Burman has provided a statement of perspective about the meaning of poverty, dynamics of generation and continuation of poverty and fundamental reorientation approaches for removal of poverty, in the region.

In the context of inadequate development of infrastructure, public delivery system and social-consumption facilities, he has questioned the relevance of income as the measure of poverty. The present study by Prof. Roy Burman shows that some of the communities of Nagaland and Manipur have by tradition control of and access to resources; but they are not well-off. They are conscious of the fact that their level of living is not satisfactory; but it is difficult to say that they perceive themselves as poor. More frequently they perceive themselves as cordoned off from the benefits of their resources. The problem arises from the cognitive dichotomy of the state and the community, about their respective relations with land and land based resources. In this matter he sharply disagrees with the National Committee on Development of Backward areas, which has recommended individualisation of communal ownership for the sake of 'progress'.

Prof. Roy Burman has cited examples from several countries like New Zealand, Peru, Australia, Greenland in support of his point that modernisation of land use can take place even in a capitalist system without disintegrating the communal system of ownership of resources. He has also pointed out that some Marxists, including Marx and Engels themselves, did not rule out the possibility of communal system serving as the nucleus of socialist transformation without repetition of the stages passed through by Western Europe and North America.

Prof. Roy Burman however concludes that while in certain situation development strategy based on communal ownership and management of resources can be empirically viable and historically a positive factor, irrespective of the political system, it does not mean that communal system should be automatically lionised without a close look into the arrangement of its internal structural elements, as well as into the pattern of articulation of the same with the external world.

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As described in a recent anthropological publication Prof. B. K. Roy Burman is known among his admirers as a "walking encyclopaedia". Currently holding the position of Senior Professor, Council for Social Development, he is a man of varied interests which is reflected in the number of public positions he holds or has held during the last two decades: General President, Indian Social Science Congress; President, Delhi Sociological Association; Vice-President, Indian Anthropological Society; Vice-President, Indian Anthropological Association; Chairman, Futurology Commission, (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences); Vice-President, Indian Regional Science Association; Chairman Folk and Tribal Music Committee, Sangeet Natak Academy; Member, Executive Committee, Indian Society for Agricultural Economics; President, Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities; President, Institute of People's Action, Manipur; Chairman, Forests and Tribals Committee, Government of India and Member All India Handicrafts Board.

He is associated with a very large number of Boards/Committees/Councils/Advising bodies and other prestigious organisations several of them concerning with the development of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes at the Central or State level.

Professor Roy Burman started his academic career as Research Associate, Tribal Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal where he took over charge of setting up the Cultural Research Institute, Tribal Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal. During 1961-1974 he was associated with the Census Organisation, first as O.S.D. In-charge of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and then as Deputy Registrar General. In 1974 he was Visiting Fellow, Anthropological Survey of India and then he was awarded the prestigious Nehru Fellowship in 1975. Simultaneously he became Visiting Professor at Jawaharlal University. He served as Professor of Anthropology at Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan during 1977-82; and since September 1982 he is holding the present position.

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