

COMMUNICATION
IN
RURAL DEVELOPMENT

A Public Policy Perspective

SAMIRENDRA N. RAY

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Samirendra N. Ray

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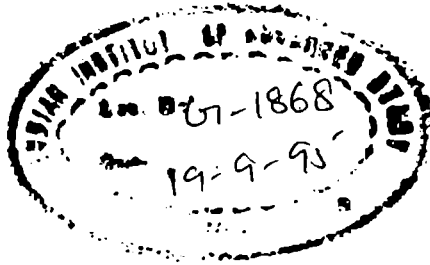
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Preface

Over three decades of experience in post-graduate teaching at the University level, supervising PhD research and conducting project work, convinced me that more than anything else, the manifold ailments of the society, polity and the economy in India could be basically traced to inadequate and wrongly perceived communication, if not its total absence. Whether it is national integration or foreign relations, economic development or political participation, social change or cultural orientation, this has been the greatest impediment to the goals of our national life. The hiatus between policy-making and its implementation, between the political leadership and the masses at the receiving end, between social goals and state action, could be largely explained by this single most critical causative factor. In the field of rural development, which has emerged as a distinctive area for policy and practice elsewhere in other parts of the developing world, but has only been paid a lip-service in our country during the decades of planning, the significance of the supportive role of communication, whether mass media-based or inter-personal or traditional, in promoting, facilitating or accelerating the process of holistic, integrated, decentralised, participatory and community-based rural development, has been hardly appreciated or recognised in our developmental policy or its implementation. For long, our policy-makers, scholars and professional experts have uncritically accepted the dominant paradigm advocated by the experts from the West without caring to appreciate its relevance in the unique and diverse Indian context. A state of anarchy has prevailed in the realm of thinking, perception and application. The present study was undertaken to understand and explore the ground realities in this neglected field and to take a close, critical look at the state-of-the-art research and public policy. This was a field long dominated by scholars in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, economics, science and technology, but which offered tremendous opportunity for

inter-disciplinary exercise. Being a political scientist by profession, it was with a sense of trepidation and misgiving that I decided to take up the challenge to offer a social scientist's perception of a problem that vitally concerns the present and the future of India's developmental enterprise. This has been a purely exploratory effort of a theoretical nature, without any pretension to originality. But behind this modest undertaking, there has been an undercurrent of conviction that the ground can be prepared truly and well for a better and fuller appreciation of this rather intricate problem that has so long eluded any meaningful solution. The effort will be rewarded only if it can generate critical responses and interactions from policy-makers, academic fraternity and the practitioners in the field. The recent declarations by the Government of India according the needed priority to rural development, and the constitutional recognition given to democratic decentralisation and local self-government, have lent additional urgency to this subject.

The study was undertaken with the generous offer of a full-time Fellowship in the idyllic surrounding and the lofty heights of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and no words of gratitude would be adequate for the wonderful support given by Professor J.S. Grewal, Director, his team of administrative officials and staff, the excellent library and secretarial facilities provided for this purpose, and the tremendous feedback obtained from the stimulating weekly and national seminars and the responses of the select band of fellow scholars working during the period of my stay. I owe a deep sense of gratitude to the authorities of the University of North Bengal for granting me the necessary leave for working on the project, to the Director and Library staff in the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi and the National Institute of Rural Development, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad; and to officials in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, in particular, Mr. Gautam Sanyal of the Indian Administrative Service. Last, but certainly not the least, this work could not have been even undertaken, let alone completed, without the ungrudging, continuous and never-failing support and inspiration provided by my wife, Chitra, our two beloved daughters, Sanghamitra and

Sanchayita, and the son-in-law, Aditya, to all of whom this book is lovingly dedicated as a token of my response to their love and affection. The untiring efforts of the Asstt. Publication Officer, Mr. N.K. Maini, and the Academic Resource Officer, Mr. S.A. Jabbar, are deeply acknowledged. Sins of omission and commission, and blemishes, if any, are entirely my own.

S.N. RAY

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Chapter I

Introduction

Communication is to society what the nervous system is to man. From the evolution of languages, writing, printing, telegraph, radio, telecom, television, the computer and the satellites, through laser communication, optical fibres, integrated circuits, space platforms, to audio and video cassettes, teletext, rural telephony and information, the world has come a long way, and the astonishing revolution in communication and electronic systems truly signifies the emergence of a new information era and information revolution. Since communication is both an instrument and product of development and technological advancement, a resource as much as education, the question of access and participation, control and coordination, assumes tremendous significance. Communication inherently implies lateral as much as vertical, two-way or circular flows that make for dialogue and exchange at and between all levels. The very growth, range and versatility of modern communication media, and the possibility of assembling it in varied combinations and systems with diverse capabilities vests it with an overarching importance. In the circumstances, the evolution of a philosophy as well as a policy for communication becomes not only desirable but increasingly inevitable. Since communication and technology are not neutral, and the media as much as the message has social and cultural implications, questions such as who has access to it, who controls it, at what cost, and who are the gate-keepers, have bearing on the nature and content of the message.

Communication presupposes a shared symbolic environment, a social relationship among those who participate. It leads to social interaction, and, in combination with a set of other factors,

contributes to a sense of community. It is a process of mutual participation in a common structure of rhythmic patterns by all members of a 'culture'. It is not synonymous with mere 'information'; it is a whole situation and an experience, a human relationship. The right to communicate is now seen as a basic and fundamental right, extending to groups, nations and the international community, and has important legal, economic and technological implications.

Communication can play an important supportive role in the nation-building process as well as in the process of development. Its significance can be critical if handled with imagination and dynamism. It can emerge as a powerful instrument of emotional integration between different sections of the population who are divided on ethnic, regional, religious or linguistic grounds. It can reduce social cleavages and can ensure active participation by large sections in selected areas of social action. Understood simply as transmission of meaning, it is a functional prerequisite of society, and can contribute to the persistence of the social order. It is a powerful tool, but its results depend on the ends towards which it is employed and the efficiency with which it is used.

Research has enabled us identify the major functions of communication as a socio-cultural process: transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to another; information, instruction and entertainment; conferment of status and legitimacy in reference individuals, reference groups and reference models; surveillance of the environment; consensus-building; enlargement of the mental horizons and cognitive changes; and encouragement of new ways of thought and action. Communication media are utilized largely to impart information with a view to increasing awareness of, and arousing interest in specific innovations, as in cultivation methods and practices in rural development, to exhort the masses of otherwise illiterate and ignorant people to adopt recommended practices and attitudes, and also to teach them particular skills and techniques. Unfortunately, the importance of communication as a valuable overhead is not sufficiently recognised--for building the desired

images, inculcating empathy, achieving high aspiration level, or for achievement-motivation.

It must be stated without hesitation that the relationship between communication-media-whether interpersonal forms, institutional networks or the media of mass-communication in this technological age-and culture and society is both all-pervasive and symbiotic. The boundary between them is difficult to demarcate, and if the two areas of contemporary life are divided arbitrarily, it must be done with a full recognition of their interdependence. Both historically and technologically, the methods and means of communicating messages have been very crucial to the integration and unity of a culture and society. The structure of the culture can be understood in terms of the communication process; at the same time, to understand the communication process, it is necessary to uncover and unravel the cultural foundations of a society.

The contemporary cultural scenario in India is confronted by two sinister sets of forces which are mutually interacting with, and reinforcing each other in a way that cannot but cause concern. On the one hand, as an information society is beginning to emerge in India, and a virtual explosion of communication technologies and their applications have brought about a veritable 'communication revolution', there has already emerged a kind of cultural and technological imperialism arising out of a hiatus between hardware growth and software growth of the media, uneven distribution of the technological mass media, their urban reach and elite character, that poses a real threat to the survival and sustenance of Indian culture and a frustrating experience for the policy-makers and the planners. On the other hand, even as culture has moved centre-stage, and as the emphasis has successively shifted from political freedom to economic growth to social equality and then to cultural autonomy, there is heightened cultural self-awareness on the part of the hitherto-neglected and isolated regions and groups and its aggressive assertion through a belligerent and at times violent resurgence of ethnic, linguistic, religious, communal and regional loyalties within a framework of culture of poverty and politics of scarcity, that seek to overshadow and overpower an

over- arching Pan-Indian cultural identity that is supposedly at the basis of nation-building and national integrity and unity for this country of sub-continental proportions characterised by cultural pluralism and diversities of language, religion and ethnicity, Granted the exponential expansion in the communication-information infrastructure, debate still persists on the effects and impact of the pervasive proliferation of the technological mass-media on the value-systems, 'masses' of the people, especially the small, silent voice of communication at the grassroots approach or a Frankenstein technotronic monster which would erode everything that goes by the name of Indian culture and tradition. Scholars have been prompted to ask what ought to be the guidelines for the expansion of the communication-network in a poor country like India so that we can utilize the benefits of modern technology without disrupting the traditional values and culture. Can we retain our cultural identity despite the increasing onslaught of the mass media like satellite television, the video and the commercial films, which have brought about so much of cultural degeneration in recent years and have threatened to destroy all communications at the roots? Behind this thinking is the very simplistic but logical assumption that a communication system cannot be fully understood apart from its socio-cultural context, a fact hitherto ignored by our communication scholars and planners influenced for long by western theories and models, and that culture must provide the supportive environment and resources for technology to grow properly and for communication to support development. The intention is to highlight the neglected role of India's own heritage of indigenous communication media in restoring, preserving and continuing the Indian cultural tradition and to emphasize the need for evolving and indigenous philosophy and policy for communication on the part of the public policy-makers in the country. The present exercise in this exploratory enterprise is to seek to offer the tentative outlines of a projected scenario of how the rich communication resources could be harnessed to inculcate the right kind of values that would facilitate development in a holistic sense and rural development in particular.

Despite a resurgence of interest in communication and national development in the wake of the new world information order debate, many questions remain to be answered. The path of communication development has taken twists and turns through four decades of hope and disillusionment, stagnation and upheaval. Though the perspectives of the role of communication in development held in the fifties and the sixties have changed, the need for development communication, or, development-support communication as it is known today, is as important today as it was four decades ago. The focus in the current concerns and approaches is not just a top-down flow of information and ideas, but co-equal knowledge-sharing between users and sources. Communication is now employed to conscientize the common people to their needs and problems, facilitate problem-articulation, help in self-development efforts, foster cultural growth and autonomy, serve as a tool for diagnosis of a community's problems, and function as important vehicle in bringing about community-participation. Newer perspectives of equity in distribution of information and other benefits of development, active participation of people at the grassroots, independence of local communities to tailor development projects to their own objectives, and integration of the old and new ideas, the traditional and the modern systems, to constitute a unique blend suited to the needs of a particular community, pose a great challenge to communication planners and policy-makers, while desperate technological dependence on the so-called 'developed' nations, the costs of technology, and the stranglehold of the multinational corporations on the flow of technology pose critical problems and constraints that might effectively block the growth of viable, relevant and self-reliant information technology in the so-called 'developing' or 'less developed' nations. The new paradigm of development, with its thrust on 'basic needs', 'another development' or 'sustainable development', has facilitated this process in no uncertain manner with its focus on the consumers, local activities, consumer-initiated change, participation of the villagers in the planning and decision-making processes, and low-cost, local-oriented 'little media' such as radio and transistors. Alongside with this, the

indigenous communication system has come to be appreciated in a big way since it appeared to be consistent with the new ideas in communication for development. The MacBride Report on "Many Voices, One World" (UNESCO, 1980) had correctly and categorically pointed out that it is essential to develop comprehensive national communication policies linked to overall social, cultural and economic development objectives, and that every country should develop its communication pattern in accordance with its own conditions, needs and traditions, thus strengthening its integrity, independence and self-reliance. Communication policies should offer a guide to the determination of information and media priorities and to the selection of appropriate technologies. Promoting conditions for the preservation of the cultural identity of every society is necessary to enable it to enjoy a harmonious and creative inter-relationship with other cultures. The western perspective of communication research has by and large ignored the social structure and has paid relatively scant attention to the functions of communication. Culture is rarely explicitly taken into consideration in research conceptualization. Conditions in India demand that both the process and methods of research designed be altered as a result of a variety of problems. There is a need for Indian scholars and professionals to bring their native insight and their own national perspective into the conceptualization of the research problems.

Development has come to be regarded as a total and holistic process involving economic, social, political and cultural elements. Its principal aim is to improve not only the economic, but the social, economic, cultural and environmental welfare of the nation. The current strategies are strategies of egalitarian development with primary emphasis on the redistribution of income in favour of the poor and the disadvantaged. It is a normative concept, implying choices about goals for achieving what Mahatma Gandhi had called 'the realization of the human potential'. There is a paradigm shift represented by the progressive replacement of the more conventional 'economic development' by 'social development' and the linking of it to the notion of 'human needs' and 'quality of life', both of which offer

conceptual novelties. There is need for a comprehensive yet strategic reorientation of the entire rural development policy which must aim at the creation of a new economy and a new social order. One must appreciate, in this context, that in India, as in many other developing countries of the so-called Third World, rural development has emerged in recent years as a distinct field of policy, practice and research, with focus on distributional issues involving the rural poor including the small farmers, the tenants and the landless. Development from below, which is based on participation in decision-making, has its own communication requirements. As development-thinking has moved beyond the conventional patterns, so must thinking in the field of communication. The whole field of communication and development has been in something of a ferment. Old assumptions have been widely questioned, and new issues have emerged. The crucial question at this moment is whether communication can be utilized as an active agent for correcting the distortions and imbalances inherent in the existing distribution of wealth and power, and for restructuring this distribution in favour of the disadvantaged and the deprived.

Even though the inter-relationship between communication and development, whether direct or indirect, has been clearly emphasized in scholarly writings and official pronouncements in recent years, especially in the context of the new philosophy of decentralized, people-oriented, participatory and self-reliant rural development with accent on distributive justice and egalitarian social order, it is sad to note that distinct conceptual or paradigmatic framework that could be termed 'Indian' has yet to take shape, and that whatever research has been done in this rather neglected field has not found its way into the policy process. A clear, consistent and integrated statement of national objectives and priorities in the field of development communication has been conspicuous by its absence despite all the plans for development during the last four decades. A striking fact that emerges from an overall assessment of India's planning policies, strategies and techniques, from the First Plan to the Seventh, is that a progressive refinement of planning techniques has gone hand in hand with an increasing divergence between the targets

and achievements of each successive Plan. Our planning policy was based on models of development unrelated to the reality of India, and a strategy of growth that had accepted, at least tacitly, a framework of dependency, and a basically colonial pattern of administration and Plan-implementation. Although rural development has been one of the abiding concerns of the successive Five Year Plans, with challenging political and social implications, there has not come about a comprehensive yet strategic reorientation of the entire rural development policy which must aim at the creation of a new economy and a new social order.

Three major factors have gone into the apparent failure of the development-path in India; two of them operational, and the third of a more substantive nature. The first relates to the role, rather failure, of a colonial bureaucracy to give shape and form, meaning and direction, to the new trends in development-thing, and the second, to a failure to introduce a communication-thinking, and the second, to a failure to introduce a communication-component in our development plans and programme in specific sectors, to define appropriate macro-policies for culture and communication, and to evolve an indigenous communication system that could rectify the present imbalances and conform to the peculiar and diverse needs of the culture and social structure of the country of sub-continental size and complexity. But more than these two functional and operational failures, there is a third, and by far the most crucial failure, the failure to develop an Indian model of development that would not only take into account the paradigm-shifts in development- thinking in the Third World of developing countries, but would keep in mind the development needs and aspirations of the vast multitude of the deprived, disadvantaged, poverty-stricken people who have all along been at the receiving end of our policies and programmes, being victims, so to say, of misplaced priorities and lop-sided implementation.

We may, at this point, conveniently and usefully refer to the 1990 declaration of the South Commission Report entitled "The Challenge to the South", which sets out a development strategy for the Third World in the light of the four decades of

experience. Defining development as a process which enables human beings to realise their potential, build self-confidence, and lead lives of fulfilment, a process which frees people from the fear of want and exploitation, and a movement away from political, economic or social oppression, the Commission of 28 members drawn from eminent Third World personalities and headed by former Tanzanian President, Zulus Nyerere, finds that a major flaw in the development-path followed by many developing countries in the post-Second World War period was that they too readily assumed that the benefits of economic growth would 'trickle down'. They took few direct steps like effective land reforms to improve the lot of the poor. Pointing out that the number of people living in poverty in the South had not appreciably come down, though their proportion had fallen, the Report says that high growth rates in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) achieved in many countries proved insufficient in themselves to remove poverty, in the absence of direct action to help the poor. The Commission has, therefore, made a strong plea for a revamping of strategies in order to achieve a self-reliant and people-oriented development-path. It emphasises the promotion of social justice and development of human resources as matters of primary concern. A recurrent theme of the Report is the need to narrow the knowledge-gap. Herein lies the crucial importance of a viable communication strategy. The relevance of the Commission's recommendations to the Indian situation is only too obvious, and must set the right perspective in which to develop our new development policy and strategy. The newly emerging concepts share a growing recognition of the cultural dimension which includes and coincides with the communication and information dimension, and also share the emphasis on rural development in which communication and information represent a key factor.

However, despite tremendous advances in science and technology, especially communication technology, the nature and role of communication in the development process has neither been adequately realized nor officially recognized in the form of a viable, integrated public policy. There is an increasing awareness and recognition in recent years that it is only by

defining the scope and priorities of rural development in the total scheme of things that a viable communication policy can be visualised for the future. The meaning, nature and content of information, education and communication as supportive inputs for rural development have not been clearly spelt out nor put into practice, in the context of their relevance to the Indian social structure and the cultural ethos, and their huge potential for transforming the socio-economic scenario.

Formation of a national communication policy becomes a matter of grave concern for the Third World countries, more so for a country of India's size and diversity. In the absence of explicit and comprehensive communication guidelines, there is every possibility that national culture and identity could be eroded by the undesirable and unwanted influx of foreign values through the media. Such policies are coherent sets of principles and norms designed to act as general guidelines for communication organs and institutions in individual countries. They provide a frame of reference for the elaboration of national strategies with a view to the setting up of communication infrastructure that will have a function to fulfil in the educational, social, cultural and economic development. In countries like India, communication planning has hitherto been done by subsystems such as print, broadcast, film and advertising, but there is a serious lack of explicit guidelines on important considerations such as priorities in resource- allocation and directions in hardware and software development. Systematic codification of these various sectoral and ad hoc measures constitutes the communication policy for a country. What is needed is not something radically new, but rather an explicit statement and deliberately prospective formulation of practices already established in the society.

India has entered the era of unprecedented technological modernization and communication revolution. But we have yet to integrate the new communication technology into our own cultural and social milieu, and to make it responsive to the needs of the small farmer, the landless peasant, the artisan, the labourer, the enterpreneur and the cultural workers in the vast unorganized sector of the Indian economy. The tragedy of the

Indian situation is that there is a wide gulf and serious communication gap between the professional communication experts or technocrats, the bureaucrats and the political elites who decide on the design and the strategy of the communication revolution on the one hand, and the natural and social scientists, specialists in the areas of art and culture, social and political activists at the grassroots, and the people's representative who constitute the social, political and cultural 'think tank' and conscience of the Indian nation outside the governmental sector. There are no effective fora for interaction and collaboration between the decision-makers in the field of communication and the agents of development and change. Despite phenomenal progress in the field of communication technology and capability, a truly national communication revolution from the point of view of social engineering has not materialised, and the country is still groping in the dark for an indigenous development support communication model or a viable communication policy and strategy that can harness the vast potential of communication technology for achieving the desired goals. Even some significant policy-shifts in other sectors and the establishment of several technology missions during the later part of the eighties, failed to get crystallized into a coherent, realistic, rational and much-anticipated public policy for communication. The consequence has been rather unhappy in all respects.

Communication has truly become a multi-disciplinary, if not strictly an inter-disciplinary study, transcending the traditional boundaries of psychology and sociology, and traversing such disciplines and sub-disciplines as theology and analytical philosophy, psycho-linguistics, physical sciences and cybernetics, arts and literature, journalism and political science, anthropology and economics. It is a mistake to consider the mass communication media in the modern age as the exclusive preserve of science and technology. Humanities and the social sciences have no less of involvement in the task and process of communication. One of the most important lacunae in the realm of theory and practice of development communication in India seems to be the lack of scientific and objective socio-economic research needed to tap economically feasible and socially acceptable technologies. Since

social-structural variables are crucial in influencing the communication flow in the social system, it would be useful to draw upon social science research such as in the field of anthropology, sociology, social psychology, economics and political science. Collaborative, inter-disciplinary research on communication would surely yield better results. Enlightened and intelligent communication policies depend on the information that only research can provide. However, it is not any and every kind of research, conventional, status-quo-oriented, pro-establishment, positivistic, behaviouristic, empiricist or psychological-oriented-that can provide meaningful inputs into the policy process. Only problem and policy-oriented research, primarily with a sociological perspective, can help contribute positively to the making and adoption of communication policies. For long, communication research in India had been media and journalism-oriented, school-based, Western-influenced and multi-directional. Such research focussed on two elements, communication and audiences. In the 1980s, audience-research was taking a back seat to media research and media-effects studies. By and large, studies were done in isolation, ignoring relationship of communication to social structures, policies or production culture. There was none or very little of critical research, lacking coordination or direction. The old format of audience must research and impact studies, based on the same old neo- positivistic methodologies and 'bourgeois problematics' of simple survey, content analysis and case studies, failed to generate explanatory theories, and despite a virtual explosion of empirical data, on worthwhile critical analysis, conceptualization and theory-building have come about. And, whatever little research has been done has not found its way into the policy process. A new communication policy must evolve strategies to respond to changing social needs and must be sensitive to new frontiers of communication thought and practice emerging from recent researches in the field.

While the thrust of rural development policy should be poverty-alleviation and distributive justice, the major goal of a national communication policy should also be to support that development-path. Community approach and community

institutions, within a communitarian framework, should constitute the common basis of a holistic and integrated policy. The basic problem is that of linking communication facilities and activities to other national objectives, or, in other words, that of integrating communication development into overall development plans. Communication policies must go hand in hand with those formulated in other fields like education, culture and science, and should be designed to supplement them.

Keeping the above perspective in mind, the present study, which is purely exploratory in nature and theoretical in orientation, would seek, in the subsequent chapters, to achieve the following objectives, based on a careful perusal and assessment of the limited but potentially rich available data at the macro and the micro levels:

- I. To study the broad trends of development-thinking and development-communication inter-relationship in the writings of Euro-American scholars who have for long influenced and conditioned Indian academic writings, and their acceptance or otherwise in India's development-experience in the 1950s and the 1960s ;
- II. To trace the emergence of the changing perceptions in these fields in the 1970s and the 1980s, and how far these were reflected in Indian thinking ;
- III. To set the pattern of communication-development relationship in the proper Indian perspective, especially in the context of the Indian society and culture ;
- IV. To identify the problem-areas and to investigate whether the perceived problem-areas have been adequately realized and acted upon in terms of government policy and its implementation
- V. To highlight the failure of the national government to evolve an explicit, well-articulated, integrated and comprehensive national communication policy as a supportive input to development in general and rural development in particular, and its negative impact on the development- situation in the country ;
- VI. To analyse the broad approaches to and strategies of rural development in India and the role of Development Support Communication in facilitating and promoting rural development policies, plans and programmes;

VII. To project the inter-active relationship between research and public policy-making, in this case, communication research and a national policy for Development Support Communication; and take a close look at the state-of-the-art communication research in India in recent years ; and

VIII. To indicate the guidelines, directions, priorities and mechanism for formulating such policy and planning for the country in the light of the existing machinery and mechanism of public policy-making at the national and state levels.

However, in outlining the above dimensions, the basic thrust and focus of the attempted exercise should not be lost sight of. As already mentioned in the preceding discussion, the study seeks to emphasize the need for evolving an indigenous communication philosophy and policy for the country, and, on the basis of the overview of the foreign and Indian scholarly writings on the subject, it seeks to offer the tentative outlines of a projected scenario of how the rich communication resources, whether technology-based or indigenous could be harnessed and mobilised to offer a rich supportive base for integrated and comprehensive rural development. The ultimate objective is to develop the broad contours of a communication system that could utilise the benefits of modern technology with its immense potential, good or bad, without disrupting the traditional values and culture. Needless to add, considering the vast canvas of the subject of discourse, the exercise cannot go beyond a synoptic survey and a broad outline.

CHAPTER II

Development, Development Administration and Rural Development: A Conceptual Overview and Changing Perceptions and Perspectives

I

INTRODUCTION

The nature and role of communication in any social or political system must be seen to be inseparably tagged to the prevailing concept and strategy of development. Development has been one of the most compelling concepts of our times, provoking painful questions about values, techniques and choices. Pursuit of development has become the central pillar around which national policies are formulated and implemented. In our country, the Five Year Plans have been the principal means of coordinating national policies in the service of development. But, despite all efforts, development has proved to be a rather elusive goal for most nations in the so-called Third World, and although there is a voluminous literature on development, there is much disagreement, and a great deal of ambiguity about its meaning. The term is used sometimes as a euphemism for change, urbanization, Westernization or growth; although, actually, it is more complex than any of these words suggests. Apart from contrasting perceptions, there have been many 'development fashions over the years.¹ As empirical evidence has accumulated, old approaches have been revised and new approaches developed in an attempt to explain, interpret and advise on what is to be done. From each of the competing perspectives on development, a sharpened, broadened, holistic concept has emerged.² The grand schemes of the last forty years, such as the modernization paradigm, developmentalism, dependency theory, articulation of modes of production, new political economy approach or

political autonomy analysis, Another Development, Basic Needs, Sustainable Development—have all failed to properly diagnose the causes of underdevelopment and establish the bases for rapid, stable and equitable growth path. The development strategies attempted during this period have, in almost all cases, either exhausted their course of action or run into serious problems of instability.³

II

CHANGING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES OF DEVELOPMENT 1950-90

The concept of development is rather elusive; it is perceived not only as a condition of life but also as a goal to be attained, and as the capacity to grow and change and develop. These three ideas of development are bound together in efforts to understand and deal with the phenomenon of development. It is not an absolute condition; there is not a fixed point at which a people, region, or country passes from a state of undevelopment to a state of development. The relative condition of development, rather, is comparative and ever-changing. It fluctuates according to what is needed, what is possible, and what is desired. It is also relative in terms of the possible, or what is feasible at any point of time. It is also relative to the aspirations of the people and in terms of time. For many years, the economic dimension of development engaged the attention of the scholars and the policy-makers. Almost everyone looked at the development of poor countries solely in terms of economic goals—a rising gross national product, an increase in investment and consumption, and a rising standard of living. The major emphasis of this type of development was on linearity. Development was regarded as a linear path along which all countries travelled. Development was seen primarily as economic growth, and it was taken for granted that organising the march along the development path was the prime concern of government. The 'old paradigm' of development had stressed economic growth through industrialization as the key to development. At the heart of such industrialization were technology and capital. Economists have gone to great lengths to differentiate between the terms economic

development and economic growth. It is now recognised that they are two different, but related processes that are both counterparts and competitors, depending on the time-span involved, and that the distinction is important from both theoretical and policy-making standpoints.⁴ It is now realized that growth and development are different processes that are complementary in the long run but competitive in the short run. Economic growth is a process of simple increase, implying more of the same, while economic development is a process of structural change, implying something different if not something more.⁵ From the 1970 onward, disappointment over the lack of widespread socio-economic advances, even under conditions of very rapid economic growth, led to the widespread adoption of an alternative conception of economic development.⁶ Thus, the dominance of the economic perspective during the immediate post-colonial era gradually came under heavy criticism.

The United Nations Development Strategy for the First Development Decade beginning from 1960 had called for accelerated economic growth, the effects of which would hopefully percolate to the masses in the developing countries. The strategy assumed that accelerated economic growth could take place with emphasis on industrialization and modernization. Capital, the scarce factor, was conceived as the main input into this process. The cumulative benefits of this kind of economic growth were expected to 'trickle down' eventually to the larger number who lived in the rural areas in the underdeveloped or developing nations. Import-Substitution-Industries were looked upon as the chief vehicle for bringing about this change. The guiding principle seems to have been that the only way in which the less-developed countries could make progress was by emulating the industrially advanced countries and taking the same historical path that they had traversed. Rostow's influential work had a profound impact on this type of thinking.⁷ Rostow identified five stages: traditional society, the precondition for take-off, the take off, the claim to maturity, and age of high-mass-consumption. His theory was predicated on the belief that capital accumulation through the medium of savings and investment was the engine of development; and development

was to be measured by GNP.

One line of criticism of this economic growth approach to development has been that it has transferred Western capitalist models, concepts and methods to situations to which they are not wholly appropriate. The Western models of development assumed that the main causes of under-development lay *within* the underdeveloped nations rather than being *external* to it. In fact, intellectual ethnocentrism characterised the works of Rostow, Hagen and McClelland who followed the trail left by the sociologist Max Weber.⁸ The 'linear' theory of 'missing components' like capital, foreign exchange, skills or management, came under heavy attack from economists in the 1970s.

The international development strategy for the United Nations Second Development Decade (1970-79) was formulated on the premise that with some improvements in aid, growth in the developed countries would provide a dynamic international framework for economic growth in the developing countries. Experience belied this over-optimistic and misdirected premise. E.F. Schumacher, in his book *Small is Beautiful*,⁹ attacked 'high technology' and advocated 'intermediate technology' as a more useful contribution to development in the Third World countries. A redefinition of the causes of underdevelopment was set in motion in the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, the Bucharest World Population Conference and the Rome Conference on Food in 1974. The centrality of technology had already been questioned in China. The impressive gains of the 'Green Revolution' in India, Pakistan, and the Phillippines as had come under heavy criticism as it widened the socio-economic gap between the smaller and the larger farmers and between the government and the people.¹⁰

Another development in economic thought came with the emergence of the 'political economy' approach and thinking during the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Its key point was that economic issues could only be understood in the context of the political reality, that political questions of resources ownership, power, and distribution have a great influence on the process of development. Growth was distinguished from development, and

structural change was seen as essential in order to expand capacity. This school of thinking also believed that production and distribution are closely related.¹¹

Economists from the mid-1970s on began to collect evidence that redistribution was possible without sacrificing growth. Since equity was feasible and desirable, development was defined to include concern for distribution. The argument came from no less an established citadel for mainstream development-economics than the World Bank and was contained in the famous publication entitled *Redistribution With Growth*¹² which grew out of a joint study by the Bank's Development Research Center and the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex in England.

The Western paradigm conveniently ignores colonialism and imperialism as factors in the development of the present rich countries and the underdevelopment of the poor ones, and the latter's continued dependency on and exploitation by the rich which tends to perpetuate their impoverishment. For the dependency theorists of Latin American vintage, many countries are *underdeveloped* rather than *developing*, and they attribute this underdevelopment to *external* factors, such as the adverse terms of trade most Third World countries experience. By leading the academic charge against the Western paradigm of development, and by proposing the 'dependency theory', which implies dependence of poor countries on the rich, and the 'internal colonies' on their 'urban imperialists', and by declaring that "it is capitalism, world and national, which produced underdevelopment in the present", Andre Gunder Frank caused considerable rethinking about development.¹³ The main argument of Frank and others¹⁴ of this school is that poverty of the masses in the Third World is a direct result of the operation of international capital. Underdevelopment, therefore, is not simply a failure to develop but an active process of exploitation. Although mainly concerned with, and applicable to the Latin American countries, these formulations had tremendous impact on the academic thinking in the other Third World countries, notably in India, although it took quite some time for the Indian scholars to shake off the stranglehold of Euro-American models

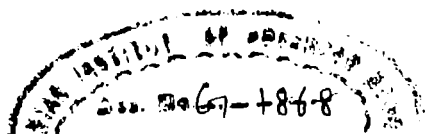
and wake up to the changing reality. The United Nations Committee on Development Planning called for a rethinking about the priorities of development process along two lines. It called for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) for a restructuring of relations between the North and the South, and, *secondly*, it emphasized equity and participation, self reliance and structural reform, poverty removal and employment generation, and renewed efforts for rural development and attention to distressed regions and disadvantaged groups. The Third World Development Decade for the 1980s was ushered in along this new thinking. The U.N. Asian Development Institute suggested an alternative strategy for Asia in their study 'Towards a Theory of Rural Development'. The U.N. Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), in a study entitled "The Quest for a United Approach to Development" (1980), offered a framework emphasizing balance development of social and economic sectors through what it describes as 'authentic participation of people'.

The emphasis, therefore, clearly shifted, and development began to be regarded as a total process involving economic, social, political and cultural elements, its principal aim being to improve not only the economic, but the social, cultural and environmental welfare of the nation. Local needs and values would determine the direction development might take, and local institutions would carry it out. This development is endogenous, and springs from the heart of each society. Decentralized, participatory development process came to be recognized as the need of the hour in developing nations. Development does not start with goods; it starts with people and their education, organization and discipline.¹⁵ People represent the primary source and the ultimate beneficiaries of the development process. It is not simply the result of applying the theories, models or strategies, but is an integral part of the dynamic process of society's growth as a whole. The current strategies are those of egalitarian development with primary emphasis on redistribution of income in favour of the poor.¹⁶ It is a normative concept, implying choices about goals for achieving what Mahatma Gandhi had called the 'realization of the human potential'¹⁷

Michael Todaro indicates several qualities of development when he observes that it is a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty.¹⁸ Development, in his opinion, implies three core values: *life sustenance*, the ability to provide basic necessities like food, shelter, health and protection; *self-esteem*, the ability to be a person, a sense of worth and self-respect; and *freedom from servitude*, the ability to choose, emancipation from alienating material conditions of life and from the social servitudes to nature, ignorance, other men, misery, institutions, and dynamic beliefs.¹⁹

Thus, from each of the competing perspective on development, a broadened conception of development emerges. This holistic conception encompasses not only growth, but capacity, equity, and empowerment as well. A self-reliant approach to economic development with central emphasis on meeting the basic needs of the majority of the population of the developing nations provides a fresh orientation in development strategy.²⁰

The basic needs approach to development policy became current in the mid-to-late 1970s. According to Paul Streeten, "the objective of a basic human needs approach to development is to ensure that all human beings should have the opportunity to live full lives. To this end, the approach focusses on securing access to minimum levels of consumption of certain basic goods and services. The basic needs approach, like other poverty-oriented approaches, attaches fundamental importance to poverty eradication within a short period as one of the main objectives of development".²¹ Basic needs is a clear point of intersection with the varied literature on participation, local organizations, and democracy. Attention to basic needs, especially through participatory structures, tends to change the reality of the lives of the poor, and may change the distribution of access to the political system and to resources.²² Strictly speaking, basic needs approach is not a theory of development, but it could be effective as an approach or a guide to policy-making and agenda-setting. It may not explain the nature of underdevelopment or the causes of



real long-term change or development.

While the First Decade of Development of the 1960s was a period of great optimism, the Second of the 1970s was one of pessimism, and alternative conceptions of development emerged in the 1970s. The Third Development Decade of the 1980s introduced greater focus on participatory decision-making, use of pluralistic, open-ended and culture-sensitive models of development, and research into investigating gender gaps and ways to close them. Contemporary literature is placing a great deal of emphasis on grassroots participation. While the dominant paradigm of the sixties has not yet completely passed away, it is less dominant. A new paradigm *Another Development*, has recently been proposed by several development scholars. This new paradigm is pluralistic and does not suffer from the authoritarian overtones of the dominant paradigm. Under this approach, communities are expected to set their own priorities and standards which may be unique to their problem situations. The new approach focusses on human and economic concerns. While participatory approaches hold great promise for more equitable and relevant development, the idea of participatory development is still only an *approach*. A full-blown theory of participation has not yet taken shape. This might well be the agenda for the nineties.²³

Among the Indian scholars, mention must be made of S.C. Dube who has undertaken a review of development-thinking and practice. Dube seeks to examine the paradigm shift and the emergence of an alternative model, and focuses on the ambiguities, ambivalences and contradictions in the praxis of planning, economic growth and directed social change.²⁴ In fact, the United Nations University's Project on Socio-Cultural Development Alternatives in a Changing World, 1978-82, arose from the deeply felt need to reposit the problematique of human and social development in view of the dominant Western-centred, reductionist models of development. Dube discusses some of the dilemmas of development, and the major issues and options. His clear preferences are for a course of development that is need-oriented, endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound and based on structural transformation, aimed at meeting human needs,

with primary focus on those who have been deprived and exploited, and due importance to equality, freedom of expression, conviviality and creativity and participative decision-making mechanisms. The paradigm shift, according to him, is represented by the progressive replacement of the more conventional 'economic development' by 'social development' and the linking of it to notions of 'human needs' and 'quality of life', both of which offer conceptual novelties. Dube offers an alternative paradigm and alternative policy framework as "an agenda for reflection and action", based on what he terms as 'conscientization', 'affirmative action' and 'institution building'. His priorities are: distributive dimensions of development, eradication of absolute poverty and of poverty generally, dynamic approach to structural change, imaginative programmes of conscientization and education as the keys to effective human resource mobilization and decision-making, a policy of affirmative action and positive discrimination to ensure equal participation in development, innovative administrative restructuring, management of the socio-cultural environment, more equitable sharing of resources between the rich and the poor countries at the global level, and the abolition of the superordinate and subordinate relationships.²⁵

It needs to be recalled that Dube had taken the cue from the preceding and prevailing voices of dissent exemplified and symbolised by Mahboub ul Haq,²⁶ Gandhi's precepts and Mao's praxis, Bjorn Hettne,²⁷ dependency models of Dos Santos,²⁸ Paul Baran,²⁹ Andre Gunder Frank and others,³⁰ the COCOYOC Declaration of 1974 produced by the *Third World and the North-South Report* (1980) of the Brandt Commission, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation Report on *What Now: Another Development* (1975), the two United Nations Documents on the N.I.E.O.-3201 (S-VI). and 3202 (S-IV).³¹

Another eminent Indian scholar, Rajni Kothari, has recently come up with the conceptual framework of what he characterises as 'alternatives in development' in one of his recent publications entitled *Rethinking Development: In Search of Humane Alternatives*,³² where he suggests that there is a need to go beyond the original conception of 'another development' and

'alternative development strategies', beyond the Brandt Commission and North-South dialogues, beyond Cancun and mini-summits convened by Third World leaders and appeals by heads of State. He feels that there is a need to rethink the basis of development cooperation and technology transfers, to recapture the real basis of self-reliance and the basic needs perspective—and to do this in the context of 'the rise of new movements and new actors on the scene'. During his time in the Planning Commission, Kothari promoted wide discussion, seminars and research efforts focusing on the social, economic and welfare dimensions of development viewed in its totality. He did not a little to shift the Commission's orientation away from the realm of the purely econometric to include the social and welfare realms.³³ His debate is raised above the level of institutional framework of state power and its articulation; it is centred in 'people's action' and 'the politics of the people'. The counter-productive aspects of development call into question the effectiveness of the state and expose to public view the erosion of institutions charged with the responsibility for dispensing justice and welfare, and give rise to assertions of popular will at the grassroots. In his outline of the broad framework of development strategies for our time, he emphasizes three major aspects like lifestyles, organization of space and production system and technology. The crux of such a combination of policies designed to raise employment and alleviate mass poverty is to put agricultural and rural development at the core of public policy'.³⁴ The objective of development should be to achieve minimum conditions of material welfare for all the people, the *minima* to be defined according to local conditions and norms, but all of them providing at the least a package of minimum items of human necessity such as food, clothing, shelter and nutritional needs to children and mothers in particular, and socially approved minima of health, education, drinking water, and public transportation for all. This policy of *minima* entails a policy of *maxima*. There should be a reasonable *scale* connecting the minima and the maxima, an admissible ratio between the two, thus limiting disparities and enabling society to implement the principles of natural justice. Participation of the hitherto

marginalised groups of people in decision-making, at the desirable level and in optimum units, becomes the major focus in his alternative model for development. This participatory model is expressed in a number of sectors: concerning economic organization and its governance, the nature of education, location of work and enterprise, choice of technology, size of units (economic, political, demographic, communications) and the nature of work. He calls this as 'the integrated perspective' provided by a set of values and the criteria that follow from it.

Over the past few years, 'sustainable development' has emerged as the latest development catchphrase. A wide range of non-governmental as well as governmental organizations have embraced it as the new paradigm of development. Although poised to become the developmental paradigm of the 1990s, a review of the literature that has sprung up around this concept indicates a lack of consistency in its interpretation. Removal of poverty (the traditional developmental objective), sustainability and participation are the three fundamental objectives of the new paradigm. However, there is a feeling among academics that the current formulations of mainstream 'sustainable development' thinking contain significant weaknesses, including an incomplete perception of the problems of poverty and environmental degradation, and confusion about the role of economic growth and about the concepts of sustainability and participation. Greater intellectual clarity and rigour are called for.³⁵

III

DYNAMICS OF DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION: THE CHANGING FOCUS AND THE CURRENT CONCERNS

The concepts of development and development administration are inextricably intertwined, especially in their formulation by Western scholars and experts, since, according to them, a nation is bound to remain underdeveloped unless the necessary administrative machinery is in place to implement the development strategy.³⁶ It is also believed that without a proper machinery of development administration, all strategies of development applied in the developing nations are doomed to failure and their

external economic dependence would persist.

The conceptualization of development administration owes a great debt to the Comparative Administration Group (CAG) which, in its turn, had been influenced by the developments in Comparative Politics in the post-Second World War period. This Group was organised in 1960-61 in the U.S.A. by a small group of political scientists and students of public administration who had been frustrated and disappointed with efforts at technical assistance for public administration in developing countries during the post-colonial period. The emergence of a host of non-Western nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the wake of decolonisation, America's growing involvement in political and economic spheres of these countries in the context of the new power-equation in the field of international politics, and the rise of the behavioural revolution and the positivistic methodologies provided the stimuli and the motivational factors behind the comparative politics and comparative administration movements. The former supplied not only a considerable body of substantive materials to the latter, but also an increasingly sophisticated and self-conscious effort at methodological clarification. As a sub-discipline of the broader discipline of modern public administration, development administration gathered considerable momentum in the fifties, and in the early sixties, there had been a steady growth of this sub-field with its own assumptions, concepts, hypotheses and theories of development. As the study and practice of induced socio-economic change in the Third World countries, it is rooted in the liberal-pluralist theory of state. Two different inter-connected Euro-American traditions converge in it. One of these streams of administrative thought is the result of an evolving trend in scientific management started at the turn of the century with the administrative reform movement. The second current is the somewhat newer trend towards national planning and government interventionism which emerged as a direct consequence of Depression, World War II and post-War reconstruction.³⁷

The concept hinges on two key assumptions: efficient management of public development programmes and simulation of private development programmes, and the acceptance of

bureaucracy as the effective instrument of development.

Scholars have identified several developmental underpinnings of development administration, namely, modernization, by the diffusion of Western values and technology; economic development defined in terms of growth of GNP; quantitative changes bringing about social changes and political development; movement of societies from agraria to industria and traditional to modern through the transitional; and emphasis on harmony, stable and orderly change.³⁸

Conceived originally as the administration of policies, programmes and projects to serve developmental purposes, and the complex of agencies, management systems, and processes a government establishes to achieve its developmental goals, and a public mechanism to relate the several components of development in order to articulate and accomplish national social and economic objectives,³⁹ the concept is not inherently confined to the analysis of the administrative problems of the so-called 'developing' countries, since 'development' has universal implications and relevance and all countries of the world face the challenge of social change. Nevertheless, since its inception, the term has acquired a kind of pejorative connotation, being looked upon as a conspiratorial phenomenon which seeks to establish the extending arm of American imperialism to the Third World countries. In recent years, scholars in these countries have started questioning the relevance of the American ideas to the Third World situation and socio-political realities. The whole concept has come under severe attack from a number of directions. In fact, the early 1970s marked a rude awakening to the inadequacies of the developmental paradigm of public administration to cope with urgent developmental problems which have qualitatively changed in their character and dimensions. The concept faced a crisis of identity and purpose, and its assumptions, methodology and focus became increasingly irrelevant.⁴⁰

However, for our present purpose, in discussing the role of communication, it is imperative to understand that like the term 'development', the concept of development administration has changed drastically over the last four decades. During the 1950s, it was concerned primarily with transferring the techniques of

public management supplied in the Western industrial countries to the developing nations. The aim was to create rational, politically neutral and impartial, efficient, bureaucracies in the Weberian tradition. During the 'era of optimism' in the U.N. First Development Decade of the 1960s, development administration was supposed to be based on professionally oriented, technically competent, politically and ideologically neutral bureaucratic machinery. It was to re-tool not only the foreign aid, but also to act as the main instrument for nation-building by transferring the inputs received into developmental outputs, known as modernization. The U.S. Point-Four Programme of 1949, the Colombo Plan of the 1950s, and the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s, were examples of the development philosophy already mentioned. Their source of inspiration was the Marshall Plan. In fact, in the 1960s, the emphasis shifted from improving administrative procedures to political modernization and administrative reform. Political modernization theorists viewed development administration as a process of social engineering in which national governments assumed the primary role in stimulating economic growth, promoting social change, and transforming traditional societies. Both these approaches came under increasing criticism during the 1970s for being ethno-centric and for attempting to 'impose' Western concepts and values that were often irrelevant, inappropriate or adverse in poor countries. Moreover, the 'tools' of administration transferred to developing countries usually were those that sought to increase efficiency in carrying out repetitive and routine maintenance tasks and did little to help policy-makers or administrators cope with the complex and uncertain problems of change in their own political and cultural environments. Focus came to be laid on institution-building and project-planning and management, which evolved from widespread dissatisfaction with Weberian models of administration. Developing countries needed institutions that would help administrators deal creatively with complex and uncertain problems and promote innovation and change.⁴¹

The focus of development administration shifted again in the mid-1970s to expanding the capacity of organizations not only to

manage development projects and programmes efficiently, but also to bring about more equitable distribution of the benefits of development activities. Greater attention was given to ways in which governments might alleviate the high levels of poverty in rural areas, elicit participation of the poor in development-planning and management, and deliver essential public services to those groups who had previously been marginalised. Emphasis was on improving the capacity of public agencies to respond more effectively to the needs of the poor, to provide for basic human needs, to stimulate productivity and raise the incomes of the disadvantaged groups, to create conditions in which community, private and voluntary organizations could play a stronger role in 'bottom-up' processes of development planning, and to cope more effectively with the complexity and uncertainty of development activities. Rural development became a matter of major concern, and decentralized processes of planning and implementation were deemed to be more relevant than centralized control and management. Increasing recognition of this trend is now clearly discernible even among the erstwhile Western exponents of the concept.⁴² The question is naturally raised if the present theory and practice of development administration, its basic concepts, assumptions and values, are still relevant in the 1990s; if not, should we consider developing a new strategy which would be more oriented towards tackling such problems as the satisfaction of people's basic needs, the eradication of poverty of the poor masses in the rural areas, and the protection of human dignity? China's example is often cited by Third World scholars to emphasise the point that it would be more realistic on the part of the developing countries to have their own indigenous concept of development and its effective administration which is uniquely suited to their national goals and special needs. The significant features of the Chinese model of development are self-reliance, political mobilisation of the peasantry through encouragement of local participation, building hierarchical self-reliant collective units of production and consumption, greater emphasis on agriculture and rural development, building medium-scale industry including agro-based industry decentralized all over the country, greater stress on

distributive justice and radical transformation of the traditional social system.⁴³

If the dominant concern of development administration is the management of change in countries which have development as a major national goal, an effective bureaucracy should function more as an agent of change than as an instrument of stability and continuity. In order to be an agent of change, the bureaucratic system must have the capacity to forecast, project and understand the direction and tempo of major or significant changes in its environment, plan for necessary or desirable changes, adapt itself to changes demanded or planned by the political system or to other unforeseen changes, and innovate on its own.⁴⁴ In the context of development administration, the Weberian model of bureaucracy, which is a product of particular historical, social and political milieu, may not be conducive to the fulfilment of developmental objectives. Development-situations require risk-taking and achievement-orientation when decision-making is situational, innovative and creative. Joseph La Palombara suggests that for developmental purposes, the Weberian characteristics of bureaucracy, such as organizational rules and procedures, division of duties, etc., should not take precedence over target-achievement.⁴⁵

Rule-bound behaviour, precise delineation of jurisdiction, centralization of authority and the system of promotion based upon seniority in the administrative organization are dysfunctional in the context of development.⁴⁶ The difference between a traditional bureaucracy of the Weberian model and a developmental bureaucracy is partly structural and partly behavioural. A developmental bureaucracy is supposed to be concerned with promoting creativity and growth within a stable system. A developmental bureaucracy needs different kinds of values, orientations and attitudes. The crucial question is whether the traditional bureaucratic structural and behavioural values and norms are contradictory or complementary to the requirements of a developmental administration.⁴⁷

The problem of bureaucracy is somewhat complex in developing countries where social and political institutions are relatively less developed and where the state has mainly to

depend upon the administrative structure for the accomplishment of its goals. Developing countries require a band of competent people for complex and highly specialised tasks of socio-economic development, ranging from fact-finding and analysis of resources to financial management, construction of multi-purpose projects, industrial development, administration of housing and social welfare programmes and management of health, agriculture and educational projects.

Thus, the entire development administration movement revolved round the crucial role of bureaucracy in bringing about speedy socio-economic change. The history of the development administration field 'is essentially a history of various efforts to address the needs of third world bureaucracies and to find ways to increase their capacity'.⁴⁸ From the Third World perspective, however, development administration is bureaucracy with a difference, since some of the structural features, operational styles and behavioural implications of traditional Weberian bureaucracy are thought to be unsuited to the needs of developmental tasks. Since the central theme of developmental administration is socio-economic and political change brought about through a series of programmes designed specifically to attain certain clear-cut and specified objectives and goals expressed in operational terms, the kind of administrative organization necessary to meet these objectives may require to shift its base from the traditional structure and 'executive' orientation to a definitely integrated 'managerially' oriented programmes organization.⁴⁹ In their search for speedy socio-economic change, the developing countries have necessarily to look for alternative mechanisms for change. Coming out of colonial experience, most of these new nations have the hangover of the imperial rule with bureaucratic dominance. In the post-independence phase, political competence needs to be increased to correct the imbalance created by the colonial system of bureaucratic hegemony. Hence, viable political institutions and strong political elite are necessary to restrain the tendency of the bureaucracy to gain autonomous power.⁵⁰

The emphasis in this reasoning is on the role of the political elite, development of autonomous political institutions and

effective popular participation in authoritative decision-making. This requires bureaucracy-modification and administrative development, both quantitative and qualitative, in the Rigsian sense.⁵¹ This also implies that the bureaucracy can and should not be an independent variable, and that its role cannot be viewed in isolation from the gradual unfolding of the overall political process. The role of bureaucracy must be subsumed in the overarching state character. Politics must set the goals for bureaucracy in a development-situation. It is for the political leadership to cultivate a vision of society and impart a sense of purpose and direction to the bureaucracy to enable it to play an adequate and effective role in the process of development. It is not politicisation and manipulation, but imaginative political control, guidance and leadership that are required, if development administration is to fulfil its changing mission in the changed situation when the entire development-thinking has been revolutionalised.

IV

A NOTE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AS THE CURRENT CONCERN OF DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

In most Third World countries, in recent years, rural development has emerged as a distinct field of policy, practice and research with focus on distributional issues. The World Bank, in its Rural Development Sector Policy Paper of 1975, had defined rural development as a 'strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people, the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small farmers, tenants and the landless. The World Bank strategy emphasized growth and the direct alleviation of poverty by government guarantee of the distribution of the benefits of growth. On the contrary, the I.I.O. approach aims at satisfying also non-material needs such as human rights, participation and autonomy. It stresses the redistribution of assets, income and power, and changes in income-distribution and in the structure of production.

Rural development has been identified variously with economic growth, with modernization, with increased agricultural production, with socialist forms of organization, and with services for basic needs such as health, education, transport and water supply. Development thinking has shifted from the view that growth and modernization would be enough, with benefits trickling down to the poor, to the more realistic, even if depressing view that sometimes growth and modernization make the poor poorer, and that the main gain from increased agricultural production often goes to the urban populations and the rural rich, and also that the better-off and the more powerful benefit from rural services than do the poor and the weak. While the World Bank strategy has much to commend itself, it suffers from some inherent limitations and exclusions, like the women, the children and the poorest of the poor. A complementary, and more inclusive definition has been offered by Robert Chambers that it is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of development.⁵²

As the current centre-piece of the new development strategy, the concept of rural development has also been undergoing reinterpretation in the same way as the holistic concept of development. In the decades of the fifties and the sixties, rural development strategy in the context of national approach to development objectives and processes laid the main emphasis on rural economic development, implying largely agricultural growth in a broad sense. As this began to result in social and economic polarisation with rising agrarian discontent and even some local conflicts, reformulations of development strategies and restructuring of programmes began to take place so as to induct the social equity concept as complementary to rural economic growth. Employment expansion, income transfers and extension of social services and social welfare facilities have begun to be given an increased emphasis in strategies and policies. The existing strategies are also being modified in order to aim at a less regionally, socially and gender-wise imbalanced

process. There is also a growing awareness among decision-makers that the development plans should also take into account population and ecology as important factors influencing the implementation and impact of the development process.⁵³

It is now widely recognised that rural development is by no means an agricultural or productivity problem alone, nor is it mainly a technical problem. Poverty is spreading, while constraints seem to multiply and continue to halt progress. It is on the removal of these constraints and the identification of gaps in rural development policy, process and research, that there is a real need to focus attention. Rural development must be looked upon as a process of change in societies whereby poverty will be reduced, if not totally eliminated, and the creativity and existing knowledge of the poor fully utilised. The poor must be *enabled* access to the resources of the society and the environment and encouraged to achieve control of resources in order to make available resources more productive of amenities, services and goods required and wanted by the poor and their governments.

Planning for integrated rural development has assumed great significance as a means to achieve a 'balanced' development of rural communities. It envisages a direct and frontal attack on rural poverty by providing viable income generating assets to the target groups and to enable them through training, extension and other supportive services and infrastructural facilities to maintain the assets. It is a synergic approach aiming at total development of the area and the people by bringing about the necessary institutional and attitudinal changes and by delivering a package of services through extension methods to encompass not only the economic field, i.e., agricultural and rural industries, but also the establishment of special infrastructure and services in the areas of health and nutrition, education and literacy, basic civic amenities, family planning and so on, with the ultimate objective of improving the quality of life in the vast rural areas. The realization that poverty eradication is the objective of rural development must mean that all dimensions of poverty must be considered.

Before closing this discussion on rural development, reference may be made to some of the useful new concepts and methods

that seek to make rural development a meaningful enterprise rather than a rhetoric. These are: development as a human enterprise, community resource management at the local level, development as a learning process, decentralization and participation, and local action involving local actors and organizations, local beneficiary groups, local service organizations, local governments, and so on.⁵⁴

Community-based resource-management, with its emphasis on rural development, decentralisation in the sense of deconcentration or delegation or devolution or privatisation, development of non-bureaucratic organisational forms, and community control of productive resources and technologies, have come as an emphatic refutation and denial of the rationale and effectiveness of the conventional image of development. The transition from 'delivered development', which is planned from the top, with people as objects and beneficiaries, to 'participatory development' which is planned from the bottom, with the people, particularly the poor, as the subjects of the development process, symbolised the emergence of a new model of development for most of the developing countries, and India can be no exception to this emerging trend.

In the context of this new philosophy of decentralized, people-oriented, participatory and self-reliant rural development with accent on distributive justice and egalitarian social order, it is sad to find that a distinctly 'Indian' paradigmatic framework or public policy has not yet evolved, and whatever research has been or is being carried out at the level of professionals, academics and other social scientists, has not found its way into the policy process. Community management goes beyond earlier conceptions of community development. It is a fundamental element of a broader development strategy directed to achieving a social transformation based on people-centred development values and the potentials of advanced, information-based technologies. It focusses on empowerment, control over ability to manage productive resources in the interests of the whole community. The performance of a community-based resource-management system is a function of its ability to mobilise available resources and to use them productively, equitably and

sustainably in meeting the needs of community-members. As a result of the new opportunities created by new technologies, changes in social values and also changing ecological realities, participative community-based resource-management has come to occupy the centre-stage of the development-strategy. There is need for new policy and new institutional setting and forms that would enable local control and initiative. However, these changes in perception, commitment, programmes and actions can emerge only as products of a social learning process—learning to be effective, learning to be efficient, and learning to expand, as David Korten has so nicely expressed it.

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 1993 Human Development Report, prepared under the expert advice of the famous economist and former Pakistan Finance and Planning Minister, Dr. Mahbub-ul-Haq, recently released, has ranked India a lowly 134th in the comity of 173 nations in the human development index and 144th in the per capita GNP index, thereby dampening the euphoria falsely generated by the pompous IMF announcement based on purchasing power methodology, that India had become the world's sixth largest economy. The UNDP has pricked this balloon quite convincingly by pointing out the failures in terms of levels of public expenditure on education and health and quality of life, and the mismanagement of anti-poverty programmes. The Report appreciates India's economic reforms as moving along the right lines, but cautions about the need to cushion the adverse impact on the poor people lest there be political backlash. The rural poor are paying for the reforms, but are not yet seeing the benefits of the reforms measures. What is interesting in this context is that although there has been a change in the direction of economic policies during the last two years from planning to markets, the UNDP has come out with the warning that privatisation is no panacea, and that when conceived or executed under pressure, it can achieve very little. Our policy makers need to take a careful note of this rather startling but welcome note of caution before plunging headlong into this unknown and uncertain future.

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CHAPTER III

Communication and Development: Theories, Models and Approaches: Development Communication to Development Support Communication

In keeping with the current trend towards a more holistic development paradigm, there is a growing recognition of another crucial dimension that is so integrally connected with development: the cultural dimension, or, seen from another angle, the communication-and-information dimension. The new emerging concepts rather incorporate and thereby subordinate purely economic aspects into what basically is a concept of societal transformation. They share an emphasis on rural development, and in all of them, communication and information represent a key factor. Development from below, based on participation in decision-making, has its own communication requirements.¹ Uma Lele's analysis has shown that almost every activity that is considered vital to rural development, whether agricultural extension, local farmer participation, credit, marketing, social services, project administration, training, is information-related or information-dependent in some way.²

It has already been emphasized that the true meaning and nature of communication and its proper role in the process of development can only be appreciated in the context of the prevailing concept and strategy of development, because the two are inter-related and inter-dependent. One cannot be understood in isolation from the other. In fact, the study of communication is virtually coterminous with that of development. This study originated in the West, especially in the U.S., in tandem with the study of development during the post-Second World War period, but more particularly in the early sixties. Although this study is comparatively of recent origin, its present status can only be appreciated in the historical context.

It is not strictly necessary to go into the definitions and meaning of communication, nor is it really relevant for our purpose in this study. Some illustrative definitions can be found in Dahama and Bhatnagar³ and Sharma⁴ as well as several others. We would rather go by the commonly accepted idea of communication as a process of social interaction in which there is a two-way interchange and exchange of ideas, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, message, feelings, behaviour and stimuli between two or more individuals or groups in a social situation. It is not just imparting or transmitting information or knowledge from the source to the receiver in a one-way sequence, but essentially a knowledge-sharing on the basis of empathy and inter-subjectivity. It is a means for breaking down the barriers to interaction, a means for achieving mutual understanding, a means for relating to each other on a more meaningful level, a means for communication. It is the universal condition for man's existence, as Karl Jaspers has correctly pointed out.⁵ However, it has to be realized that since communication has presently become a multi-disciplinary study, transcending the boundaries of psychology and sociology, and traversing such disciplines and sub-disciplines as theology and analytical philosophy, psycho-linguistics, physical sciences and cybernetics, arts and literature, journalism and political science, the functions of communication have been variously categorised depending on the specific thrust of a particular discipline.

While Harold Lasswell talks of surveillance of the environment, correlation of the part of the society in responding to the environment, and transmission of social heritage from one generation to the other,⁶ Wilbur Schramm looks upon communication as the watcher, the forum and the teacher.⁷ Information and entertainment are mentioned by some as the two basic functions of communication, while the libertarian theory mentions six functions, namely, public enlightenment, serving the political system, safeguarding civil liberties, profit-making, serving the economic system and providing entertainment. While an over-simplified version considers the communication process in terms of the Source-Message-Channel-Receiver (S-M-C-R) model, one scholar mentions and enumerates several

meanings of communication at successive dimensions—the neutral dimension, the psychological dimension, the biological dimension, the engineering dimension, the metaphysical dimension, and the utopian or evocative dimension.⁸

Fischer categorises communication into original and intermediary, the former including signal (symbol, flag or sign), word and sound (speech, device, slogan or rumour), arrangement (assembly, ceremony and demonstration), while the latter includes press (pamphlet, leaflet, newspaper, magazine, wall-poster), broadcasting (radio, television, folk-song), picture (drawing, cartoon poster, photo), film (documentary, feature or newsreel), and stage and literature (political theatre, political literature and political song).⁹ McCroske points out two dimensions of communication: (a) transmission vs. stimulation, and (b) purposeful vs. accidental.¹⁰ From the social development point of view, stimulation and purposeful communication are the most important and significant. Campbell talks about three purposes of communication, informative, persuasive and entertainment.¹¹ Juan E-Diaz Bordenave, who had made a perceptive analysis of ten case studies of communication and rural development in ten countries, mostly in Asia, Africa and Latin America, on the basis of the ideological assumptions and the ideas of development at work, traced the steady growth of the theoretical model, right from the first, i.e., the tele-communications model, which mechanistically viewed communication as a process of message transmission, through communication as persuasion during the Second World War, the marketing and agricultural extension model having pre-occupation with effects, communication as a process acquired from the philosophical and scientific thinking of the times and involving such social science discourses as anthropology, sociology, social psychology, political science and economics, communication as a system that encouraged the diffusion of innovation with its 'dripping down' views and right upto communication functions in terms of social structure based on the distinction between instrumental and consummatory communication and to content analysis of mass media so popular in modern times.¹² Bordenave finds much enriched thinking in the systems approach which looks upon communication as a

goal-establishing system and whose chief function is to supply information about environmental needs and conditions, through information-exchange, channel the system's influence on the environment, and bring back, through feedback, information about the environment's reactions and its changing needs.

One very important trend arising out of this approach is an interest in formulating overall communication policies and plans. Communication, according to this author, is an instrument for changing society. It can be an important means for achieving conscientization, organization, politicization and technification, and this requires a coherent communication philosophy and methodology. While significant innovations in rural development communication are discernible, with a participative orientation, there may be certain gaps between the models and principles developed at universities and research institutes by communication theoreticians and researchers and the actual projects they have designed and run in the developing areas.

In respect of mass communication, certain individual theories have also been developed to clarify the concept of mass communication and its effects. These theories are: McLuhan Theory, the Electric Approach Theory, the Media Content Theory, the Semantic Theories of Broadcasting, the Reflective-Projective Theory, the Empirical Theory, the Congruence or Balance Theory, the Conspiracy Theory, the Play Theory, the Social Influences or Identification Theory, the Uses and Gratification Theory, the Dependency Theory.¹³ The theory put forward by Herbert Marshall McLuhan states that the medium itself is the message. Media are seen as extensions of human abilities and senses that affect sensory balance. Media may be 'hot' or 'cool'. Hot media like radio, print, film and photography involve low participation but high auditory information, while cool media like television are low in data but high in respect of audience involvement. Under the electric approach theory, the media have high thrust and speed, and function through a complex nexus of influences. Although the impact of the media is formidable, it is tempered by psychological factors, group customs and value judgements. According to the media content theory, the communicators should form policies in order to

achieve a balanced content which the majority of the viewing or listening or reading public would not only appear to want but would also like to receive in terms of ideas and information. The semantic theories, of which there are five, lay stress on the meaning in the language of broadcasting. The reflective-projective theory which encompasses all aspects of broadcasting, postulates that mass communication media are best understood as mirrors of society that reflect an ambiguous image in which each observer projects or sees his own vision of himself and society. It differentiates the social from the individual aspects of the semantic significance of mass communication. The mirror theory, which is another version of the reflective-projective theory, explains not only the emotional involvement of the audience but also the popular appeal and universality of the medium. Empirical theories are those which are purely descriptive and seek to explain and harmonise observed facts. The congruence or balance theory is based on the congruity principle of Charles Osgood and Percy Tannenbaum, which points out that when change in evaluation or attitude occurs, it always occurs in the direction of increased congruity with the prevailing frame of reference. The conspiracy theory relates to the concept that the mass media organizations construct their programmes which suit the people who own or control them or other pressure groups who support their cause of existence and development. Such mass media conspire against people who do not exercise any influence. The social influence or identification theory is related to the varying effects of the mass media, the way the people in audience identify themselves to the super-human characteristics of their heroes on the screen and try to be themselves what they see. The imitation leads to change in the style and behaviour of the audience. The broadcast programmes can have thus a major influence on the development of a culture or the social norms. The uses and gratification theory which is similar to the earlier theory views mass media as stimulators for making their audience their profile use for gratifying their needs. The four categories of need which the media serve to gratify the values of the audience are diversion, personal relationship, personal identity and surveillance. The dependency theory relates

to the extent to which the audiences feel dependent upon the mass media.

Apart from those theories, there are several models which have sought to explain the process of communication in a more comprehensible way, and also the effects of the media, through pictorial and other means. Some of the prominent models which are found in communication studies are : Andersch, Stats and Bostrom model, Barnlund's transactional model, Becker's Mosaic model, Berlo's SMCR model, Commercial Laissez Faire and Mass Manipulative model, Dance's Hellical model, Gerbner's model, Hypodermic Needle model, Newcomb's ABX model, One-step, Two-step and Multi-step Flow model, Riley and Riley model, Shannon and Weaver model, Schramm's models and Wesley and Maclean's model.¹⁴

The period between the forties and the sixties had been characterised by the role of the big media, powerful effects orientation, and top-down persuasion models. The three areas which made rich contributions to our understanding of the role of communication in development theory and practice were: (a) communication effects approach; (b) diffusion of innovations approach; and (c) mass media and modernization approach. The earliest models of mass media effects conceptualized the impact of the mass media as direct, powerful, and uniform on individuals living in modern industrial societies termed as mass societies by sociologists. Colourful terms like the *bullet* and *hypodermic* needle theories were used to describe the concept of powerful mass media effects. The early models developed by Lasswell, Shannon and Weaver, Berlo, Schramm, etc., conceptualized communication as a linear and one-way flow from a powerful source to a passive receiver. Mass media were conceived to be a kind of 'magic multiplier' for development in the developing societies, 'inculcators of individual modernization'. The communication scholars who most strikingly represented this model are Wilbur Schramm, Daniel Lerner and Lucian Pye.¹⁵ Communication could be employed to disseminate new knowledge, impart new skills, introduce new values, raise aspirations of the people, create a sense of nationhood which transcends parochial boundaries, reassure people in a state of

transition which development clearly entails—in other words, create the right ambience for development.

Implicit in the formulations of Lerner and Wilbur Schramm was the belief that the interaction of literacy and mass media was the means by which the masses could eventually break away from the bonds of traditionalism, heralding the 'passing of traditional society'. Under this model, the mass media would be responsible for creating widespread awareness of, and interest in, the innovations espoused by change agencies. Change agents would furnish targeted segments of adopters with the details of information and the skills necessary to make the adoption of the innovations possible. Early adopters would then presumably constitute role models for others in the social system to emulate. By these demonstration effects, the innovations would trickle down to the rest of the community.

Realization came much later that the role of communication in facilitating development was often indirect and contributory, rather than direct and powerful. Research showed the rather weak nature of mass media in affecting important behavioural and attitudinal changes among receivers. It was felt that mass media, rather than being 'sole' agents of attitudinal and behavioural changes, were mere agents of reinforcement. However, this shift in emphasis regarding the role of media from one of dominant and powerful influence to that of minimal effects did not make any significant difference to formulations advocating the use of the mass media for development in the Third World countries. The orientations of communication as transmission of information and communication as persuasion were transferred to fields such as agricultural extension, health, education, and public relations.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory has important links with the communication effects research. The emphasis was again on communication effects, i.e., the ability of media messages and opinion leaders to create knowledge of new ideas and practices among the target audience and to persuade them to adopt the exogenously conceived and introduced innovations. Everett Rogers, the most famous and influential exponent of this approach, identified several elements in the diffusion of an idea

or an innovation, namely, the innovation in its communication through certain channels among members of a social system over time. The five stages through which adoption was made were: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption. The diffusion of innovations research established the importance of communication in the modernization process at the local level.

In the Mass Media and Modernization approach, the mass media served as agents and indices of modernization in the developing nations. Research in this tradition focussed on social-psychological characteristics of individuals which were considered necessary for a successful transition from a traditional to a modern society. Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* illustrates the major ideas under this approach. Mass media were considered as the ideal vehicles for transferring new ideas and models from the developed nations to the Third World and from the urban areas to the rural countryside, an also for establishing a climate of modernization. Information was the missing link in the chain of development, and the quality of information available and its wide dissemination was a key factor in the speed and smoothness of development.

These conceptual formulations tended to 'descend into a simplistic psychologism that takes insufficient account of the social and political dynamics of change and lacks an adequate conception of relationships between ideas and action, between culture and social structure'.¹⁶ Katz's 'two-step flow' process,¹⁷ and McClelland's 'achievement motivation'¹⁸ also fall in this category of research. These orthodox media theories have been criticized for their Western-centredness, their neglect of the international dimensions of both communication and development, and their emphasis on the attitudinal rather than the structural characteristics of the underdeveloped societies. By the 1970s, many development-communication scholars began to criticise this approach for a variety of different reasons. In 1976, looking backward, it seemed to Rogers that the optimism and high hopes generated a decade ago about the considerable potential of mass communication in fostering development in the developing countries were largely misplaced and belied. The shift from what he calls 'a dominant model' of a 'dominant

paradigm' to 'alternative paradigms' implied new, different and wider roles for communication in development.¹⁹ With increasing hindsight, it came to be recalled by him that mass media represented an extension of exploitative relationships with U.S.-based multinational corporations through the advertising of commercial products, elitist in ownership and control, and basically propagandist in nature. The disenchantment with this vision of communication and development had gained strength and legitimacy during the Vietnam War when, in the wake of assassinations and racial violence, America's short-lived invincibility and innocence in world affairs ended. "The war gave ammunition to those who later argued that the 'Western model' of development was merely a smokescreen for a new style of colonialism in which multinational communication organizations, operating behind the facade of freedom, served as advance strike forces for a coalition of political and economic interests intent on maintaining exploitative control of Third World resources".²⁰ But the denunciations of this new 'cultural imperialism' that permeated so much of the UNESCO debate in the 1970s came much later. Even Schramm admitted in 1979 that he should have been more sceptical about the applicability of the Western model of development, and should have paid more attention to the problem of integrating mass media with local activity and to the cultural differences that make development almost necessarily different, 'culture to culture, country to country'.²¹ Rogers mentions four world events which had a shattering impact on the validity of the old paradigm, namely, the problems of environmental pollution, the oil crisis, the expansion of the People's Republic of China and the failure of the less developed countries to develop.²²

Researches by many Latin American scholars, especially by Grunig, Haven, Paulo Freire, Beltran and some others²³ point to the 'implicit 'elitist bias' of the earlier approach, the 'atomistic and mechanistic' character of the 'components approach', and to the need for a holistic systems approach that would include understanding of the audience and its needs, communication planning around selective strategies, message production, dissemination, reception and feedback. With increasing concern

about self-development and communication effects gap,²⁴ and new technology, as well as attention to the content of the mass media, participation, mass mobilization and group efficacy, the shift of research attention was all too evident. Conscientization and dialogue now replaced the earlier top-down approach and technologically top-heavy bias. Scholars now openly questioned whether television, satellites and other artefacts represented the best use of resources in poor countries, and whether they were the best means of reaching the people. The 'media imperialism' or 'cultural imperialism' was now openly challenged. At the same time, there was an interesting realization that research had often tended to be too media-centred, and other factors had been insufficiently explored. The dependency theorists criticised the asymmetrical relationship in which the developed countries thrived at the expense of the developing nations. Even the European theorists in the 1970s became critical of the development model. While the traditional emphasis in the U.S. communication development scholarship was on the individual, not the political or the economic system in which he or she lived, the existing system simply served to strengthen the already exploitative imbalance between the neo-imperialists and the Third World. Nordenstreng and Schiller referred to the emergence of another paradigm leading to what they termed as 'the third generation of communication and development research.'²⁵ Characteristic of this perspective was an emphasis on global structure, whereby "it is in precisely the international socio-politic-economic system that decisively determines the course of development within the sphere of each nation. In this approach, the rational conditions—including class contradiction—serve as more or less intervening variables on influences emanating from the historically determined global design".²⁶ The seminal works of a number of scholars served to crystallize this approach and gain wide recognition in the academic community, like Frank, Dos Santos, Galtung, Amin, Wallerstein, Barnett Brown, Kaufmann, Petras, etc.²⁷ According to this approach, communication was basically a matter of education. The vast majority of the people living in the less-developed countries needed to be educated into a new awareness of their plight. The

vicious nature of the world system and the shifting dependency relationship had to be unambiguously pointed out to them. A basic component of the communication strategy would be one mobilising support for a structural rearrangement of society. Contrary to the emphasis of the old paradigm on the mass media, and the subsequent emphasis on a mix between mass media and interpersonal channels, this approach supported and emphasised exclusively the interpersonal channels.

While it was previously assumed that communication-information was an *independent variable* in the development process, and that exposure to mass media messages would be powerful enough force to generate the necessary change for development, results of research in the seventies showed that communication was not just a simple *independent variable*, but both a *dependent* and an *independent variable* in a complex set of relationship with social, economic and political structures and processes.

We have already noted that a new approach to development is currently gaining recognition. The hallmarks of this approach are: popular participation, grassroots development, integrated rural development, use of appropriate technology, fulfilment of basic needs, productive use of local resources, maintenance of the ecological balance, development problems to be defined by the people themselves, and culture as a mediating force in development. The notion of integrated rural development is as central to this approach as popular participation. A mistake made by the early development thinkers was to conceptualise rural development in terms of fragmented categories like agriculture, health, nutrition, etc. However, it is apparent that all these are inextricably linked, especially in the village environment. The new approach, therefore, advocates a systems perspective.²⁸ The communication strategy under this approach would be to use interpersonal channels found at the grassroots level for the purpose of creating a common identity by stressing the shared values and experiences of the people. Mass media could be productively employed for the purpose of uniting the far-flung village units in the endeavour.

Srinivas Melkote has very appropriately summed up the

salient characteristics of the three decades of development-communication syndrome. During the first decade of development in the sixties, there was a dominance of the big mass media, powerful media effects, belief in the bullet theory of communication effects and the powerful, direct and uniform impact on the people, and mass media were considered as magic multipliers of development benefits and as agents and indices of modernization, and great importance was attached to diffusion of modernizing innovations. The second development decade encountered problems with the use of mass media for development, like the potential to widen knowledge gaps between rich and poor and the possibility of the revolution of rising frustrations. Mass media were not just an independent variable but dependent on other environmental factors. The weaknesses of the diffusion of innovations to help the poor were due to communication effects bias, pro-innovation bias, pro-source bias, in-the-head variable bias, pro-persuasion bias, top-driven models rather than user-driven models, absence of a process orientation, and widening of the socio-economic benefits gap. The alternative conceptions of development in the 1970s envisaged new roles for communication in development, i.e., communication in self-development efforts, i.e., user-initiated activity at the local level considered essential for successful development at the village level, and communication as a catalyst for change rather than the sole cause, and as dialogue between users and senders. The role of folk media in development activities was highlighted. Communication strategies were employed to narrow the knowledge gaps between the rich and the poor, reduce the pro-literacy bias through tailored messages and formative evaluations, and communication media were used to conscientize the masses to the harsh realities in their environment. The third development decade of the eighties laid greater focus on participatory decision-making knowledge-sharing on a co-equal basis between senders and receivers, right to communicate, use of pluralistic, open-ended, and culture-sensitive models of development. There was also an emphasis on research into investigating gender-gaps and ways to close them.²⁹

The role of communication in development is now understood

to be more 'permissive' and 'supportive' than in the past. In keeping with the current concern with more equitable distribution of socio-economic benefits as the goal of development activities, Rogers has suggested a new communication strategy in terms of (a) using the traditional mass media as credible channels to reach the most disadvantaged audiences, (b) identifying the opinion leaders among the disadvantaged segment of the total audience and concentrating development activities on them; (c) using change-agent aides selected from this audience to work for development-agencies; (d) providing means for this audience to participate in the planning and execution of development activities and in the setting of development priorities; (e) establishing special development agencies that work with this audience, like the Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) in India, to provide agricultural information and credit only to small-sized farmers; and (f) producing and disseminating communication messages that are of need and interest to the downtrodden and the deprived.³⁰ In the same vein, the Indonesian economist, Soedjatmoko has focused on the need to define appropriate macro-policies for culture and communication.³¹ As Edward, W. Ploman, the then Executive Director of the International Institute of Communication, London, so aptly pointed out in a seminar in New Delhi in 1980, the place and role of communication and information in the new development approaches is crucial. Thinking in the communication field must move beyond the conventional patterns, and there is a need for new approaches to the entire communication and information complex. What is essentially called for is the transformation of the village from a traditional society in to an 'information community' of a new kind.³² It will be necessary to design and develop programmes to help increase agricultural productivity, stimulate and guide adjustment to new methods of food production, new crops, new methods of improving livestock. There must also be programmes to provide access to relevant market information and to render possible the utilization of new opportunities in trade and rural manufacture. Equally important are programmes to increase the farmers' understanding of his utter dependence on, and their responsibilities for

maintaining and improving environmental quality.

The concept of development support communication is a relatively new addition to communication literature. It has rather dramatically reversed the earlier situation when most development plans, programmes and projects went without a media or communication element, and development and communication were out of gear. Media were without development purposes, and development action was without media or communication support. The relationship between development and communication has frequently come under the scrutiny of researchers and scholars, and quite a few hypotheses have been drawn up on how communication can contribute to the national growth and overall wellbeing of developing societies.

It was during the critical period when the alternative paradigm replaced the dominant paradigm that the concept of development support communication started to gain currency. While development communication in the earlier sense meant application of communication to further development *generally* (emphasis added), such as by increasing mass media exposure in order to strengthen the 'climate for development', development support communication basically meant application of communication to support a *specific* (emphasis added) development programme or project, like the family planning programme in India and the O.R.T. programme in Bangladesh to overcome the problem of dehydration in diarrhea.

In 1980, the U.N. Information Committee recommended inclusion of an information or communication component in every relevant development project in the U.N. system. Development support communication has shown that it can inform people of new ideas and techniques, help to change attitudes and stimulate popular participation and self-help. Media can work visible transformation in the field of agriculture and rural development. Development support communication can play a positive role to create a participatory society in which information flows not only downward, but across horizontally among the people and upward from the people to the policy-makers in the development. Government and the professional experts in the field need feedback from the people on the real performance and

problems of institutions and projects at grassroots level so that adjustments can be made. However, it has to be realized that communication may be a key component among several others, but it would be a mistake to overestimate its importance. We now realize that development is a systems problem, consisting of several interdependent components, each of which must accompany the others if success is to be achieved.

Robert McNamara, then President of the World Bank, had set the stage for this development in 1973. In his famous speech entitled 'New Directions in Development', he had called for reassessment of the existing development strategies since these had failed to produce the desired advancement of Third World countries. A major shortcoming with the existing strategies, he felt, was the piecemeal approach to removing constraints. What was needed, according to him, was a multidisciplinary broad-fronted integrated rural development approach which would seek, in one go, to remove all identifiable bottlenecks constraining adoption among peasants. One of the major external constraints to development was the paucity of adequate, reliable, relevant, and timely information to overcome lack of knowledge and skills about recommended innovations among potential peasant adopters. Development support communication specialist has the job of bridging this communication gap between the technical specialists with expertise in specific areas of knowledge, and the users who are in need of such knowledge and its specific applications to improve their performance, increase their productivity, improved their health, etc. Such supportive communication is expected to translate technical language and ideas into messages that would be comprehensible to users.³³

However, it has to be understood that development support communication, as presently understood, goes beyond just message transmission. It should really be seen as a management information function. The potential of development support communication is not yet fully recognized. Properly conceived development support communication can reduce the costs, and speed up the pace of planned and beneficial change, helping to boost production in farms and workshops, to improve levels of education, health and nutrition, to stimulate community

development and self-help, and to contribute to the universally accepted values of equality and participation in development.

The 'human development' school of the eighties argues that human development is the only dimension of intrinsic worth in national development. Consisting of development experts, practitioners, and scholars from both the North and the South, this school emphasizes the development of human resources in terms of (a) education, including training in the basic sciences in the Third World countries; (b) nutrition and health, which require simultaneous action in several sectors, namely, agriculture, public health, basic health education, and mass media support in spreading information and helping to mobilize nation-wide action; (c) enhancement of the position of women's involvement in decisions affecting their lives, families and communities; and (d) the new scientific and technological revolutions taking place in such disparate areas as informatics, bio-technology, materials and energy.³⁴ It is argued that these technologies can be harnessed to the central purpose of development, i.e., the human factor in national development.³⁵ The human development approach, it will be seen, constitutes an important plank of the new concept of development support communication that is being widely used in the Third World countries. The task of message construction or transmission from the sources to receivers or vice versa is a micro-level objective of development support communication, while at the macro-level, it is concerned with effective organization of a development programme.³⁶

Thus, development support communication has a dichotomous goal-structure. As far as the beneficiaries of development are concerned, it is used to mobilise, train, and organize them so that they may participate effectively with the experts and governmental authorities. For the sources of development or benefactors, it can be used to execute better management strategies, hire and train development support communicators in effective communication skills, coordinate the various user-agencies, and generally ensure that the development programme does not suffer from handicaps.

A comparison of development communication with the contemporary development support communication has been very

succinctly brought out by Melkote in the form of a table which is reproduced below for convenience. The table was originally produced by Ascroft and Masilela (1989).³⁷

<i>Development Communication</i>	<i>Development Support Communication</i>
<i>Source:</i> University-based	Development agency-based
<i>Structure:</i> Top-down; authoritarian	Horizontal-knowledge-sharing between benefactors and beneficiaries
<i>Paradigm:</i> Dominant paradigm of externally directed social change	Participatory paradigm of an endogenously directed quest to maintain control over basic needs
<i>Level:</i> International and national	Grassroots
<i>Media:</i> Big media: TV, radio, and Press	Small media: video, film strips, traditional media, group and interpersonal communication
<i>Effects:</i> To create a climate of acceptance by beneficiaries for exogenous ideas and innovation	Create a climate of mutual understanding between benefactors and beneficiaries

Source: Ascroft and Masilela, 1989: 16-17.

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 - “The concept of communications would include all those processes by which people influence one another”
 - “Communication is the arrangement of environmental stimulus to produce certain desired behaviour on the part of the organism”
 - “Communication is a process by which an individual, the communicator, transmits (usually verbal symbols) to modify the behaviour of other individuals” (Hovland, 1964)
 - “Communication has as its central interest those behavioural situations in which a source transmits a message to (a) a receiver, (b) with conscious intent to affect better behaviour” (Gerald Miller, 1968)
 - “Communication is a process by which two or more people exchange ideas, facts, feelings or impressions in ways that each gains a common understanding of the message. In essence, it is the act of getting a sender and a receiver tuned together for a particular message or series of messages.” (Leagans)
 - “Communication is the process by which information, decisions and directions pass through a social system and the ways in which knowledge, opinions and attitudes are formed or modified.” (Loomis and Beegle)
 - “Communication occurs when two corresponding systems coupled together through one or more non-corresponding systems assume identical status as a result of a single transfer along the chain in trying to establish commonness.” (Schramm)
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CHAPTER IV

Development Experience and the Communication Scenario in India: A Broad Overview

I

INTRODUCTION: THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Any analysis of India's development strategy, experiment and experience must initially take into consideration the political-institutional structure that was designed by the first generation of Indian leadership after independence. The most important institutional parameters in this connection are the framework of parliamentary democracy and the nature and character of the Indian federal system that found their formal recognition in the Constitution of India that came into operation with effect from January 26, 1950. Parliamentary democracy, predominantly on the British model, was adopted in India not so much on account of the familiarity of the Western-educated elites who played the most visible role in articulating the goals of the national movement, but seemed to serve the interests of the dominant classes of big business and educated elite who had dominated the Congress Party to whom power was transferred more by way of negotiated compromise-settlement than through genuinely revolutionary liberation struggle.¹ Together with a highly centralized federal structure that at least constitutionally provided for a diffusion of governmental power in the notable fields of agriculture, education and health in order to serve the interests of the dominant agrarian classes at the State and regional levels, it provided the basic institutional framework for India's development effort.² Broadly speaking, although there was no decisive class-rule in India, the federal and liberal-democratic parliamentary structure that has characterised the Indian state upto this day, enabled the national government to exercise strong rule on behalf

of the alliance of the dominant classes.

Political democracy was desired and adopted as the principal means for carrying out or ushering in social and economic revolution. But it is sad to note that the political 'revolution' that was climaxed by the adoption of a democratic constitution with basic guarantees of civil liberties, universal suffrage and an unbroken electoral experience for more than four decades, has not been followed by genuine social and economic revolution that was promised by the leadership. The social and economic goals have remained a mirage even to this day. Results of planning did not come up to expectations. Whatever development in the field of industry was achieved was not evenly distributed. The noted economist, Amartya Sen, highlights the underlying duality of the Indian economic performance—its achievements on the growth front and in the development of science, technology and higher education, which coexist with persistent inequalities and deprivation.³ While the development plans benefitted the bureaucratic, professional and the entrepreneurial classes, the overwhelming majority of poor farmers and landless peasants in the rural areas was left untouched. Economic inequality increased rather than decreased, despite the decade of development and the Green Revolution.⁴ In the selectively modified capitalist path of development, the programmes with significant redistributive potential, like land redistribution and reform, public employment projects, progressive taxation measures, efforts to curb the growth of large business empires, were either lacking or were not pushed through vigorously.⁵

It has not been adequately realized that the burden of Plan-implementation on the State governments would be greatly increased and that the most radical restructuring would be needed in the fields of agriculture and rural development administration. This also required a much greater level of organization and public cooperation. In India, the three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions were expected to create a congenial psychological climate and field for the growth of participatory democracy and community-feeling in the lowest area of planning and development. As an improvement in the process of socio-economic development, the utilization of local resources

and manpower through local institutions for the execution of plans was visualized. As a part of the process of democratic decentralization, they were meant to awaken the people's consciousness and afford new springs of inspiration and support for development activities. The critical question was whether economic planning on a national scale was compatible with local autonomy. This dilemma was sought to be resolved by associating the Panchayati Raj bodies with the process of Plan-formulation so that the local demands could be devetailed into the national plans and the State and the national plans might be based on local resources and requirements. However, while Plan-formulation at local levels did ensure greater Plan-perspective, it raised tremendous problems of coordination at the numerous village, block (Samiti) and district levels.

Indian experience has not been any better than in most of the developing Third-World countries that have adopted the democratic political structure, although there has been no dearth of blueprints and official policies that tended to encourage and expand the principles and the horizons of democratic decentralization. India's past history, colonial legacies, and objective socio-economic and political conditions at the time of independence and constitution-making had swung the centralization-decentralization debate in the Constituent Assembly clearly in favour of a highly centralized federal structure, and only a symbolic lip-service was offered to the none-too vigorous voices of democratic decentralization by a ceremonial declaration in Article 40 in the Part IV of the Constitution offering the non-justiciable, non-enforceable directive principles of state policy that 'the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government'.⁶ From the very beginning, the compulsions of national integration, planning and economic development have strengthened the process of centralization, and since this perfectly suited the inclinations and requirements of India's ruling leadership, no genuine and serious attempt was made to modify this basic centralized structure of the political system.⁷ Scholars are, by and large, agreed on the critical assumption that

behind the formal acceptance of the idea of local autonomy there exists a well-entrenched but subtle resistance to any radical change of balance of power in favour of local self-government institutions.⁸ It is an unfortunate commentary on the Indian federal system in that in consequence of the interplay of politics, planning and finance, the federal structure and the federal process have never really operated, and central dominance over the States in decision-making and policy-formulation has been the most conspicuous factor in inter-governmental balance of power and relations up to this day, the Sarkaria Commission Report and other recommendations notwithstanding.⁹ Since the basic character of the Indian society, economy and polity had not changed and the entrenched position of the dominant classes had shown no sign of abatement or decline, it was perhaps logical to assume that the federal process would not genuinely work in response to some very superficial changes in the superstructure. The result has been very disastrous for the all-round development of the political system and for the intended congruence of growth and equity that is the core of the Indian problem.

II

INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

The first, and possibly only, comprehensively articulated development strategy for India is to be found in the First and Second Five Year Plans and the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956, although the initial attempt at developing such a perspective was through the formation of the National Planning Committee by the Indian National Congress in 1938. The imperatives of fulfilling the aspirations of the people of the newly emergent nation-state dictated a sharp and decisive break from the colonial economic structure imposed upon the country in the past. It was a challenge to the economists and planners as well as to the leadership to chart the course of development from a poor, agricultural economy to a powerful, self-reliant industrial power. The early planning framework established by these

pioneers has gone down the history of economic thought as an outstanding example of vision coupled with technical excellence.¹⁰

One striking fact that emerges from an overall assessment of India's planning policies, strategies and techniques, from the First Plan to the Eighth, is that a progressive refinement of planning techniques has gone hand in hand with an increasing divergence between the targets and achievements of each successive Plan.¹¹ The subsequent economic history shows a relatively dismal record of awareness and creativity in economic management. It illustrates the extent of inertia in Indian planning and policy-making, and its insensitivity to structural issues. Policy-making did not emanate from an overall macro-economic perspective, but got fragmented into sectoral domains. The projections of the First Plan (1951-56) were derived from a simple application of the Harrod-Domar growth model, though it lacked any theoretical underpinning or overall visualization of the future, being in the nature of summarization, compilation, coordination and rationalization of schemes of development already under way. Broadly, the Plan frame focused on two types of investment: agriculture, and some areas of infrastructure like transportation and communications.¹² The First Plan was a great success, aided more by natural causes than anything else. The core of the strategy adopted in the Second Plan (1956-61) was rapid industrialization through massive investment on heavy, basic and machine-building industries, based on Feldman-Mahalanobis two-sector model, although, according to late Professor Sukhamoy Chakraborty, the Indian development model of the mid-fifties could better be viewed as a variant of the Lewis model.¹³ Agricultural productivity was relegated to the fifth position in the scheme of priorities. The Third Plan (1961-66) was not based on a consistent, clearly defined model, although the United Nations expert, Professor J. Sandee's simple linear programming and demonstration planning model was before the planners at the time of its formulation. The planners themselves had reportedly admitted¹⁴ that the general pattern of development followed in the Third Plan necessarily flowed, in large part, from the basic approach and experience of the Second

Plan. Following Rostow's argument, the Indian planners thought that a 'bit push' was necessary for launching the country into the 'take-off' stage and self-sustained growth. India entered into an agreement with the United States on a large-scale import of foodgrains under P.L. 480 Programme. Dr. S.R.Sen stressed the importance of maintaining 'a cheap food regime' for promoting growth in India.¹⁵ The planners' optimism about growth floundered on the rocks of some exogenous and other factors, like the two wars with China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1965 respectively, with consequent sharp increases in defence spending, successive monsoon failures and sharp cutbacks in public investment.

The turning point in Indian planning came in 1965-66 when growth really turned into decline and the Indian economy slid into the reverse gear since then. This was rather inevitable, since our planning policy was based on models of development unrelated to the reality of India, and a strategy of growth that had accepted, at least tacitly, a framework of dependency, and a basically colonial pattern of administration and Plan-implementation. All the manifestations of what Gunnar Myrdal had called a 'soft state' to describe India's nation-building experience,¹⁶ had come into full play during those critical years. India entered into the era of 'Plan Holiday' by first abandoning the draft of the Fourth Plan in 1965-66, and then adopting the Annual Plans for 1966-67, 1967-68 and 1968-69, as emergency devices to deal with abnormal situations. The realization had now dawned among the policy-makers in the government that the first three Plans had led to the improvement of economic conditions of certain sections of the people, while over the vast stretches of the country, large sections of people had remained submerged in the most abysmal poverty.

With the induction of Professor D.R. Gadgil into the Planning Commission, a new planning strategy came to be adopted for the Fourth plan (1969-74) with the declared objective of rapid economic development accompanied by continued progress towards equality and social justice. The Gadgil strategy included a new agricultural strategy without giving up the heavy industries programme. However, the new strategy seemed to

deny the critical importance of land reform even at the level of principle, but welcomed technological modernization. The strategy seemed to succeed with the impressive achievements of the Green Revolution which, however, proved to be a mirage to the vast multitude of the poor. It was quite evident at this stage that the planning efforts had failed to formulate, articulate, and implement the distributive goals. The output goals were over-emphasized, while social goals were only marginally recognized. However, significant lessons were learnt, and the need for a rethinking about development as a concept and a strategy was clearly felt. The question of an appropriate model of development for India was taken up in right earnest in academic fora as well as by policy-makers in the government. There was a ferment of thought, and the country looked for viable alternatives.

The planning model on which the Fifth Plan (1974-78) was based was made up of two elements: a Harrod-Domar type construction showing the relation between investment and its resultant output, along with a Liontief-type inter-sectoral transactional model.¹⁷ For the first time, the problem of poverty eradication was catapulted into the forefront of political discussion. It was a strategy of 'growth with redistribution'. However, the period of the 1970s was one of great turbulence not only for the Indian economy, but for the world. The major events of this period included the prolonged agricultural failure of 1970, the Bangladesh War of 1971, the first oil-price shock of 1973-74, the Emergency of 1975-77, the first Janata Government of 1977-79, return of the Congress (I) government in 1979-80, and the start of the second oil-price shock in 1979. All these events made it imperative to redraft the approach to the Fifth Plan and to considerably dilute the strategies to achieve its ambitious redistribution objectives. The Janata government decided to introduce a decentralized planning technique with rural orientation. The government scrapped the Fifth Plan and introduced a new system of 'rolling plan' which became operational during 1978-80. This period failed to register any marked progress, and the fail of the Janata government merely short-circuited this new phase in India's planning process. The earlier version of the Sixth Plan drawn up for 1978-83 was recast in the light of the

policies and programmes of the new government headed by Sm. Indira Gandhi. Decision was taken that the Sixth Plan would now cover the period 1980-85. It outlined a two-pronged strategy, namely, simultaneous strengthening of infrastructures for agriculture and industry so as to create conditions for an accelerated growth in investment, output and exports, and special programmes for increased opportunities for employment, especially in the rural areas and the unorganized sector, and to meet the minimum basic needs of the people. A number of poverty eradication programmes were introduced. It became quite clear that with a growing population and limited natural resources, emphasis had to be shifted to improvement of the productivity of land through the greater diffusion of technological improvements.

Under Rajiv Gandhi's dispensation, the Seventh Plan (1985-90) was formulated on the basis of (a) strategies for poverty alleviation, (b) strategies for employment generation, (c) strategies for agricultural development, and (d) strategies for industrial growth. However, in actual practice, this Plan gave a decisive turn to economic development in favour of the rich, and sought to promote computer culture borrowed from the West, American management practice, consumerism and elitism. Instead of tackling the nagging problems of poverty and unemployment, the policy of 'liberalisation', especially import liberalisation that took place since 1979, and more particularly after 1984, immensely benefitted the gainers from the 1970s redistribution, the urban capitalists, bourgeoisie and the emergent industrial and rural middle classes and demanded a consumption pattern which could not be met without the inflow of imported capital and intermediate goods, which had been restricted earlier. This liberalisation was an outcome of pressures exerted by these groups and partly of the pressures of the multilateral aid agencies, although the ostensible argument was in terms of increasing the competitiveness of the Indian economy. The Planning Commission's only obsession seemed to be with technical growth models and the growth rate. The fruits of whatever growth took place did not trickle down to the poor, but benefitted only the top ten percent of the population. The vetera

journalist Nikhil Chakraborty characterised this development planning process as the 'top ten percent' philosophy.¹⁸

The newly constituted Planning Commission under the newly elected National Front government in December 1989 scrapped the earlier Approach Paper to the Eight Plan (1990-95), and its new Approach Paper, entitled 'Towards Social Transformation', indicated a significant departure from the objectives, priorities and methods of planning hitherto adopted. It sought to lay emphasis on the content of development rather than the growth rate per se and to avert irreversible damage to the environment and especially to the resource base of the poor. It sought to achieve its objectives through people's participation in framing and implementing development programmes through a system of open and democratic decision-making. The thrust on employment and poverty alleviation would generate additional demand for mass consumption goods, the supply of which must expand. Some of the major implications of the new planning approach were : (i) completion of democratic decentralization within the first year of the Plan; (ii) acceptance of integrated local areas planning approach to rural development for which fifty percent of the resources would be earmarked; (iii) emphasis on agriculture as a more stable and productive occupation through various measures; (iv) remunerative prices to farmers in general and diversification of agriculture into more remunerative enterprises; (v) promotion of adequate production of mass consumer goods, particularly through labour-intensive manufacture; (vi) thrust on exports in order to reduce dependence on external savings and foreign exchange earnings; and (vii) enforcement of the strictest possible economy both in government expenditures and in imports so that additional internal and external borrowings are significantly reduced. The Approach Paper was submitted to the National Development Council in its meeting in June, 1990, and was duly endorsed by the Council, but before any follow-up action could be taken for final preparation of the Plan, this government had to bow out on the 7th November, 1990, and was replaced by the minority government of Chandrasekhar that had to depend on Congress (I) support for its survival. The Chandrasekhar government fell

within one year, and was replaced by the new Congress (I) as an aftermath of the tragic assassination of Shri Rajiv Gandhi and the Parliamentary elections that followed soon after. A new Planning Commission had been constituted with Pranab Mukherjee as the Deputy Chairman, and there had been a declaration that the Eight Plan would be prepared and enforced from April 1992. This plan, which is indicative in nature, integrative, and flexible, with scope for change, innovation and adjustment, recognises 'human development' as the core of all development, efforts, recognising the essential need to involve people in the process of development, is committed to: achievement of near-full employment, containment of population growth, growth and diversification of agriculture to achieve self-sufficiency in food, strengthening of infrastructure like energy, transport, communication and irrigation, in order to support the growth process on a sustainable basis, universalisation of elementary education and total eradication of illiteracy, etc., and is geared to the need for continued reliance on domestic resources for financing investment, increasing technical capabilities for the development of science and technology, and modernisation for competitive efficiency. With an allocation of a total outlay of Rs. 8,71,100 crores at 1991-92 prices, including an outlay of Rs. 4,34,100 crores in the private sector, the Plan fixes the growth rate at 5.6 per cent per annum. The new Industrial Policy, announced by the present government on July 24, 1991, along with the New Economic Policy (NEP), with its characteristic features like globalisation, liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation, has opened the floodgates for the multinational corporations and almost completely privatised the production and distribution system. It constitutes a complete departure from the policy perspectives of the fifties continued till the end of the seventies. Foreign exchange crisis has been declared as the crux of the present grave economic crisis, and has led to devaluation of the rupee, sending out of gold, and new-look budgets (1991-94) adapted to suit the International Monetary Fund from whom large chunk of fund is being borrowed. Debate still persists whether the foreign exchange crisis was really so crucial for the functioning of the Indian economy, and if, with some corrective

measures and without undertaking such a somersault in economic policies as has been done, the situation could have been retrieved.¹⁹ While the problem of poverty and unemployment has further deteriorated during the eighties, and has been the more serious economic problem, it has been put under the carpet. Rapid and excessive privatisation may lead to an accentuation of the unemployment problem in India during the coming years, despite the measures announced by the Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in his budgets.

It has to be admitted that the objective conditions of the Indian economy are quite different today from what they were in the mid-fifties, and it is idle to expect that a strategy which was valid then will continue to be valid now. What has happened, however, is that only periodic marginal adjustments to certain policy parameters have been made from time to time for addressing short-run problems. It is obvious that such patchwork tinkering will not do any more. The Indian economy has long suffered for want of a viable development strategy that is suited to the objective socio-economic conditions of the country. Such a development strategy must address the minimum socially necessary objectives. Poverty and unemployment continue to be the most crucial persisting problems which are intimately interlinked. Poverty is basically a rural phenomenon, and the kulakisation of Indian agriculture had grave implications for such poverty of the disadvantaged groups.

Certain interesting features that stand out in this survey of India's development strategy and experience, may be recounted. *First*, the development strategy formulated by Indian planners was a response to not merely economic imperatives, but also to political and social ideology and administrative needs. The strategy worked well for some time within the constraints of limited resources and narrow infrastructural base, but it failed to take into account and tackle the growing agricultural constraints which were in operation by 1960. The growth-performance during the 1960s was more or less at the constrained level, but the development strategy continued to be determined on the basis of a wrongly perceived savings constraint. *Second*, there was over-reliance on the import-substitution strategy when the need

was increasing exports by instituting a more attractive export incentive system. Even during the eighties, in view of the foreign exchange crisis, the proper reaction would have been to step up exports substantially and to curtail imports, but this was not done. Rather, import-substitution became even more attractive than before, with large and unjustified increases in the effective rates of protection. By 1989, the binding constraint to growth in India was not just foreign exchange, but was basically fiscal, which called for urgent step-up in exports. Larger export earnings would have generated greater revenues by way of import duties. In his 1991-92 budget speech, the Finance Minister, Dr. Man Mohan Singh, had correctly diagnosed the basic ailments of the Indian economy which was in "deep crisis", with a precarious balance of payments situation, low foreign exchange reserves, and the spectre of a double-digit inflation. His emphasis was on reducing drastically the fiscal deficit of the central government. However, reduction of fiscal deficits required cut in current expenditures, which was not achieved. In his 1993-94 budget speech, Dr. Singh admitted that in June, 1991, the economy was in the throes of an unprecedented balance of payments crisis. A savage squeeze had been imposed on imports. International confidence had collapsed; industrial production was falling; and inflation was on the rise. Growth declined to 1.2 per cent in 1991-92, but was expected to be around 4 percent for 1992-93. He attributed all these to rising fiscal deficits of the central government of the previous years, and emphasised the urgency of fiscal discipline as well as structural reform, the latter intended to increase efficiency in resource-use and improvements in the country's international competitiveness.

The priorities of economic policy, at this critical stage of economic restructuring, would be : (a) continuation of fiscal correction and reduction of fiscal deficits at the centre and in the states; (b) its likely impact on development expenditure, especially for poverty-alleviation, rural development expenditure, especially for poverty-alleviation, rural development and vital social services like education and health; (c) strong industrial revival, to be followed by a vigorous boom; (d) full

support to agriculture on which the livelihood and well-being of the majority of our people depend, and also to agro-processing industries having tremendous potential for increased rural employment and income; and (e) exports to be made a high priority national endeavour as the viable means for self-reliance.

What is indeed heartening is the recognition of the central role of agriculture in supporting broad-based and equitable development. After a long time, indeed, agriculture, agro-processing and rural development have been given top priority in the design of economic policy. The components of this new policy and strategy would be assurance of remunerative prices to farmers to encourage agricultural production and make it profitable; and flow of rural and agricultural credit from institutional sources like NABARD and a future Cooperative Development Fund. The agricultural credit system was to be revitalised so that it could become a more effective instrument for increasing capital formation and productivity of agriculture. The 1993-94 budget enhanced the outlay for rural development by a massive 62 percent to Rs.5010 crores, while the allocation for Jawahar Rojgar Yojana has been increased to Rs.3306 crores as against the present Rs. 2046 crores, for creating 1100 million mandays for employment. Higher allocations have also been made for TRYSEM, rural water supply programme and IRDP, as well as programmes of decentralised planning and development through the newly created Panchayati Raj Institutions under the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992. However, despite all these seemingly reassuring words and figures, some disturbing facts about India's agricultural and rural development programmes have lately become too pronounced to be ignored for too long, like deceleration in agricultural investment over the past decade, as pointed out by the Economic Survey, 1992-93, from Rs.46.4 billion in 1980-81 to Rs.43.6 billion in 1990-91; poor and unsatisfactory capital formation in agriculture; poor performance of the agricultural credit system caused by loan waivers and problem of loan recovery; poor development of infrastructure or a proper institutional framework for decentralised decision-making based on the experience of local inputs.

Two related problems and issues which are being widely

debated in the context of the Eighth Plan are decentralised planning and the involvement of the Panchayat institutions at various levels in the implementation of anti-poverty programmes. One of the criticisms of rural development programmes in India, from the days of the Community Development Programme onwards, including the Green Revolution technology, has been that many a time, most of the public efforts and public investments benefitted the relatively better-off sections of rural society to the exclusion of the very poor. The anti-poverty programmes were born out of this apprehension. A major drawback of the IRDP, for example, has been that it is essentially a bureaucratic programme; and bureaucracy in our country, right from the days of British colonial rule, is not exactly known for its ability to absorb the ethos of economic development and social change, especially those with an equity orientation. This is particularly true at the lower levels of the hierarchy, i.e., at the cutting edge of the administration, in relation to the anti-poverty programmes.

III

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: STRATEGIES, APPROACHES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Whatever becomes the strategy and approach of the Eighth Plan, there is no doubt that in recent years, as in other Third World countries, so in India, rural development has emerged as a distinct field of policy, practice and research with focus on distributional issues. In an earlier chapter, we have already indicated the emerging concept and approaches of rural development in Third World countries. In India, too, we find that rural development has been one of the abiding concerns of the successive Five Year Plans and successive governments in power. In the pre-independence period, rural development was primarily a task of voluntary organizations set up by eminent persons. Tagore's scheme of rural reconstruction, the Gurgaon experiment of F.L. Brayne, the Rural Reconstruction Programme in Baroda, the Firka Development Scheme of T. Prakasam, the Etawah Pilot Project of Abet Meyer, the Nilakhari Experiment by S.K. Dey, and Mahatma Gandhi's programmes for rural

reconstruction, are worth mentioning. After independence, the Community Development Programme of October, 1952, along with the National Extension Service of 1953, were attempts at rural reconstruction with the aim of associating the people. The First Plan had described the Community Development Programme as 'the method', and rural extension the 'agency' through which the Five Year Plan sought to initiate the process of transformation of the social and economic life of the villages'²⁰ The Panchayati Raj system that replaced the Community development Programme in 1957 on the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Team Report was based on the concept of democratic decentralization and had institutionalized the people's role in the elected bodies of the Panchayat institutions. But these institutions were dominated by people who were well-off and were eager to grab every opportunity to benefit from the programmes. While the introduction of special programmes like Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP), the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP) and the High-Yielding Varieties Programmes (HYVP) culminated in the ushering-in of the Green Revolution, this in its trail brought about a sharpening of socio-economic disparities, for it was sustained by intensive use of modern technology that was capital-intensive and therefore, beyond the reach of the majority of small and marginal farmers. This led to a policy-shift from 1970 onwards, marked by frontal attacks on the twin evils of poverty and unemployment. The strategy of the Fourth Plan was designed to meet the challenge of 'development with social justice' through institutional measures and infrastructural development. Target group-oriented programmes such as the SFDA and MFAL and area development schemes such as the DPAP and the CADP were launched. This thrust continued in the Fifth Plan and was reflected in the Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) and the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) meant to help the poorest of the poor in the rural areas to come above the poverty-line through income-generating activities. The Sixth Plan saw an extension of the IRDP to the whole country. Implementation of land reforms, and different schemes, cooperatives for credit, marketing and other services, setting up

of Farmers' Service Societies (FSS), National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD), the Regional Rural Banks, all aim at rural development. A new look at the Panchayati Raj was taken by the Ashoka Mehta Committee under the Janata government (1978), the G.V.K. Rao Committee through the CAARD Report (1983) and the L.M. Singhvi Committee Report of 1986. Lack of awareness of developmental programmes and schemes was seen as the main reason for the low participation of the rural youth in development programmes like TRYSEM. The National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) were replaced by the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana from 1989.

However, with all these grandiose programmes, rural development has not yielded the desired results in terms of the declared objectives. Undoubtedly, the challenges are big and the implications are politically and socially far-reaching. There is need for a comprehensive yet strategic reorientation of the entire rural development policy which must aim at the creation and evolution of a new economy and a new social order. The South Commission Report, as already pointed out,²¹ has made a strong plea for a revamping of strategies in the poor Third World countries including India, in order to achieve a self-reliant and people-oriented development-path. It emphasises the promotion of social justice and development of human resources as matters of primary concern.

Some general observations may be made about the importance of a comprehensive rural development policy in the Indian context. One obvious fact is that the rural sector in India is likely to continue to remain significant for economic and social development. Both in terms of size and economic impact, rural producers and their families are an important consideration for development policy in the country. Farming is significant as a supplier of food, an earner of foreign currency through cash crops, and for providing the necessary goods, services, and labour to permit sufficient investment in industrial efforts. Agriculture is still the basic industry, employing a big percentage of labour force, and a major source of GDP. Yet, poverty

continues to be widespread, disease endemic, life expectancy lower, and educational and literacy levels below those in most other countries. Rural women are especially at a disadvantage by reason of their gender and location. Human resource development is particularly of critical importance. Policies intended to raise the standard of living of the rural population through raising agricultural productivity often consist of disseminating or 'extending' knowledge and information about more efficient techniques, and providing the means for farmers to adopt them. Rural extension services must form an important resource for investment in rural development programmes. So are land reform and redistribution critically important in rural development policy. Various strategies have been designed to deliver rural development policies. Two major strategies should be given special consideration : improvement strategies and transformation strategies. The former focuses upon adopting more efficient techniques within existing social and economic structures, while the latter aims at nothing less than total change in the lives and livelihoods of those affected by this policy, and attempts to provide totally new resources and decision-making institutions. Together with the basic needs approach, they constitute the cornerstone of any future social data. Such social data would not only focus upon social and cultural 'barriers' or obstacles to rural development objectives, but at the same time reinforce and strengthen the notions of self-sustaining development effort, participation and decentralized approaches, by relating to indigenous social institutions, perceptions and change mechanisms. Most rural development activities would need technical and economic inputs. But all rural development efforts require adequate inputs of social and cultural knowledge. How people affected by development plans use their resources, communicate with one another and with external groups, or view their lives and livelihoods, are essential issues to be taken into account in planning change. Any discussion of the content and media of extension programmes is futile without an appreciation of the social environment within which and on behalf of which the extension activities are being carried out.²²

Rural development, then, integrates economic and social

objectives in seeking to create better and more secure livelihoods for rural people. Building these objectives necessarily entails analysis, problem-identification and suggestion of possible resolutions, often implemented within the framework of a programme or project. Rural development efforts attempt not only to resolve agricultural issues, but also to tackle the social and/or institutional difficulties of rural areas.

The C.A.A.R.D. Report, therefore, very appropriately observes that "the time has come to take a total view of Rural Development. It has to encompass all economic and social development activities handled by different agencies at the field level. It is not advisable any longer to limit anti-poverty programme to a few specific schemes." Past experience clearly indicates that government machinery (bureaucracy) alone cannot be assigned the responsibility for achieving economic development and social justice. Local initiative must be encouraged and the detailed strategy worked out by local people. It is essential to involve the people and their representatives effectively in drawing up programmes of rural development and their implementation. The Committee feels that Panchayati Raj institutions have to be activated and given all the support needed so that they can become effective organisations for handling people's problems. It is also necessary to encourage voluntary agencies with informed idealism, operating in rural areas, in every possible way. The Committee very rightly recommends decentralized district planning, properly prepared district plan, implementation of land reforms with greater vigour, development administration at the district level as a major activity involving significant responsibilities, significant restructuring of planning and implementation machinery, avoidance of the proliferation of development agencies and departmentalisation and fragmentation of functions, and rationalisation and reorganisation of blocks to ensure that they become viable units for the tasks assigned to them.²³

IV

LAND REFORMS, AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

It seems that land reform, once a live issue during the heydays of peasant struggles and movements during the fifties and the sixties, has ceased to matter in rural development planning and policy, and has receded into the background, except for occasional rhetorical declarations of policy-makers and the leadership. However, in recent years, the role of land reform and its impact on agricultural and rural development, especially as a potent engine of socio-economic transformation, has emerged in serious academic discussions for a reassessment of the new directions in the light of the new economic policy of the government. Such issues as the end of the existing 'benami' transactions, enforcement of ceilings on land holdings, legitimisation of tenancy rights within the ceiling limit, registration and recording of tenancy arrangements through Panchayats, support to marginal and small farmers and cultivators through group action for efficient water technology, social forestry, etc., and national action for bringing the landless labourers into the mainstream of development, as suggested by the National Commission on Rural Labour, 1987, have been engaging attention. In a national seminar held by the Centre for Agrarian Studies at the National Institute for Rural Development, Hyderabad, December 16-18, 1991, as reported in *Economic and*

Political Weekly, February 22, 1992,²⁴ the consensus of a wide assortment of distinguished experts and other participants, was that an effective implementation of land reforms could contribute to efficient functioning of markets and could facilitate the shift to a non-subsidised agricultural growth, while simultaneously contributing to the goals of improved employment and equity and distributive justice, changing both income and power relations, strengthening democratic ways of life in rural society, and for agricultural development.

In this context, the West Bengal case has evoked much interest, as an interesting success story, in sharp contrast with failures elsewhere, notably Bihar. Unlike Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal has had a fairly long and uninterrupted period of 'left'

rule with a political will and commitment for implementation of land reform. The remarkable success of 'Operation Barga' in West Bengal, even if not always followed up by other infrastructural action for effective agricultural productivity and growth, could be attributed to this political will, and a committed administration, and organisation, of potential beneficiaries and grassroots Panchayati Raj Institutions which, recently, in the May 30, 1993 elections, completed an enviable three five-year terms since 1978, with an impressive, even if chequered record of achievements in socio-economic change in rural Bengal. As claimed by spokesmen of the West Bengal government and corroborated by critics and even foreign scholars through field surveys,²⁵ substance was given to land reform legislation through pressures built by the Panchayats and Kisan Sabhas at the grassroots level, combined with support at the state level. By abolishing land monopoly and by augmenting the incomes of the rural poor, land reform in West Bengal has widened the base for industrialisation. The significant productivity and welfare impact of land reform on rural West Bengal has been unmistakable. In a recent three-part article²⁶ dealing with the Constitution (73rd Amendment) and Constitution (74th Amendment) Acts, 1992, on Panchayat Raj and Nagarpalika (municipalities), which have already become operational, Shri Nirmal Mukarji, a retired ICS officer and former Governor of Punjab, considers the West Bengal Panchayat experience as a success story, despite several deficiencies, and as having shown the way to the rest of India with political and now self-governing Panchayats, paving the way to future 'third stratum' of government in India's federal structure. Not only has a new generation of young political leadership entered the arena at the grassroots level; the popularly elected functionaries have shown remarkable 'upward mobility' Power structure in the rural areas has already substantially.

In its June 1, 1993 edition, *The Statesman*, Calcutta, not exactly enjoying the reputation of a pro-Left daily, has observed in a perceptive and sympathetic editorial, that the sweep and magnitude of the Left, or rather, the CPI(M)'s victory in the May 30, 1993 elections, disproves the oft-repeated Opposition (Congress-I) allegation of terror and violence, consolidates the

Party's bargaining power *vis-a-vis* other Left partners and other parties, re-establishes the credibility of the Panchayati experiment initiated a decade and a half ago, imparts an aura of respectability and good image in the eyes of others even when the institutions are languishing in Karnataka, once a front-runner with West Bengal in this exercise. "West Bengal has already mapped the contours of the system that the rest of the country will do well to emulate." The movement has brought momentum to large segments of people, including, now, women who would occupy one third of the elected offices, for decentralised decision-making. Steady agricultural growth at a rate higher than national growth, even in a dismal, regressive industrial climate, has provided the necessary foundation for this appreciable and impressive record.²⁷

The noted agricultural economist, C.H. Hanumantha Rao has very correctly observed²⁸ that 'given the nature or the Indian polity and the political will on the part of the ruling elites, a drastic restructuring of rural institutions through radical redistribution of land has to be ruled out.' Effective implementation of existing land reform legislation has to be on the agenda, and might provide some land to the landless and prevent further concentration of land ownership. The goals of employment-generation and poverty-eradication, the twin pillars of rural development policy and programme, have to be achieved basically through the growth process that has to be highly labour-absorbing. Rao outlines four major areas of interest as (i) restructuring agricultural growth, (ii) accelerating the pace of social development in the rural areas, (iii) stepping up the existing rural employment programmes for capital construction in agriculture and for rural development, and (iv) stimulating the growth of household and small-scale rural industries by integrating the self-employment programmes like the IRDP.²⁹ Agricultural growth in India has so far centred round the objective of achieving self-sufficiency in foodgrains. This objective has now been largely, almost wholly achieved. The focus in the coming decades should be achievement of social justice. Being labour-intensive and small farmer-based, agriculture offers a considerable potential for achieving the goal of poverty-eradication. Similarly, social

development will slow down population growth, raise the skill and awareness of the rural poor, simultaneously reduce rural poverty and prepare the rural poor for effective participation in the development-process. For example, afforestation and social forestry, through effective participation of the rural poor, can at once become a programme for poverty-alleviation and eco-preservation. The right choice relating to the size of public infrastructural investment has to be made by the public policy-makers in the country.

In the context of the current reorientation of the development strategy in the country, the one critical area where a major restructuring of programme may be necessary relates to agriculture and rural development. Public intervention in agriculture and rural development needs to be switched to an area-based approach that works with the climate and topography of each area and focuses on providing a sustainable livelihood for all. It should cover all rural activities including cottage industries. Research, extension, credit and other support systems should be based on the household rather than on specific crops or inputs. An integrated policy for land and water development that covers the entire rural spectrum has to be evolved. Such a transformation of public intervention will seek to combine the compulsions of decentralisation, employment generation and environmental protection.³⁰

However, it needs to be repeated at this stage that attempts to integrate growth with poverty-eradication would remain largely ineffective in the absence of adequate structural reforms and improved access for the rural poor to agricultural and common lands. Unlike in the immediate post-independence years, the need for land reforms is now more pressing and urgent. At the level of overall development strategy, land reforms need support from the broad spectrum of agricultural policies focussed on improvements in agricultural investments, research, extension, credit, services and institutions.³¹

IV

COMMUNICATION SCENARIO IN INDIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE:
EARLY PERCEPTIONS, PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS
AND THE NEED FOR A NEW POLICY

The striking fact about the communication scenario in India since independence upto this day is the wide gap between perception and practice, objectives and accomplishments. The need for communication in support of development was recognised and articulated very early in India, and institutionalized in the Plan documents. In the First Plan,³² the need for a widespread understanding of various development projects and programmes was emphasized. It envisaged the development of "all available methods of communication", and approaching the people through the written and the spoken word no less than through radio, film, song and drama. The importance of feedback was recognised to understand the people's needs and aspirations as well as difficulties encountered at the operational levels. In all subsequent Plans, this concern was voiced with increasingly greater force, although with varying emphasis. In a sense, the First Plan was a remarkable document for its perception and recognition of the need for decentralization and localisation of information, and for feedback. It talked about 'local programmes', 'languages and symbols of the people', and believed in the 'capacity of the common man to find out and accept what is good for him'. The concept of communication in support of development was thus well and truly understood. The Second Plan³³ outlined the measures for expansion of Plan publicity through the mass media of communication. While the Third Plan³⁴ proposed the intensification of the existing publicity arrangements, it was the Fourth Plan³⁵ which called for an *integrated approach* (emphasis added) to development communication after acknowledging the serious information imbalances within the country. Reaffirming the emphasis on people's participation, the Sixth Plan³⁶ stated that 'the planning process in a democratic country can acquire fuller meaning and depth if the people not only associate themselves in planning for their

development but also participate consciously in Plan implementation'. The Seventh Plan³⁷ observed that economic betterment of the poorer sections cannot be accomplished without growth in awareness. Similarly, the important objective of the Approach Paper to the Eighth Plan, previously formulated,³⁸ were: (a) involvement of local communities and their representatives, particularly of the weaker sections, in the development process; (b) making development responsive to felt needs at the grassroots; and (c) strengthening democracy at the grassroots.

A brief thumbnail sketch of the existing communication scenario in India may not be out of place at this point of our discussion. The nodal institution is the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India which is entrusted with the responsibility of creating a sense of awareness among the citizens about nation, its history, heritage, customs and traditions. The task of keeping the people well-informed about the various developments and problems they face from time to time lies with the Ministry. Through its media units, the Ministry disseminates the messages of development and modernization and creates awareness for generating public participation and support for the government's plans and programmes for bringing social and economic change and to protect national security as well as to advance the cause of national integration. These objectives are achieved through various media units attached to the Ministry. They are: Akashvani (All India Radio),

Doordarshan, Press Information Bureau, Publication Division, Research and Reference Division, Directorate of Advertisement and Visual Publicity, Registrars of Newspapers for India, Directorate of Field Publicity, Photo Division, Song and Drama Division, and Films Division. The Ministry is also associated with the National Film Development Corporation, the Children's Film Society, the Film and Television Institute of India, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, and the Press Council of India.³⁹ The main thrust of the media units of the Ministry during the Seventh Plan has been extensive dissemination of information relating to government policies and programmes and motivating people to participate in the national endeavour for integrated development of the country. Skilful combination of

programmes and messages through the traditional and folk forms or inter-personal communication and modern audio-visual media using satellite communication was successfully managed for communication objectives in rural, backward, tribal, remote and hilly areas. Phenomenal coverages in the Akashvani and Door-darshan programmes have been accomplished in recent years.⁴⁰

However, this machinery, which is totally owned and controlled by the Government, whether at the Centre or in the States, does not exhaust the communication scenario in India. At the operational level, as various studies so far made have come to show, despite tremendous expansion in the network of the mass media like the radio, television, films and the press, these have not been able really to be effective in penetrating the real target groups as primary tools for creating awareness, leading to attitudinal changes conducive to rural development. While traditional media have a wider and deeper reach, in view of their close association with the social and cultural ethos of the rural populace, only a limited effort has been made to use them for development communication. Very little is known about the relative suitability of the various forms and their potential and effectiveness.

Mass Media and Rural Communication in India

As already indicated, in the Indian context, a skilful synthesis between traditional and folk media of communication on the one hand, and the modern audio-visual media including satellite communication on the other, is being attempted on a large scale. So far as programmes for rural development are concerned, almost all AIR stations broadcast rural programmes in different languages and in local dialects. It was in 1966 that AIR, in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, set up Farm and Home Units in selected AIR stations to provide relevant and problem-oriented technical information to the farmers of a small homogenous area with similarity of agro-climatic conditions. More such units were set up in subsequent years. Intensive Farm Programme and programmes for rural audience in general are now originated by more than ninety stations with full Farm and Home Units. With the introduction of

local stations, the much-felt need for agricultural programmes was in the process of fulfilment. The main ingredients of the Farm and Home broadcast are hints on agricultural practices, scientific methods of cultivation, soil and water management, fertiliser application, plant protection measures, storage and marketing, etc. Special programmes are broadcast in support of the programmes sponsored by Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA), marginal farmers and agricultural labourers, dryfarming and drought prone areas schemes, applied nutrition programme, adult education, national demonstration schemes, etc., with greater emphasis now on integrated rural development programmes. Topics on health, hygiene, nutrition, cottage industries and various other aspects of rural life are also included in the general rural programmes. The basic thrust of the agricultural programmes has been the ways and means for increasing production of cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, fruits, animal products and fish. These Farm and Home Units are also broadcasting special programmes for rural women and children on topics like women's education, vocational training, self-employment schemes, legal literacy, training facilities in agriculture, storage of grains at home, poultry, rearing, kitchen gardening, health and hygiene, food and nutrition, mother and child care, etc.

Akashvani's Audience Research Unit (ARU) provides qualitative feedback on audience size and composition, reaction of listeners in rural areas to the programmes and assesses their impact on the target audience. It is a functional activity providing basic data for feedback, ready reference and analysis for programme planners on various aspects mentioned above. This forms the basis for determining the necessary remedial actions related to programme policies and their qualitative aspects. The services provided by the Audience Research Units, presently numbering 26, 20 of which are located in State capitals, are: (i) quantitative and qualitative feedback to enable the policy-makers, broadcasting managers and programme personnel, evolve suitable policies, raise or prepare programme schedule or bring about qualitative improvement in programmes, and also working out popularity-rating of the different channels, programme preferences, listening tastes, etc; (ii) research support to development

broadcasting by providing the basic data about the target audience, assessing reactions of target audiences to individual broadcasts or a series of broadcasts, and measuring the impact of these programmes on the specific target groups; (iii) maintaining a mini-data bank for ready reference by compiling information on profile of the audience; demographic and socio-economic characteristics, ethno-linguistic and cultural characteristics, development needs, aspirations and expectations from broadcasting organisations, general exposure to other media, listening pattern, etc. Wherever necessary, these Audience Research reports contain action points or recommendations.⁴¹ Some samples of these recommendations are; technical terminology may be explained in simple terms or language; presentation of programmes should be interesting, simple and attractive; practical ideas for adopting improved agricultural practices should be disseminated; more entertainment items may be broadcast; more field-survey programmes may be broadcast on agricultural inputs and seasonal crops; progressive farmers may be invited to participate in these programmes; weather information may be broadcast well in advance and with alacrity; khedut mandals may be started in more villages for better participation and Gram Sevaks may be involved in this venture; local equivalents for metric units and alternatives for generic names of pesticides may also be included in the programmes; formats other than 'talks', including question-answers sessions and featurised programmes, may be increased. Since agricultural communication to be fruitful requires a good infrastructure, this aspect may be highlighted in Rural Broadcast Advisory Committee meetings. Generally, the areas of enquiry include sources of information, exposure, relevance of radio broadcasts, perceived utility, coordination between various agencies, changes in the patterns of farming, possible contributory factors, agro-climatic conditions, etc. The methods employed in such research are interviews, depth interviews, observation, case studies, diary of activities, follow-up of messages and content analysis.

As for television, in the fourth decade of its operational life, Doordarshan has emerged as an extensive network to serve the broad objectives of information, education and entertainment.

The phenomenal expansion of the television backed by indigenous technology has helped in linking a major part of the country's rural and remote areas with the national mainstream. Apart from its national programme, news and current affairs programmes, media-support campaigns in respect of family welfare, health, literacy, water management, energy conservation, adult literacy, child labour, drug abuse and other educational programmes, Doordarshan offers a substantial number of programmes of special interest to rural areas including programmes on agriculture, animal husbandry, rural health and sanitation, family welfare, rural industries, arts and crafts and domestic services. An increasing number of such programmes is field-based. There are also need-based, area-specific programmes and programmes for specific audience. As in the All India Radio, eighteen Audience Research Units under the control of the Director, Audience Research, have been functioning at various centres to collect feedback on Doordarshan programmes. Panel, mail and telephone surveys, summative and formative types of research are also undertaken. The stress is on reaction from the rural areas. Audience-profile and need-assessment studies are undertaken to identify area-specific programmes. Pre-testing evaluation is done to find the relevance and impact of different programmes. A weekly consolidated report of such surveys conducted at various places is prepared at the head-quarters to take remedial measures.

In respect of programmes for publicity and distinctive orientation towards development issues and activities, the role of the Press cannot be gainsaid. In recent years, technology has brought perhaps the greatest change and development in the Indian Press. The major advances in information and communication technologies, which are impacting the print media and newspaper industry in particular, are computerisation and automation in typesetting, image manipulation, growth of word processing, multicolour scanning, processing and offset printing. Desk Top Publishing has brought about 'the fourth revolution in printing' after the invention of moveable type, the linecaster and phototypesetting. It is a set of electronic devices consisting of a computer, a keyboard, laser writer printer and page maker. DTP

software, when assembled at a desk, is capable of performing most such functions at an affordable cost and in a minimum period of time. The revolution in print technology has equipped the newspaper industry to meet the challenge from the electronic media.

The Press Information Bureau (PIB) is one of the principal agencies of the Government of India, whose main function is to disseminate information on the policies, programmes and achievements of the government through the media. It is primarily responsible for presentation and interpretation of the policies, and activities of the government and for keeping the people informed of the developmental activities in the social and economic spheres through the medium of the press. According to the Press in India, 1989, compiled by the Registrar of Newspapers in India, as on December 31, 1988, the number of newspapers of general interest rose to more than 28,000.⁴²

The Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity is the central agency for publicising the policies, programmes and achievements of the Government of India through different media. In 1989-90, it organised a number of multi-media publicity campaigns to highlight national programmes, to create awareness among the people, particularly in the field of socio-economic development. The Directorate of Field Publicity is the largest rural-oriented inter-personal communication medium in the country which seeks to project the policies and programmes of the government by bringing its men and materials face-to-face with the people. It endeavours to inform them of the decisions taken and the plans formulated for their benefit by the government. Its basic objectives are: to secure involvement of people in development programmes, to foster national cohesion and communal harmony, and to facilitate smooth transformation especially in backward, remote and tribal areas. It is a two-way channel of communication, relying on its 'public reactions reports', 'special situation reports', and 'success stories'. It seeks to achieve the basic objectives of development and transformation through skilful synthesis between the traditional and modern forms of communication and judicious use of various media techniques like films, song and drama programmes, photo

exhibitions, display and distribution of print material, conducted tours of opinion leaders, public meetings, group discussions, seminars, symposia, debates, essay competitions, etc. Publicity campaigns are launched through various media like press advertising, printed publicity materials like posters, folders, brochures, booklets and wall-hangers, outdoor display like hoardings, kiosks, slides, wall paintings, and transit advertising on buses and tramcars, audio-visual media like radio and television commercials, short advertisement films, video programmes and exhibitions. The National Agricultural Fair organised by the Trade Fair Authority of India with the cooperation of Ministry of Agriculture, as organised in April 1989, is an important occasion for such publicity campaigns in which the DAVP takes a leading part.

The Song and Drama Division utilises live entertainment media to create an awareness among the people about various national programmes of socio-economic significance. A wide range of traditional stage forms such as drama, dance drama, puppetry, folk recitals, and traditional plays as well as sound and light programmes are used. Such media have the advantage of instant rapport with the people and the flexibility to incorporate new ideas and convictions. The Department of Communications Research and the Department of Evaluation Studies of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication set up in 1965 under the auspices of the UNESCO to accelerate social change in developing countries contribute towards the understanding of the communication process, its practices, and their wider social, economic and political implications within the Indian context. The Research and Reference Division is the chief source of information for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, its media units and their field offices. The information provided by this Department in the form of 'background to the news', 'reference papers', etc., is utilised by the Ministry and its media units for projecting the politics and programmes of the government and for highlighting the schemes and plans for the economic development of the country. Study of the notable trends in mass communication is another important activity of the Division which maintains a reference and documentation

service on mass media. The Division, in a way, is an information bank as well as information centre for the media units in their programmes and publicity campaigns.⁴³

Traditional and Folk Media and Indigeneous Communication

Despite a resurgence of interest in communication and national development in the wake of the new world information order debate, many questions remain to be answered. Though the perspectives of the role of communication in development held in the fifties and the sixties have changed, the need for development communication, or, development support communication as it is known today, is as important today as it was three decades ago. The focus in the current concerns and approaches is not just a top-down flow of information and ideas, but co-equal knowledge-sharing between users and sources. Newer perspectives of equity in distribution of information and other benefits of development, active participation of people at the grassroots, independence of local communities to tailor development projects to their own objectives, and integration of the old and new ideas, the traditional and the modern systems, to constitute a unique blend suited to the needs of a particular community pose a great challenge to communication planners and policy-makers, while desperate technological dependence on the developed nations, the costs of technology, and the stranglehold of multinational corporations on the flow of technology pose critical constraints that might effectively block the growth of viable, relevant and self-reliant information technology in the developing nations. The new paradigm of development, with its thrust on 'another development' and 'sustainable development', has facilitated this process in no uncertain manner with its focus on the consumers, local activities, consumer initiated change, participation of the villagers in the planning and decision-making processes, and low-cost, local-oriented 'little media' such as radio and transistors. Alongside with this, the indigenous communication system has come to be appreciated in a big way since it appeared to be consistent with the new ideas in communication for development. The U.N.E.S.C.O. Document on Communi-

cation and Cultural Policies (1973)⁴⁴ made a valid point that the performing arts provide a particularly good meeting point for traditional values and the requirements for progress. The flexibility of adapting to socio-cultural changes imparts to it a built-in strength which allows it to transfer development messages without destroying itself and without any harmful and negative effect. So did the MacBride Report on "Many Voices, One World"⁴⁵ emphasise that 'it is essential to develop comprehensive national communication policies linked to overall social, cultural and economic development objectives', that 'every country should develop its communication patterns in accordance with its own conditions, needs and traditions, thus strengthening its integrity, independence and self-reliance', and also that 'communication policies should offer a guide to the determination of information and media priorities and to the selection of appropriate technologies'. Promoting conditions for the preservation of the cultural identity of every society is necessary to enable it to enjoy a harmonious and creative inter-relationship with other cultures.

In India, a 'free' communication climate is a distant dream. While there are pockets of media saturation in the urban areas which resemble Western society, there are large areas in the country which are media-barren. The issue, as already pointed out, is one of access and availability. Factors of credibility, message structure, channels of communication and effects *vis-a-vis* the received vary from those elsewhere.

Conditions in India demand that both the process and methods of research designed be altered as a result of a variety of problems. Researchers in this country have been guilty of ignoring the social system and the way of life. India has a vibrant oral communication tradition which has been the mainstay of cultural cohesion for centuries. Music, dance, drama, mythology and the tenets of culture and religion have been carried out through this oral tradition. The 'gurukul' tradition of education, existent for centuries, and the traditional and folk media of communication have also been equally ignored in the scramble to exploit sophisticated communication hardware such as satellite-based television. The Western perspective of communication research

by and large ignores the social structure and pays relatively scant attention to the social functions of communication. In the Western perspective, culture is rarely explicitly taken into consideration in research conceptualization, because culture is not usually regarded as a variable. There is a need for Indian scholars to bring their native insight and their own national perspective into the conceptualization of the research problems.

As presently used, 'folk media' and 'traditional media' are often confused. Folk media should apply mainly to the performing arts which include, but are not limited to, puppetry, shadow plays, folk drama, folk dances, ballads and story-telling. Ranganath⁴⁶ delineated three categories of folk media: ritual, historical/traditional, and functional. Ritual ones are the most rigid, both in terms of form and content. They are indigenous modes and have served society as tools of communication for ages, as Parmar⁴⁷ has suggested. They have been integrated over the years into patterns of behaviour and institutions of the people. Traditional media are also indigenous modes of communication, but they seem to focus on inter-personal channels and networks of communication, such as meeting places, including community tea shops, market places, religious centres, and social community institutions.

Indigenous communication system is that which is embedded in the culture which existed before the arrival of the mass media, and still exists as a vital mode of communication in many parts of the world, including India, presenting a certain degree of continuity despite changes. It differs from the mass communication system on at least three counts: size of audience, degree of audience flexibility, and roots in local culture. Not only are indigenous communication systems close to the people, they are also woven into the community structure, and are part of local social activities. Ranganath⁴⁸ describes folk media as being intimate with the masses, rich in variety, readily available at low cost, relished by different age-groups and by both men and women, traditional theme carriers and having greater potential for persuasive communication, face-to-face communication and instant feedback. He believes that folk media can carry modern messages effectively. It is also believed that the traditional

media can bring about social change in developing countries, being comparatively cheap, not importable staff, involving no scarce foreign exchange, and facing no threat of cultural colonialism and foreign ideological domination. Being basically egalitarian, these folk media can prove a better outlet for egalitarian messages than the present elite press, film, radio or television. They are characterised by acceptability, cultural relevance, entertainment value, localised language, legitimacy, flexibility, message replication, and instant two-way communication. They may be better carriers of the 'total' message and the welfare of the whole society in the many-sidedness of cultural, economic and social development for uplifting the quality of rural life in its entirety.

Dissanayake⁴⁹ believes that traditional media employ the idiom of the rural farmers and peasants and the symbols which are readily intelligible to them, reach a part of the population that is impervious to the influence of the mass media and demand active participation in the process of communication. They are not mere quaint relics of the past but vigorously active and highly functional cultural institutions performing functions vital to the well-being of the society. They provide entertainment, dissemination information, inculcate socially acceptable norms and values, and perform a generally socializing function. However, it has to be remembered that not all folk media are flexible enough to be used for development purposes. One has to take care of their social authenticity and integrity and purity of forms. Not all of them can be employed for the purpose of disseminating modern messages. While there is considerable debate at the academic level on whether folk media can be used to transmit developmental messages, little systematic research on the question seems to have taken place.

The communication potential of India's varied traditional media was proved during the struggle for freedom. These were used by our freedom fighters to arouse the conscience of the nation against British rule. In the fifties, the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), the cultural arm of the undivided Communist Party of India, successfully used some popular forms of folk theatre like Jatra of Bengal, Tamasha of Maharashtra,

Bhavai of Gujarat, and Burrakatha of Andhra Pradesh to influence the people of India. In the mid-fifties, the drama was effectively used by the government agencies to tell rural people the story of independence and acquaint them with the programmes of the Five Year Plans and other projects for rural development. During the sixties and the seventies, there was greater resurgence of interest in traditional media in India and these media received a dynamic push in relation to their multifarious application to mass communication programmes. The experience gained during this period of experimentation to understand the communication potential of traditional media proved to be very rewarding. The lesson was learnt that communicators must sell their messages and adapt them to suit the medium so that they can prepare a convincing programme package. While trying to achieve improvement in the effect of communication, one should also take care to preserve the living cultural symbols of these media, and these arts and forms should be saved from the blind onslaught of the new technology of sound and light.

India has been one of the first so-called Third World countries to have attempted to preserve the cultural identity of indigenous performing arts and to bring a sense of functional relevancy to them. The Government of India, in 1954, established a Song and Drama Division as an arm of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to convert the wealth of performing arts to development communication functions. The Division utilises live entertainment media to create an awareness among the people about various national programmes of socio-economic significance. It uses a wide range of traditional stage forms such as drama, dance-drama, puppets, folk recitals and traditional plays as well as sound and light programmes. The Division presents its programmes through its 35 departmental troupes, two sound-and-light units, one tribal unit and about 575 private parties, mostly Social Action Groups owing allegiance to various political, social and religious bodies, registered with the Division, and in close collaboration with other Central and State agencies like the Directorate of Field Publicity, the Directorate of Audio Visual Publicity (DAVP) and the Departments of Health, Family

Welfare, Education and Information. For years, the All India Radio, in its rural broadcasting, has used the folk media in the form of a daily programme **narrated** by conventional characters who convey the typical life and folklore of the rural areas of particular AIR stations.

Inter-personal Communication and Role of Extension Workers

Here is one grey area of research that could be fruitfully pursued on an extensive scale, both at the macro and the micro levels, but more at the micro level, in view of the wide diversity of social and cultural norms and practices in different states, regions and areas of the country. The large bulk of communication activities is actually performed by the vast network of change-agent groups at the inter-personal level, including 'the Block Development Officer, the Village Level Worker, the political party leaders, the Panchayat functionaries, the Patwari, the extension agent, social workers, teachers, the traders, the village priests, and other positioned leaders, the opinion leaders, who play a crucial role, the key community members and the power structure, as well as the voluntary agencies. In this connection, the role of the extension worker has to be particularly highlighted. Extension has long been regarded as the most logical, scientific and systematic method for disseminating more productive and useful knowledge and skills to user receivers. Agricultural extension is the means by which the agricultural extension workers advise and teach farmers about the relevant production technology, and keep themselves abreast with the farming problems and needs of the farmers. It serves as a linkage system between the scientists and the farmers. However, without an effective system of communication within the extension service and between it and the farmers, agricultural extension can achieve little. The success of an extension worker is dependent on his communication behaviour, i.e., his potentiality and ability in regard to information input, processing and output, his command over communication skills of encoding and decoding the messages, besides a sound technological background. The Training and Visit System. (T&V) establishes a broad structure

to facilitate such communication through monthly workshops, fortnightly training camps and regular scheduled visits to the contact farmers. The original extension responsibility to collect, collate and convey all relevant research-based and research-generated information to potential clients under the 'old paradigm' became gradually irrelevant, and was replaced by the new role of a change-agent, a professional person who attempts to influence adoption of decisions in a direction that he feels is desirable. Even then, this was one-way, top-down communication. But the glaring anomaly at this level is that not too much attention has been given to developing the skills of these communicators. In the absence of a clear strategy and policy for rural development, a communication strategy for rural development cannot be formulated which would have specific objectives and specific target groups, and therefore, specific information channels.

VI

EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNICATION SCENARIO IN INDIA

A survey of the communication scenario in India in the context of rural development needs and policies makes rather sad reading, in terms of its efficacy, effectiveness and accomplishments. From a scanning of the literature on the subject, the following impediments, bottlenecks, deficiencies and drawbacks could be identified in a broad way and kept in mind, for the purpose of formulating any viable policy for the future.

(1) According to Professor J.S. Yadava,⁵⁰ not only have mass media a very limited reach in rural areas, their programme contents are also of little relevance to the daily life of the rural masses, to their information needs and aspirations. They have failed to carry the plans and development programmes into every home in the language and symbols of the people. Although the radio has been marginally effective in the area of agricultural broadcasts through *Krishi Jagat* and other programmes, neither the radio nor other mass media have been able to develop in the rural people the critical consciousness capable of contributing to and influencing their society. Despite occasional radical public

pronouncements and well-meaning policy statements in favour of the disadvantaged groups, organizational expansion of these media has merely contributed to empire-building and urban bias.

(2) There are not only quantitative shortcomings with regard to the availability of an access to communication and information facilities in respect of origination, transmission and perception of messages, but qualitative shortcoming with regard to the content of information and messages, as well as imbalances in communication between urban and rural areas, between groups in society, between regions, whether defined in terms of social classes, power, sex or age. This was the broad consensus reached at the Seminar on Rural Development and Communication Policies in New Delhi in 1980 organised by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication.

(3) Although the radio's network has expanded in a big way, the demand for radios and radio-listening has not kept pace with this expansion. Critics have decried radio's small presence in India. It is considered at worst an elitist medium and at best an urban middle class phenomenon. Although, by 2001 A.D., A.I.R. will be one of the largest hardware organizations in the country, its expenditure on software, as in 1989-90, is a meagre 7.5 percent of its annual expenditure. But there is no doubt that it could be turned into a vibrant medium of communication by a proper reordering of priorities. The distortions and aberrations that have crept into the medium arise from the adhocism, absence of a clear communication policy which includes media policy, a scientific management policy and utter indifference to human resource development.⁵¹

(4) Development broadcasting over radio and television has been repetitive thematically, too general and not exactly relevant to the day-to-day needs of the people at the micro level. Audience research in Akashvani and Doordarshan plays a critical but essentially supportive role. The role of research is not only to provide data on popularity ratings but also on the quality of the programmes and the informational needs of the people. The overall emphasis is on enhancing the effectiveness of programmes in communicating with the people.⁵² What Doordarshan in particular needs is communication research aimed at making its

programmes relevant to the felt needs and interests of the common people. Research will provide the linkage between Doordarshan and its viewers, and feedback to programme producers and policy makers for continuous improvement.

(5) Although television and other types of media are potentially massive agents of national education in problems of the economy, society, polity, culture and science, there has been a progressive drift and departure from the official policy pronouncements and actual practice, resulting in a 'credibility gap'. The expectation that the most advanced communication technologies including T.V. should be tapped for what Vikram Sarabhai had called in 1969 'leapfrogging' into rapid economic growth and social transformation, has not materialised. In the opinion of the Working Group,⁵³ Doordarshan is still a faceless medium and does not reflect the new India in the making. It does not reflect the creative, vibrant and growing India of the scientific and industrial age which is fast replacing yesterday's colonial and semi-feudal, India. It presents a truncated, partial and distorted image of today's India. While the central figure in the Indian society is the peasant and the phenomenon of the Indian peasant, Doordarshan continues to identify India only with the newly emerging consumerist Indian middle class. It views Indian life through the narrow prism of a middle class outlook. But making programmes for community viewing in terms of information, education and entertainment calls for a different kind of approach, methodology, techniques and equipment.

(6) Much of the research is done on behalf of the official development agencies that are interested in demonstrating short-term, easily quantifiable 'effects' of their campaigns, and is inhibited politically from asking searching or critical questions about the functioning of the communication system in the society as a whole.

(7) As the recent work by Paul Hartmann and others⁵⁴ suggests, the influence of the media is mediated through the structures of inequality that themselves pose a major obstacle to change. There is relative neglect of the importance of social-structural factors and conflicting group-interests in our approach to development communication in theory and practice. There is

also a tendency to view development as a quasi-mechanistic process and to treat people as passive recipients of communication and the ministrations of development agencies. The observational studies indicate the centrality of word-of-mouth communication in the information economy of our villages and the relative marginality of mass communication for most people. Information, ideas and values originating in the media acquire currency by a process of diffusion. This process is neither automatic nor indiscriminate; it tends to follow the pattern of social interaction already structured by caste, class, age or sex. Effects of communication should not be thought of only in terms of the spread of information. One of the more important effects is to gradually alter the cultural climate and to introduce new values in a slow, diffuse way.

VII

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

From the above brief survey, it must have become pretty clear by now that the development communication in India scenario presents a near-chaotic situation, and this is mostly on account of the absence of a clear, consistent, viable and integrated policy both for communication and development. As things stand now, we have neither such a policy for rural development, nor one for the effective utilization of communication media for such rural development goals. As already noted, the root of the trouble lies as much in the absence of a policy statement of national objectives and priorities in the field of communication, as in the lack of collective national will and effort to put it into practice. While it is an open question whether failures of development planning have been basically failures of communication or something that have to do with other problems of the Indian society, we have to ponder if it would be possible to leave communication to the existing structure or devise a public policy regarding development communication. Indian planning has never taken into consideration a conceptual framework of development communication. At a time when we are talking of decentralized, participatory development process, the need for an

information system and policy is all the greater.

While the communication and information system can help to build bridge between the research system and the production system, between the lab and the farm, between the scientific worker, the field worker and the rural producer, special efforts need be made to promote the inclusion of an information-component in every relevant development project in India's development plans. A new approach and design for integration of development and communication is called for, in all the ministries, departments, and development agencies, at the central, state, district, block and village levels. An integrative, interactive and participatory model of communication which is required by Indian conditions is permitted and facilitated by the very flexible and dynamic character of modern communication technology which allows scope as much for area-specificity and audience-sensitivity in programme coverage as for national integration. The idea of evolving an Indian version of communication revolution means being sensitive to socio-cultural requirements of the Indian situation in national, regional and local levels. In the new approach to communication, communication becomes the nerve-centre, the integrating and energising force, an integral part of the cultural, educational and developmental planning and activities. But it must be remembered that there can be no uniform information package for the whole country. It has to be area-specific, specific to the particular economic or occupational category, and varies from season to season. Programme making for development requires, especially for rural development, a creative, continuing and on-going challenge.

The urgent need, as Professor Yashpal so correctly observes,⁵⁵ is to find a way of turning innovation and creativity into a cumulative and self-reinforcing process which puts technology into the service of the people and does not allow it to tyrannise man. In order to fulfil its destiny, communication calls for creativity, which involves both the technological elements as well as organizational and social elements. The challenge is that of changing our priorities in favour of rural India. We must design telecom and telematics for our development programmes and for

the various integrated rural development programmes which mean giving advice to the farmers and getting their feedback. With the assurance of the SITE experience, the country went on to the operational phase with INSAT-IA and INSAT-IB. It is now possible to communicate daily weather information and weather charts with agro-meteorological advice, signals and warning to coast-line areas, and disaster-warning systems have proved to be highly successful. But unless the national network is supplemented by an enormously large decentralized network picking up messages, information and experiences all over the country, we shall not have true communication.

Farm instructional programmes on TV should be followed up by organizing group discussions through teleclubs or charcha mandals in order to make the communication process more effective and purposeful. Lack of formal education is not an impediment in assimilating and utilising farm instructions. Community TV sets must be provided on a priority basis particularly in the remote villages. Frequency of telecast of such programmes is an important prerequisite. We also need to carry out content analysis of the programmes in terms of the modes of presentation preferred by the farmers, kinds of agricultural information and content of the programmes. Appropriate use of traditional methods of communication, like kirtan, bhajans, lokanatya, folk songs, may be made for improvement of such programmes. Also, more need-based provision for constant feedback of audience reaction is necessary. Important success stories should be covered in the production and telecast of farm programmes.⁵⁶ We must need appropriate interface between the broadcast organization and extension and educational authorities at all levels. Strong and clear linkage is needed between the TV centre and agricultural universities, research institutes, State Departments of Agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, etc. Greater use should be made of such programmes as National Demonstrations, Agricultural Operational Research Projects, Krishi Vigyan Kendra and Lab-to-Land Programme initiated by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

One of the most important lacunae seems to be the lack of socio-economic research needed to tap economically feasible and

socially acceptable technologies. Since social-structural variables are crucial in influencing the communication-flow in the social system, it would be useful to draw upon social science research such as in the fields of anthropology, sociology, social psychology, economics and political science.

With conscious planning and intervention, and 'engineering' communication systems, the imbalances and disparities can be considerably narrowed down. The electronic media will have to play a major role in accelerating development, providing education and information, reducing disparities, providing intensive interaction, creating a new system of distance learning, and providing access to the richness and diversity of our cultural heritage.⁵⁷ But, at every step, there is need to understand the development needs and aspirations of the rural people carefully and then evolve communication strategies to support and effect development. It is only by defining the scope and priorities of rural development in the total scheme of things that a viable communication policy can be visualised for the future.

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9. S.N. Ray, "Intergovernmental Balance of Power in the Indian Federal System: A Study of Grants-in-aid in (Comparative Perspective)", *Indian Journal of Political Science*, 39 (3), July-Sept. 1978; The Commission on Centre-State Relations, headed by Justice R.S. Sarkaria of the Supreme Court of India, was formally constituted by Sm. Indira Gandhi's government in 1983, in response to persistent demands for greater autonomy for the States and radical restructuring of the Constitution and the Centre-State relations over the last two decades on the parts of several States like West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, etc. It was asked to "examine and review the working of the existing arrangements between the Union and the States in regard to powers, functions and responsibilities in all spheres and recommend such changes or other measures as may be appropriate", keeping in view "the social and economic developments that have taken place over the years" and having due regard to the scheme and framework of the Constitution which the founding fathers have so sedulously designed to protect the independence and ensure the unity and integrity of the country which is of such paramount importance for promoting the welfare of the people". The Commission submitted its Report in two parts, Part I including the recommendations arranged in 21 chapters. The Commission came to the conclusion that 'the fundamental scheme and provisions' of the Constitution 'have withstood reasonably well the inevitable stresses and strains of the movement of a heterogenous society towards its development goals', and that it was neither advisable nor necessary to make any drastic changes in the basic character of the Constitution. At the same time, the Commission conceded that there was 'certainly scope for improvement and reform in a number of aspects. The broad thrust of the Commission's exercise was on gradual decentralization. However, for reasons political, more than anything else, the Commission's valuable recommendations have not been implemented by the Government of India, despite persistent demands from many States.
10. P. Sen, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 27, 1991.
11. Prem Shankar Jha, "Economic Development: Failure of a Strategy", in S.C. Dube (ed): *India Since Independence: Social Report on India 1947-*

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12. Sukhamoy Chakraborty: *Development Planning: The Indian Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 11.
 13. *Ibid.*
 14. M. Banerjee: *Planning in India*, 2nd. ed. (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH, 1988), p. 21.
 15. Sukhamaoy Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, n. 12. pp. 21-22.
 16. Gunnar Myrdal: *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, 3. Vol., (New York: Pantheon, 1968), Vol. I, Ch. 7. The 'soft state' characterisation has been disputed by a number of Indian scholars, but one cannot possibly deny that the state in India has by and large failed to effectively enforce and implement the policies and programmes expected from it.
 17. Dhiresch Bhattacharyya: *India's Five Year Plans*, Ninth Ed., (Calcutta: Joydurga Library, 1986), pp. 124-145.
 18. Nikhil Chakraborty, "A Recipe for National Disaster", *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), July 8, 1990.
 19. D.P. Bhatia, "New Industrial Policy and Employment in India", *Mainstream*, XXIX (52), October 19, 1991.
 20. Government of India: Planning Commission: *First Five Year Plan, 1953*, p. 63.
 21. See Introduction, Chapter I. Extracts of Report obtained from *Hindusthan Times* (New Delhi), August 5-7, 1990.
 22. Tom Gabriel: *The Human Factor in Rural Development* (London and New York: Belhaven Press, 1991), Chapters 1 and 3.
 23. Government of India: Department of Rural Development: *Report of the Committee to Review the Existing Administrative Arrangements for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes (CAARD)*, December, 1985, pp. 87-89.
 24. *EPW*, Vol. XXVII, no. 8.
 25. Biplap Dasgupta, in *EPW*, *Ibid*; also, G.K. Lieten, a Dutch Scholar, in his *EPW* article as well as the recent Sage Publication.
 26. *The Statesman*, Calcutta, May 11-13, 1993.
 27. *Ibid*, June 1, 1993.
 28. *EPW*, Annual Number, March, 1991, pp. 691-696.
 29. *Ibid*, p. 695.
 30. *Seminar* 365, January 1990, p.48.
 31. V.M. Rao, "Land Reform Experiences: Perspectives for Strategy and Programmes", *EPW*, June 27, 1992, pp. A-50-A. 64.
 32. Government of India: Planning Commission: *First Five Year Plan*, *op. cit.*, n. 20.
 33. Government of India: Planning Commission: *Second Five Year Plan*, New Delhi, 1958.
 34. Government of India: Planning Commission: *Third Five Year Plan*,

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35. Government of India: Planning Commission: Fourth Five Year Plan, New Delhi, 1970.
 36. Government of India: Planning Commission: Sixth Five Year Plan, New Delhi, 1978.
 37. Government of India: Planning Commission: Seventh Five Year Plan, New Delhi, 1985.
 38. Government of India: Planning Commission: Towards Social Transformation (Draft), New Delhi, May, 1990.
 39. Government of India: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting: *Annual Report, 1989-90*, New Delhi, 1990; also Research and Reference Division: *Mass Media in India*, 1988 (New Delhi, 1989); Sita Ram Sharma: *Educational Development in India: The Role of Media in Education* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1990).
 40. *Ibid.*
 41. Sunil Misra, "Audience Research in India: Experience and Issues", *Communication*, January-December, 1987; The ARU of the AIR has so far carried out about 28 field surveys in different parts of the country in order to assess the impact of the Farm and Home Broadcasts on the target audience, in particular, their reach, their popularity, and utility, and the feedback of the opinion of this target audience on the qualitative aspect of these broadcasts spread over three sessions, morning, afternoon and evening. The findings of these surveys are usually followed by action points. For reasons of official secrecy, since these reports are marked confidential, the specific content of these different reports cannot be discussed at this stage. This is a pity, since the very purpose of such research seems to have been lost. A radical change in government policy is surely called for in this field. The P.C. Joshi Committee Report of the Working Group on Software for Doordarshan expressed its disapproval of the nature of research conducted by the ARU. According to the Committee, audience research has followed 'the beaten commercial track', and that the secrecy 'is not only unnecessary but is a hindrance to the improvement of programmes'. No effort is made by way of 'time series' analysis or inter-regional comparative analysis. The Committee has suggested that the name of this audience research wing should be changed to communication research wing.
 42. *Annual Report, 1989-90* and *Mass Media in India*, 1988, op. cit., n. 31; also, *Press in India*, 1989 (Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India, New Delhi, 1989).
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. Paris: UNESCO, 1973.
 45. *Communication and Society--Today and Tomorrow: Many Voices and One World—Towards a New More Just and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order* (Paris: UNESCO, 1981).
 46. H.K. Ranganath: *Folk Media and Communication* (Bangalore: H.Q.

- Judge Press, 1979).
47. Shyam Parmar: *Traditional Folk Media in India* (New Delhi: Geka Books, 1975).
 48. Ranganath, *op. cit.*, n. 38. In his Silver Jubilee Lecture at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, April, 1991, entitled 'People's Performances: A Perspective in Rural Communication', Ranganath has observed that the persuasive power of people's performances has been confirmed time and again by country profiles from Asia and Africa; as live media, they came to be credited with successfully covering the three major steps of information, education and motivation which could lead to action, 'Organised and systematic employment of people's performances made the motivational work more community-based with the ultimate objective of development of not only social and economic factors but also of culture'. However, he points out that even when the three 'M's, i.e., the medium, the message, and the masses, were carefully studied and treated, achievement-oriented communication often drew a blank. The time-lags between media service, inter-personal action/reaction and the availability of essential and effective service were considered responsible for such failure. The gaps needed to be plugged.
 49. "Indigenous Communication Systems and Development: A Reappraisal", in Georgette Wang and Wimal Dissanayak (eds): *Continuity and Change in Communication Systems*, 1984.
 50. J.S. Yadava, "Communication Strategy and the Challenge of Rural Development", *Communicator* (Quarterly Journal of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication), April, 1979, pp. 4-10.
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 53. *Indian Personality for Television: Report of the Working Group on Software for Doordarshan* (Chairman: Prof. P.C. Joshi), 3 Vols. (New Delhi, 1985).
 54. Paul Hartmann, Anita Dighe and B. R. Patil (eds): *The Mass Media and Village Life: An Indian Study* (New Delhi; Sage Publications, 1989), p.23.
 55. Professor Yashpal, "Choice and Determinism in a Technological World: Structure and Content of Creative Communication", in Institute of Economic Growth: *Development Perspectives* (Silver Jubilee Series), (New Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1988), pp. 61-62 (Introduction by P.C. Joshi/General Editor: T.N. Madan).
 56. J.S. Yadava, *Ibid.*
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CHAPTER V

Communication Research in India: Present Crisis and the Emerging Trends

I

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF STUDIES BY INDIAN SCHOLARS ON COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In making an assessment of studies and researches on communication and development by Indian scholars, whether writing in India or abroad, one is struck by several features, namely, their insignificant number, their heavy dependence on Euro-American models and methodologies, their failure to evolve and apply indigenous models to understand the Indian reality, their failure to perceive and diagnose the real barriers, impediments and bottlenecks in the way of a successful communication in rural India in the context of the programmes for rural development. Barring a few scholars who wrote on indigenous communication or those who sought to revive the traditional concepts of communication and to apply them to the contemporary Indian situation, most others were heavily influenced by the concepts and methodologies of the so-called 'old paradigm' of development communication that characterised the late fifties and the sixties and even the early seventies.

Y.V.L. Rao's monographic study of two Indian villages in Andhra Pradesh in 1966¹ has been one of the first and pioneering efforts. Based on the anthropological approach, Rao tried to study the role that communication plays in the economic, social and political development of a community. His findings reveal the impact of communication in these fields. Communication, he found out, helps a person to find alternative ways of making a living, helps him to raise a family's social and economic status,

creates demand for goods, motivates local initiative to meet the rising demands, raises the literacy rate, shifts the influence from the age-old and traditional status to knowledge and ability, helps him in the process of power-change from heredity to achievement, motivates the traditional leaders to defend their power by raising their information level, increases awareness about government plans and programmes, and helps the community or the nation to achieve power through unity.

The study by Kivlin, Prodipto Roy, Frederick Fligel and Lalit K. Sen in 1968² was a two-nation, comparative study on the level of knowledge, trial and adoption of certain agricultural, health and family planning practices. It was a follow-up of a study initiated in 1964. The radio-farm-forum treatment villages showed more significant progress than the literacy and control villages. Similarly, the comparative, cross-cultural study of two countries, Costa Rica and India, by Prodipto Roy, F.B. Waisanen and Everett M. Rogers in 1969³ considered the effect of a 52-week radio forum programme, reading forum and animation training.

The year 1964 was a landmark in India's communication history. The National Institute of Community Development in Hyderabad and the UNESCO collaborated to launch the first theory-based Indian communication research project called the 'Impact of Communication on Rural Development' under the leadership of Everett M. Rogers of the USA. The UNESCO-NICD collaboration resulted in several research reports in the late 1960s. These studies followed the main paradigm of that period, diffusion of innovations, generally associated with Rogers. The joint venture brought together Indian and western scholars like Rogers, S.C. Dube, Prodipto Roy and L.K. Sen among others, and a new interest in communication research flowered.

The Community Development Programme launched in the fifties since the adoption of the First Five Year Plan provided the impetus for great many studies on development programmes in rural India and the role of information, persuasion and feasibility of choices for the people at work, Mention may be made of the researches made by Dube (1958),⁴ Gaikwad and Verma (1968),⁵ H. Rao (1970),⁶ Majumdar (1970),⁷ Reddy (1970),⁸ Rangaswamy

(1972),⁹ Jodha (1971),¹⁰ Desai (1972),¹¹ Verma (1971, 1972),¹² Sinha (1976),¹³ Shingi and Mody (1974, 1976),¹⁴ Joshi, (1968),¹⁵ Nanda (1972),¹⁶ Sinha and Mehta (1972),¹⁷

Mathai (1977),¹⁸ Parthasarathy (1974),¹⁹ and a few others, like Damle, who studied the diffusion of modern ideas and kinds of knowledge in seven villages.²⁰ In his 1958 study, Dube, for example, had found that the multi-media communication channels which were adopted in particular development blocks included interaction between officials and villagers, public meetings and clubs, and mass media channels of radio, cinema and literature. His study also documented widespread ignorance of programme activities and vague knowledge of specific projects. C.R. Prasad Rao and K. Ranga Rao (1976)²¹ studied the village communication channels in three villages in Andhra Pradesh. Causal relationships between the channel usage and the audience attributes were sought to be found and identified with the help of path analysis. Shingi and Mody (1976)²² made a very interesting study of the communication effects gap on the basis of the hypothesis that development campaigns often benefit the comparatively advantaged sections of the community rather than the really poor, widening the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and consolidating the position of the elites. Other studies included those by M.S.A. Rao, Yogesh Atal, L.R. Nair and Myron Weiner.²³ A good number of empirical studies were undertaken by the National Institute of Community (now Rural) Development, Hyderabad, and the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi.

The peak of Indian communications research came in the middle 1970s, especially the years 1975 and 1976. The Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) conducted in India brought an explosion of communication researches. In cooperation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the USA, the SITE project sought to improve the lives of villagers in 2400 villages in the six Indian States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. Government television sets were placed in the villages and programmes were beamed by satellite at least for an hour in every week to groups of viewers, who were encouraged

to discuss the programmes after viewing. The 'Krishi Darshan' programmes, originating in Delhi, provided information about agricultural innovations, news, weather, family planning, health and hygiene and other topics and practices in keeping with national objectives for development. Several innovative researches were launched under the leadership of Binod Agrawal to evaluate the potential of satellite television in rural development. Large-scale surveys with pre-test and post-test controlled designs, holistic studies with anthropologists stationed in rural areas to observe the process of change initiated by SITE, massive feedback from SITE and school children viewers, in-depth studies on SITE's impact on social classes, and formative evaluations were conducted. About 100 social scientists worked on these studies in the Space Application Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in Ahmedabad. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the Planning Commission, and the Council for Social Development in New Delhi, were the other organisations which conducted evaluation studies on SITE.²⁴

In the middle and late seventies, and the early eighties, notable studies were undertaken by Krishan Sondhi,²⁵ M.V. Desai,²⁶ M.R. Dua,²⁷ N.K. Jaiswal,²⁸ B. Kuppuswamy,²⁹ Mehra Masani,³⁰ Sachchidananda and N.N. Jha,³¹ Arvind K. Sinha,³² R.R. Sinha, N.V. Kolte and H.P.S. Arya,³³ Suresh Chandra Sharma,³⁴ and many others. In the middle eighties, seminars and studies conducted by the IIMC in New Delhi and the NIRD in Hyderabad, highlighted the problems of communication in rural development in the Indian context while scholars like Parmer, Tewari, Malhan, Ranganath and Yadava have been engaged in highlighting the relevance and importance of the traditional and folk media and the Indian tradition for communication in their writings,³⁵ P.C. Joshi has been one of the most prominent scholars in the eighties to have focused on the need to evolve a communication policy in India in the context of the Indian culture and tradition.³⁶ So is B.G. Verghese doing a pioneering work in this field.³⁷

On December 6, 1982, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India, set up a Working Group

under the chairmanship of Professor P.C. Joshi, to prepare a software plan for Doordarshan, taking into consideration the main objectives of television of assisting in the process of social and economic development of the country and to act as an effective medium for providing information, education and entertainment. The Report of the Working Group, entitled 'Indian Personality for Television', in three volumes, published in 1985, constitutes an important document in communication planning in the era of development planning and offers a wealth of data, even if in one sector of development communication, namely, television.³⁸

Several recent works also deserve mention, as they break new ground in terms of concept and methodology. One, by Paul Hartmann, B.R. Patil and Anita Dighe, assesses the actual and potential contribution of mass communication media to the process of development in the Third World in general and India in particular, based on extensive anthropological studies in five villages in three Indian States. The research claims methodological innovation, based on intensive community studies. The study reveals that the influence of media depends on structures which already exist and which impede change and also that locally based rather than centralised strategies of communication can be much more successful. According to the authors, the impact of mass communication in India has been limited.³⁹ Another study, by M. Seetharam,⁴⁰ is an exploratory one to ascertain the structure and process of participation by citizens in rural development activities with special reference to the Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP) in a particular block in Andhra Pradesh. Krishan Sondhi's three works, in 1980, 1983 and 1985,⁴¹ very pertinently deal with the role of communication and its progress in the decade of the 1970s, relationship of communication with culture and social structure, cultural tradition, social structure, art forms and political organisation, exponential expansion of communication infrastructure and its impact on value systems, attitudes, behaviours and life-styles, and also highlight the need for national communication policy and suitable policy mechanisms for communications at the national level.

Among the very recent works, three studies deserve mention. P.C. Joshi's volume *Culture, Communication and Social Change*,⁴² opens up for enquiry the unexplored cultural dimension of advances in science and technology which, according to him, has created a new type of cultural colonialism which has had a far greater impact on the intelligentsia than Western cultural impact in earlier centuries. The author poses a critical question whether India is drowning itself in imitating the values and materialistic lifestyles of the West or is evolving and searching for new cultural alternative to the consumer society. Arvind Singhal, jointly with Everett M. Rogers, has written one of the most significant books, which explores the relationship between information, technology and economic development, and, through fascinating case studies and on-the-ground illustrations, offers a new framework to study and analyse the explosion and impact of information technologies.⁴³ S.K. Aggarwal's recent publication on *Media Credibility*⁴⁴ raises important questions concerning the ethics of journalism as also the control of the media either by the government or powerful industrialists. The debate regarding autonomy and the role of the media in society considers the need for press responsibility as much as press freedom. Aggarwal feels that the press in India is passing through a critical phase and is under tremendous pressure from the business community and the government. The credibility of the press is at stake and it is time for the press to reassess its role and formulate some kind of voluntary ethical code.

Perhaps the only futuristic study that invites serious attention is the one by N. Bhaskara Rao of the Operations Research Group. In a monograph entitled *Perspectives into the Media Scene: 2001*, published in 1988, Dr. Rao rightly stresses the importance of bringing about a radical shift from linear forecasting to 'more normative modes that consider a range of alternative features'. And this is the national context for the obvious reason that there are such sharp variations among states, and unless these are fully taken into account, most generalisations are likely to be misleading.⁴⁵ Srinivas R. Melkote's book, the most recent,⁴⁶ provides a concise historical review of the field of development communication and development support

communication, and a comprehensive discussion of the theory and practice in this field since the 1940s. It especially highlights the new paradigm of the 1990s, and examines the emerging field of development support communication. Ronald E. Ostman's book on *Communication and Indian Agriculture*⁴⁷ brings together several perceptive and critical essays written by prominent Indian experts, like J.K. Doshi, J.S. Yadava, K.N. Singh and others, in taking a close, critical look at the role of communication in fostering the growth of agriculture, and the current state of knowledge on the subject. It is a comprehensive and coherent analysis and a fresh perspective on issues and problems relating to communication and development process, and provides a futuristic outline of the qualitative and quantitative research in this field, especially the important techniques such as audience profiling through survey research, needs assessment, feedback, and statistical analysis. The essays look particularly at the diffusion of dairy farming technology and agricultural journalism, and offer an overview of the needed conceptual and methodological departures. The book on *Communication and Society*, edited by Kamlesh Mahajan,⁴⁸ is devoted to the discussion of various conceptual, methodological and substantive issues related to the interaction between mass communication and the social system. It includes several contributions by prominent experts like Jaspal Singh, Kamlesh Mahajan, Rajendra Sharma, D.P. Saxena, Dharam Vir and V.M. Mishra, among others.

Among others authors who have been writing extensively on communication in rural development and carrying on tireless researches in this field, mention must be made of four scholars, B.S.S. Rao, Director (Information) at the National Institute of Rural development, Hyderabad, B.C. Muthaiyya and M. Shiviah of the same Institute, and Devesh Kishore of the National Academy of Agricultural Research Management, Hyderabad, who have been persistently trying to utilise their professional expertise in order to improve the effectiveness of rural communication.⁴⁹ Significant contribution are also being made by Usha Reddy, N.L. Chowla, Bashiruddin Ahmed and others.⁵⁰

II

OVERVIEW AND EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION
RESEARCH IN INDIA

Communications Research, as Singhal and Rogers point out,⁵¹ is the application of social science theory and research methods to the study of human communication behaviour. Human communication issues are central to academic disciplines such as social psychology, computer science, electrical engineering, linguistics, anthropology, sociology and political science. The study of communication must necessarily be rather multi-disciplinary, drawing on many other fields and contributing to them. The world of communication scholarship can be roughly divided into two main schools based on their presuppositions and methods of approach: *empirical* and *critical*, representing two distinct tendencies in communication research. Empirical research is characterised by an emphasis on quantification, functionalism, and positivistic explanations. A sharp line is drawn between fact and value, and precision of measurement takes precedence over contextual factors and historical perspectives. Scant attention is paid to the notion of cultural values. Critical research, on the other hand, is a problem-posing and consciousness-raising activity attuned to the broader social structural contexts of communication. It adopts a holistic and interactive view of communication. Facts and values are inextricably linked and can hardly be separated. The critical school is an outgrowth of the Frankfurt School led by Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm.⁵² Four areas are central to the development of critical theory as explicated by these scholars: (a) differentiation of critical from traditional theory, (b) critique of ideology, (c) critique of positivism, and (d) comparison and integration of the ideas of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. It is a reflective theory which gives agents a kind of knowledge inherently productive of enlightenment and emancipation. It has cognitive content, and its intent is to critically examine and take into account the social context.

As pointed out by Dissanayake and Belton,⁵³ between the

years 1971 and 1982, in communication research conducted in several Asian countries, including India, about 84 percent were empirical as opposed to critical in nature. This was hardly surprising in view of the fact that the generality of communication research in Asia represented a mirror-image of communication research in the West, notably in the U.S. Participatory research has gained currency only in recent years, especially among European scholars. It involves a process of interrelationships and reciprocal education between the researcher and the other social actors. It is a process by which the critical perception of social reality generates a form of awareness and a stimulus for social action for all the actors involved. Participatory and critical forms of research require that communication scholars move away from the widely prevalent positivistic perspective.

Critics of contemporary communication research point out that in certain respects, the primary concern with determining audience effects may have distracted scientific attention from other priority issues such as who controls the mass media, how decisions and policy and programming are made in these media institutions, and how these organisations operate to carry out their gatekeeping, information-processing, message-producing and feedback functions. There is need for a shift in the primary focus of communication research from audience-effects to media institutions using a systems approach. Preoccupation with 'channel research', 'message research' and 'audience research' led to a serious neglect of 'source research'. That deficiency needs correction, especially in the Indian context where survey method faces serious limitations.

Coming to the interaction between research and policy-making in the Indian context, the independent influence of research on policy-formulation is somewhat limited, even though professional economists have been members of the Planning Commission. The limited influence of research on policy-formulation is attributed to the fact that little policy-oriented social science research in India questions the fundamentals.⁵⁴ While researchers feel that the governmental system is so vast, so complex and so immobile that any kind of change and innovation is difficult, the bureaucratic system, as a whole, is not

responsive to research. Also, policy-oriented research is poorly disseminated. The research findings do not always reach the political elites who are at the helm of ministries.

According to James Halloran,⁵⁵ enlightened and intelligent communication policies depend on the information that only research can provide. However, it is not any and every kind of research, conventional, status-quo-oriented, pro-establishment, positivistic, behaviouristic, empiricist, or psychological-oriented. Only problem and policy-oriented research, primarily with a sociological perspective, can help contribute positively to the making and adoption of communication policies. It should treat communication as a social process; it should study media institutions not in isolation but at and together with other institutions and within the wider social context; and it should conceptualize research in terms of structure, organization, professionalization, socialization, participation, and so on. While mass media developed fast in the 1970s, communication research in India received less attention. It was originally media and journalism-oriented, school-based, western-influenced and multi-directional. Research on communication process focused on two elements, communicators and audiences. In the 1980s, audience-research was taking a backseat to media-research and media-effects studies. By and large, studies were done in isolation, ignoring relationships of communication to social structures, policies or production culture. There was none or very little of critical research, lacking coordination and direction, which was the result of a lack or absence of overall national research goal or communication policy which could set up priorities and avoid wasteful duplication of research efforts. There is a need for both policy-research and policy-oriented research, the first to provide data to policy-makers so that alternative systems or new values and independent criteria might be found to solve major communication problems of our time.

A few observations on the state-of the art communication research in India are called for at this point. As has been very aptly pointed out,⁵⁶ an epistemological evaluation of communication research in India will need to take into consideration the overall development of social science research in post-

independence India in its historical context. The Nehruvian quest of 'scientific temper', which had become the widely accepted social philosophy of the post-independence period, and was in a real sense a product of our colonial legacy, buttressed our preoccupation with scientific method as a tool to study and analyse social problems, and logically culminated in the establishment of neo-positivism (behaviouralism-functionalism) as the dominant trend in social science research. These neo-positivistic methodologies were supposedly value-free, apolitical and ahistorical, but actually misrepresented the post-colonial Indian reality by breaking with history and analysing Indian reality in terms of cultural contact, acculturation or the diffusion of modern Western culture. Neo-positivism provided a methodology with which to initiate and measure social progress and development defined in terms of gross national product or per capita income, industrial growth and similar indicators. Policies prescribing such growth models came to dominate the Indian socio-economic scene in the fifties and the sixties. Research was limited by more immediate short-term problems which confronted the policy-makers. Policy-makers in their turn relied heavily on the top-down social action development projects which were planned and financed by ideologically dominated international agencies, and which relied heavily on external expertise, capital, know-how and equipment.

This combination of neo-positivistic methodologies and 'bourgeois problematics' in our social science research equally vitiated our so-called 'scientific' mass communication research. The communication approach to development, in the sense of mass media acting as prime-movers of social change and development (economic growth) was championed by UNESCO and other aid agencies and shaped the character and contours of early communication practices and research in India as in many other developing countries, epitomised by the establishment of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication in 1965 and the training offered by Wilbur Schramm. The early communication researches were applied and individualistic, fragmented and atheoretical, conceptually crude or archaic and socially irrelevant. These were mostly carried out at the behest of and in the

interest of those who controlled money and power, and generated data and produced results to suit their policies, decisions and programmes. Research also tended to an optimistic and simplistic assessment of what technological innovations in communication may bring to society. The old format of audience research and impact studies, based on the same old methodologies of sample survey, content analysis and case studies, failed to generate explanatory theories, and despite a virtual explosion of empirical data, critical analysis, conceptualisation and theory-building have not come about. The lack of social problem orientation was singularly manifest.

Professor P.C. Joshi has correctly suggested that time has come to redefine communication as an art which can only be learnt through active involvement in the processes of social living.⁵⁷ It is quite heartening to find a new generation of communication scholars attempting a critical reflection on epistemological and methodological questions. These scholars came to appreciate that a wide range of cultural factors influenced the acceptance or rejection of the innovative ideas communicated through the development communication package.

The anthropological knowledge of culture came handy in explaining such situations, and hence, anthropological methods have made their impact felt in communication research, gradually replacing the earlier survey method and psychological analysis.⁵⁸ This is the holistic approach, quite familiar in anthropological literature, which seeks to understand all manifestations of human beings and their activities in a unified perspective. The holistic perspective encourages anthropologies to consider a wide range of causal factors while attempting to understand human behaviour—biological, social, cultural, psychological, economic, political, ecological and many others. Since the Satellite Instructions Television Experiment (SITE) of 1975-76, the holistic method had been increasingly used in studying the interaction between mass media and society. The recent three-State, five-village study undertaken by Paul Hartmann, B.R. Patil and Anita Dighe⁵⁹ is a notable example of such holistic study. It has been found that where communication is mostly verbal and interpersonal, specific to a particular area or social context, the

holistic approach is quite useful. Even non-verbal, symbolic communications are culture-bound and lend themselves to this methodology.

These are indeed heartening signs, but the unfortunate fact is that such researches have not yet found their way into the policy-making process. The challenge for the coming years is to build bridges between the concept-builder in the Universities and research institutes, the technology innovator or adaptor in the scientific research system, and the technology-used at the field levels.⁶⁰ We must take cognizance of the new opportunities which are now emerging, for instance, through the introduction and expansion of the little media which can make communication truly development-oriented, and responsive to the needs of each section of the community and which can also evolve participatory and local community-based communication at the grassroots. A new communication policy must evolve strategies to respond to changing social needs and must be sensitive to new frontiers of communication thought and practice emerging from the recent researches in the field.⁶¹

There is a growing recognition now that the western models have neglected the structural and sociological factors present in India, and that the 'effects approach' or the 'functional orientation', or 'attitude change' or 'consistency and congruence' or 'cognitive dissonance' theories are hardly applicable. New and innovative processes of research are considered necessary. One scholar has correctly observed that "conditions in India demand that both the process and methods of research designed be altered as a result of a variety of problems".⁶² Some of these problems relate to lack of baseline data, problem of trained communicators, lack of coordination with social sciences, neglect of the indigenous communication process like oral tradition in the form of music, dance, drama, mythology, and the tenets of culture and religion, and the Gurukul tradition of education. It is a hopeful sign that large field-based sample surveys and experiments are being supplemented with micro-level depth evaluations to provide a total picture of the problem, at formative, processual and summative stages of development schemes. The diversities of Indian ethos are being identified and examined from every

angle. The Kheda experiment is cited as an outstanding example of application of innovative process to a typical Indian situation. However, by and large, despite enormous amount of statistical data, the field of communication research in India has not really produced much fresh knowledge in recent years, and one can honestly observe that there has not been a major breakthrough. Understanding the social structure in the Indian villages and the cultural values and beliefs of the rural audience is essential for a successful development communication programme. If we keep in mind the great diversity of languages, cultural patterns and ways of living, as well as the psychological dispositions of the rural farmers, and the wide dispersal of the population of 680 million over about 2650 towns and about 5,76,000 villages, the problem of communication becomes really daunting.

Communication research has started to demonstrate its usefulness to development programmes by calling attention to what media can contribute to the process of change by serving as initiator, legitimiser and facilitator. Although beset with numerous problems, mass communication research has indeed come a long way during the past two decades. There has been a significant growth in the amount of mass communication research generated in this country as in other parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Uma Narula has identified four distinct approaches to communication research: (a) mass media research focusing on the availability, content, and use of mass media channels, mainly concentrating on media functions rather than on media structures; although labelled as impact studies, these are mostly media profile studies or exposure studies; (b) interpersonal communication research, mostly concentrating on official and family interpersonal communication channels; there is hardly any focus on interpersonal communication network in relation to various development programmes and little research on the need for utilisation of 'contact points'; (c) development support communication research with major focus on disseminating development-oriented information rather than testing and applying development strategies; four main areas of development communication research are usually found, namely, development communication as a change-agent, message strategies for

development programmes, use of mass media and interpersonal communication channels, and target audience for development programmes; (d) research in development of theoretical concepts, which is a weak area and not appropriate to Indian way of life and social systems.⁶³ It has been found that communication research in India has been largely in the areas of agricultural extension, family planning campaigns and consumer studies by advertising agencies. Although numerically quite impressive, these researches have largely been duplications without adding significantly to the knowledge about the process of communication in an extremely complicated social milieu. Emphasis is mainly on 'action research', and there is none of very little of 'critical research'. Studies are done in isolation, ignoring relationships of communication to structures, policies or production culture. Despite significant roles played by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) in Singapore, the UNESCO, the East-West Centre in Honolulu, Press Information Institute in Manila, Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development in Kuala Lumpur, and the Indian Institute of Mass Communication in New Delhi, huge gaps still persist in a big way. Problems relating to methodology, lack of coordination and direction, lack of support and recognition and lack of sharing of research information continue to cause serious concern.

While an extremely pessimistic view is held by B.R. Patil, that 'the entire communication research tradition . . . can be straight-way dismissed as totally unworthy, devoid of common sense, without any scientific and professional standards, and without any relevance and utility for the society whatsoever', and that 'the entire research is basically a quest for truth about trivia',⁶⁴ Royal D. Colle feels that the situation is not nearly as disastrous as stated by Patil. The pioneering spirit of communication research in India suggests, according to Colle, that the stage is set for extraordinary activity in the decades ahead. Patil suggests that there is absolutely nothing like a typical Indian communication research tradition, and no Indianness about concepts, models and methods. Dissanayake believes that in order to promote critical communication research in the Third World, it is

vitaly necessary to re-examine the kinds of communication theories, models, paradigms, and conceptualisation that are currently in vogue and seek to come up with alternate theories, models, paradigms that are more in consonance with the cultural ethos and world-view of the people, and therefore, more likely to contribute to a critical research stance. Dissanayake feels that more and more explorations in indigenous communication theory may be encouraged to promote more productive and relevant communication research in non-Western societies. One can begin by examining the classical treatises on philosophy, rhetoric, linguistics, etc., to extract principles and postulates of communication, and by examining traditional rituals, folk dramas, and other indigenous means of expression to see what is uniquely culture-specific about them, and by exploring the communication behaviour of different societies from an intercultural perspective to acquire a set of principles or axioms that guide communication behaviour.⁶⁵

One can discern an Indian theory of communication, which is a part of Indian poetics, rooted in the concept of *Sadharanikaran*, which is quite close in meaning to the Latin term *communis*, i.e., commonness, which is of the essence of communication. *Sadharanikaran* can be achieved only among 'sahridaya', i.e., only those who have the capacity to accept a message, an innate ability acquired through culture, adaptation and learning. The concepts of *sthai bhava*, *rasa*, *vibhavas* and *anubhavas* are ingrained in such depths or levels of sensory experience that shapes human personality. J.S. Yadava, one of the foremost exponents of this Indian model of communication, believes⁶⁶ that the term *sahridaya* is synonymous with identification and simplification, the identification of the communicator with the receiver through the process of simplification. Gandhiji, for example, achieved this identification with the masses through 'simplification' of his message, the common religious symbols that he employed, and the utter simplicity of his life. The saints, the sufis, and the brahmins of the old propagated religious and cultural values through simplification and illustration. The practice continues today in the conversation and traditional media of rural folk throughout the country. Yet, the process of

Sadharanikaran is fundamentally 'asymmetrical', and the sharing of oneness it connotes is among 'sahridayas' alone, perhaps unequal, but one in heart. In the asymmetrical relationship, the 'higher' source is more active than the 'lower' source, and although there is a dominance/subordination relationship, the source is held in high esteem by the receiver—an arrangement idealized and romanticized in the *guru-chela* relationship. While persuasion may be the objective, a key element is enjoyment of the interaction, without which the process of communication is incomplete. Yadava suggests that *Sadharanikaran* 'communication', which is characterised by simplification and illustration, is more subtle and effective than the Aristotelian rhetoric style and may explain the prolific use of illustrations and idioms by rural people to make a point in their day-to-day conversation.

It seems that further in-depth research is needed along this line of thinking in order to further explore and establish a possible Indian model and concept of communication for use in our rural areas, so that the present barriers to effective communication could be overcome. Such an indigenous communication might effectively handle the knowledge-attitude-practice network, as mentioned by L.M. Khubchandani, i.e., focusing on diverse communication tasks to be accomplished through the rural development programmes by identifying their variable thrust at three levels, namely, extending knowledge (information), inducing change in attitudes, and guiding towards the aimed practice or action.⁶⁷

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CHAPTER VI

Formulating a National Communication Policy and Planning for India

I

INTRODUCTION

Three major factors have gone into the apparent failure of the development-path in India, two of them operational, and the third of a more substantive nature. The first relates to the role, rather failure, of a colonial bureaucracy to give shape and form, meaning and direction, to the new trends in development-thinking, and the second, to a failure to introduce a communication-component in our development plans and programmes, to define appropriate macro-policies for culture and communication, and evolve an indigenous communication system that could rectify the present imbalances and conform to the peculiar and diverse needs of the culture and social structure of the country of subcontinental size and complexity. But more than these two functional and operational failures, there is a third, and by far the most crucial failure, the failure to develop an Indian model of development that would not only take into account the paradigm shifts in development-thinking in the Third World countries, but would keep in mind the development needs and aspirations of the vast multitude of the deprived, disadvantaged, poverty-stricken people who have all along been at the receiving end of our policies and programmes—victims, so to say, of misplaced priorities and lop-sided implementation.

II

COMMUNICATION POLICY AND PLANNING: NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Formulation of a national communication policy becomes a matter of grave concern for Third World countries, more so far a

country of India's size and diversity. In the absence of explicit and comprehensive communication guidelines, there is every possibility that national culture and identity could be eroded by the undesirable and unwanted influx of foreign values through the media. Communication policies have been defined by UNESCO (1972) as "sets of principles and norms established to guide the behaviour of communication systems. Their orientation is fundamental and long-ranging, although they may have operational implications of short-range significance. They are shaped in the context of society's general approach to communication". In the San Jose Conference of 1976, Mr. M'Bow, Director-General of UNESCO, had defined such policies as "coherent sets of principles and norms designed to act as general guidelines for communication organs and institutions in individual countries. They provide a frame of reference for the elaboration of national strategies with a view to the setting up of communication infrastructure that will have a function to fulfil in the educational, social, cultural and economic development." Case Hamelink defines such a policy as "a systematic, organic and specific set of principles of organization, action, control, evaluation and reorientation, intended to direct the public planning of systems and social communication process, within a specific political framework and according to a model of economic and social development."¹ Actually, the search for a new communication vision was at the heart of the Report of the UNESCO-sponsored International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems entitled "Many Voices One World" headed by Sean MacBride.² Some countries have long been formulating policies for sectors like agriculture and education, but have neglected communication simply because, being so ubiquitous, it has always been left to sort itself out. In such countries, India including, communication planning is often done by sub-systems such as print, broadcast, film and advertising, but there is a serious lack of explicit guidelines on important considerations such as priorities in resource allocation and directions in hardware and software development. Systematic codification of these various sectoral and adhoc measures constitutes the communication policy for a country.

Planning is "the application of theory to reality in order to decide what to do, when and how".³ As such, it has to be connected with the concept of these various sectoral and adhoc measures which constitute the communication policy for a country. In many societies, communication policies exist, but they may be latent and disjointed, rather than clearly articulated and harmonized. What is needed is not something radically new, but rather an explicit statement and deliberately prospective formulation of practices already established in society. Communication planning involves the preparation of both long-range and short-range plans, strategic and operational, for the efficient and equitable use of communication resources, in the context of a particular society's goals, means and priorities, and subject to its prevailing forms of social and political organization.⁴ Communication planning is a much-needed accelerator in most rural development programmes if they are to benefit the poor. Integrated communication planning in rural development can help programmes be planned in response to the people's interests, needs and possibilities, ensure that development proceeds smoothly as an integrated process, and facilitate the achievement and maintenance of benefits for the poorest populations. Communication planning is a broad concept, denoting a wide range of communication resources, tools and methods like mass media, interpersonal including traditional forms, institutional forms, as well as the activities of people at any level of the development programme who educate and influence other people.

India has entered the era of unprecedented technological modernization and communication revolution. But we have yet to integrate the new communication technology into our own cultural and social milieu, and to make it responsive to the needs of the small farmer, the landless peasant, the artisan, the labourer, the entrepreneur and the cultural worker in the vast unorganized sector of Indian economy and society.⁵ The tragedy of the Indian situation is that there is a wide gulf and serious communication gap between the communication experts or technocrats, bureaucrats and the political elites who decide on the design and the strategy of the communication revolution on

the one hand, and the natural and social scientists, specialists in the area of art and culture, social and political activists at the grassroots, and the people's representatives who constitute the social, cultural and political 'think tank' and conscience of the Indian nation outside the governmental sector. There are no effective fora for interaction and collaboration between the decision-makers in the field of communication and the agents of development and change. Nor has there been any significant initiative to evolve a national consensus on a communication policy through discussion and dialogue.⁶ What is more ironical is that, although, as early as 1948, the report of the special panel set up by the National Planning Committee to evolve a basic communication approach relevant to Indian conditions and to formulate guidelines for a communication plan for independent India, constituted a path-breaking policy document in a way, and the First Five Year Plan sought to incorporate this basic approach in India's planning process, such exercises did not really culminate in any expressly articulated national communication policy. It is perhaps not wrong to surmise that in the absence of any scientific communication research at that time, adequate data and inputs could not be fed into the policy process that was itself not properly developed. It was only in the seventies that such eminent scientists like Homi Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai were engaged by the national leadership to provide the blueprint for a science and technology policy, including communication technology, as an aid to planned social and economic development. It is a pity that the Bhabha-Sarabhai approach to communication planning also did not find favour with the policy-makers in the government, and the subsequent years witnessed sharp deviations and departures from the vision and the strategy outlined by these two eminent scientists. Despite phenomenal progress in the field of communication technology and capability, a truly national communication revolution from the point of view of social engineering has not materialised, and the country is still groping in the dark for an indigenous development support communication model or a viable communication policy and strategy that can harness the vast potential of communication technology for achieving the desired goals. Even some signifi-

cant policy-shifts in other sectors and the establishment of several technology missions during the later part of the eighties failed to get crystallized into a coherent, realistic, rational and much-anticipated public policy for communication. The consequence has been rather unhappy in all respects. Unguided and unplanned communication revolution would merely subvert social priorities and national goals. Adhoc programmes would merely subserve sectional interests. And, since technology is not really value- free and neutral, this could spell danger for the national interests of the country.

The development of a communication system has implications that bear on investments, choices of technology, organisational forms embracing patterns of ownership and control, education, culture, security, individual rights and social responsibility. Taking these into consideration, the evolution of a philosophy and a policy for communication becomes desirable as well as inevitable. In India, an element of communication planning has been inherent in the very process of national planning. There have been sectoral policies at different times, relating to the Press, the Radio and the TV, education and telecommunication, in the form of establishment of several Commissions. But what has been lacking is a wider systems approach, comprehending all aspects of communications and communication technology.⁷ A viable, integrated communication policy must take into account the wider framework of an agricultural policy and a rural development policy that would provide the parameter for such a policy frame; it would need to integrate several essential components like media policy, science and technology policy, education policy and a cultural policy among others.

Let us, at this point, take a quick look at the process of formulation of public policy in the parliamentary democratic system and the centralised federal structure in the Indian political system. The dynamics of policy formulation in a government as vast and complex as that of India involves a number of social, political, economic and administrative forces and factors that go into the making of policy decision. Not all of them are clearly identifiable. Nor are all motivations for a policy clear or known. Most decisions would involve a number of people or func-

tionaries—the technician, the administrator, the scientist and others, who have the interest and the status and capability to contribute to the making of such policy. It is not correct to hold that most decisions are politically motivated and influenced, although politics surely lies behind the policy process; nor is it always true that most decisions are piloted by the technical experts or the civil servants, even though parliamentarism implies that it is the responsibility of the civil servants or the top management in the bureaucracy to recommend a policy within the overall frame and constraints laid down by the political boss, i.e., the minister in charge of a particular portfolio. The management scientists are of the firm belief that specialist inputs are essential in formulating a policy requiring a systematic study of policy alternatives derived from available data, often accompanied by a cost-benefit analysis of the choices open to the decision-maker before the final choice is made and presented before the cabinet or parliament. There may not be a clear or uniform pattern in formulating a public policy, but it is nevertheless agreed that a large number of important policy decisions do follow a recognizable logic that clearly evolves into a system.

In the parliamentary system and the centralized federal structure that characterise the Indian political system, the Union government enjoys wide powers in formulating policies both in the general area of economic and social planning and in the individual sectors of the economy, while implementation of the programmes is the responsibility of both the Union and the State governments who jointly share the responsibility for results. A host of institutions are actively engaged in contributing to the policy formulation, like the Cabinet and its Committees, especially the Standing Committees, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Prime Minister's Secretariat, the Policy Planning Cells created in several key ministries—which function more as research cells—the Planning Commission and the National Development Council, the Consultative Committees of the Ministries drawn from Members of the Parliament, parliamentary committees for specific purposes, advisory committees in the nature of standing committees numbering about 500, certain specially established

institutions like the Reserve Bank of India and its Economic Department, the Division of Monetary Research, etc., and certain extra-administrative institutions like the organizations of business and industry, trade unions, professional organizations, national research institutes like ISI, NCAER, ITPA, NIRD, and some coordinating agencies for scientific and technical research like CSIR, ICAR, ICSSR, etc. Thus, institutions involved in public policy-making range from agencies in all branches of government to a wide spectrum of non-governmental institutions, associations, interest and pressure groups, political parties, academic bodies and individuals. All of them can be termed as policy actors, whether direct or indirect. While the political parties play a significant role in macro-policy issues, the other agencies play an active role in micro-policy issues.⁸

The role of bureaucracy in the policy process varies from level to level and situation to situation. It performs multifarious functions—surveillance function, diagnostic function, antenna function, and, in some cases, prescriptive function, i.e., proposing an alternative policy framework—subject to the political dynamics within which it operates. It is not proper to assume that its role is to buttress, legitimize and implement policy rather than to initiate policy. Bureaucracy does sometimes play a critical role in initiating policy, mainly because of its technical knowledge and professional expertise. Bureaucratic participation in policy-making is shaped by certain normative and operational conditions. Top civil servants have some margin or latitude both in advising about policy and carrying it out. Since political values influence policy choices, the ideological preferences of senior officials are an important variable in policy-making. While politics and administration play a continuous role in both formulation and execution of policies,⁹ the respective roles of bureaucrats and politicians are determined by structural constraints and the technological and environmental demands of the situation. 'Responsible neutrality', to borrow a phrase from Fritz Morstein Marx, does not imply an ostrich-like withdrawal and isolation from the nerve-centres of the political process, but requires that bureaucrats play a major role in the definition and development of policies and the implementation of

the programmes.¹⁰ Scholars have in general identified five key parameters of policy and decision-making within the executive—anticipating policy needs, which is a basic function, systematically developing various alternatives or choices, suggesting specific choice of alternatives that would yield the optimum achievement of objectives, expertly deciding upon the instruments of implementation, and applying general policy to specific instances. In most contemporary systems, the power of bureaucracy as a top-grade actor in the policy process has been steadily increasing, even if one maintains that it is not a protagonist of policies but merely an adviser in respect of policy proposals, not an innovator and source of energy for policies, but a guardian of continuity and stability.¹¹ The controversy persists. In contrast with the British and the American systems, Indian bureaucracy presents a rather hazy profile, and public policy-making becomes more polyarchal than in any other country.

Evolving a national communication policy has, therefore, become imperative, because, (i) communications systems are increasingly becoming more complex, (ii) new technological advances require more planning and oversight, and (iii) the expansion of international communication has to be supported by internal measures. Further, a series of developments have taken place in this area which warrant urgent action. These are :

(a) the growth of a deeper understanding of the nature of communication itself, which is more receiver-and-message-centric, with emphasis on the process of communication and the significance of this process;

(b) a new awareness of the need for a wider input from philosophical, sociological, political, cultural and ethical backgrounds;

(c) the spread of knowledge through mass media, and remarkable improvement in people's ability to handle and use machinery and communication technology;

(d) the trend towards democracy, and decentralized, participatory communication process, involving people, especially the target groups, in the decision-making process;

(e) recognition of the imbalances in communication resources, requiring communication policies and planning to be formulated

in such a way as to help redress these imbalances; and

(f) momentous developments in communication technology, which require that communication policies and planning have to take into account the needs of the new information society created by the communication revolution.¹²

It might be helpful to develop certain policy-orientations which are meant to be guidelines in formulating communication plans. *First*, there is the need for a balanced, integrated and holistic rural development policy and a supportive communication policy. Policies in India, whether in the field of rural development or agriculture or communication, have been fragmented and shifting, and their execution only partial and half-hearted. There has been a fundamental failure to develop a coherent conceptualization of the problems, their prioritization, the formulation of solutions, and their inter-linkage. If the twin objectives of growth and equity are to be fully realized, only a total integrated strategy synchronizing technological change, institutional reforms, structural adaptations and economic incentives should be kept in mind. In other words, communication policy which has its own systemic characteristics, will itself be a sub-system of the overall agricultural and rural development policy. While the thrust of rural development policy should be poverty alleviation and distributive justice, the major goal of a national communication policy should also be to support that development path. Community approach and community institutions, within a communitarian framework, should constitute the common basis of this holistic and integrated policy. Such a policy should never be merely aspirational or merely ritualistic; it should develop a built-in nexus between policy and instruments, and should avoid and overcome intra-policy inconsistencies and interface inconsistencies in allied policies. The basic problem, as the UNESCO Report of 1980 correctly points out, is that of "linking communication facilities and activities to other national objectives, or in other words, that of integrating communication development into overall development plans. Communication policies must go hand in hand with those formulated in other fields like education, culture and science, and should be designed to supplement them."¹³

Second, definition of the goals and functions of the communication system. These must be consistent with the development choices outlined above. The national communication policy must incorporate the changes in communication patterns needed to reflect the changes from a foreign to an endogenous development model. Such a policy must provide for allocation of public resources on the basis of their availability, the kind of technology to be adopted, decisions about general structures of communication activities, elimination of internal and external imbalances, and definition of priorities. The formulation of national policy should serve to marshal national resources, strengthen the coordination of existing or planned infrastructures, facilitate rational choices with regard to means, help to satisfy the needs of the most disadvantaged, and help in strengthening cultural identity and national independence.

Third, design of the institutional structure, concrete organization, and content of the communication system. This involves planning for message production and distribution, software development, utilisation support, feedback and evaluation, consistent with the requirements of flexibility, decentralization, participation, accountability, avoidance of control by professional elites, a diachronic mode of information exchange, etc. It must also spell out the rules and mechanisms by which the internal and external functioning of the system can be effectively controlled.

Fourth, a future national communication policy should aim at a judicious synchronization of the mass media which are the products of the communication revolution and the indigenous communication systems that include both folk media and the traditional media. Indigenous communication system is that which is embedded in the culture which existed before the arrival of the mass media, and still exists as a vital mode of communication, presenting a certain degree of continuity, despite changes. It differs from the mass communication system in respect of the size of the audience, degree of content-flexibility, and rootedness in local culture. Not only are indigenous communication systems close to the people, they are also woven into the community structure and are part of local

activities. The policy should provide a clear direction whether the emphasis on using smaller and more local educational media would be given to the exclusion of, or in combination with mass media. Attention should be given to using mass media in combination with other kinds of organized local activities such as programme support staff and organizations of local people. A sound approach to communication planning is to rely more on audio-visual tools like slides, 8mm films, audio-cassettes, posters, flip-charts, and channels such as the traditional and rural folk media troupes. The relevant communication approach in India with appropriate structures and functional agencies should focus on the primacy of the regional language, give priority to the sub-regional needs and wishes of the population, concede the decentralization of media with access to the people, and base policy formulation as a response to feedback and evaluation.

Evolving a national communication policy along these lines has therefore become imperative. Professor P.C. Joshi has correctly suggested that time has come to redefine communication as an art which can only be learnt through active involvement in the processes of social living. The national communication policy must incorporate the changes in communication patterns needed to reflect the changes from a foreign to an endogenous development model. Such a formulation must serve to marshal national resources, strengthen the coordination of existing or planned infrastructures, facilitate rational choices with regard to means, help to satisfy the needs of the most disadvantaged, and help in strengthening cultural identity and national independence. The future communication policy must aim at a judicious synchronization of the mass media which are the products of the 'communication revolution' and the indigenous communication system. The policy should provide a clear direction whether the emphasis on using smaller and more local educational media would be given to the exclusion of, or in combination with mass media. Indian experience has stressed the need for resorting to data collection, pre-testing and objective evaluation to make the traditional media performances more result-oriented. It also underlines the necessity of having a multi-media strategy, especially in communication programmes

dealing with rural people or seeking to affect their attitudinal and motivational aspects. At the same time, it calls for theme banks for collection and recycling of messages, ideas and themes of educational, social and economic importance. There is also the possibility of cross-fertilization of some of the easy but powerful performing arts of one region in another. It cannot be denied that media that can be used with small groups may have an edge over the mass media for some situations. China's multitude of mass campaigns use a combination of mass media, group media, printed media and traditional or folk media, backed up with study and discussion groups. There is widespread understanding now that there should be a happy marriage of the modern and the traditional media since they interact and enhance the impact of each other. The task is challenging but exciting, and a whole host of opportunities await the researcher, the policy-planner and the leadership.

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6. P.C. Joshi, in *Communicator*, Jan-April, 1988, pp. 39-45.
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10. Joseph La Palombara (ed): *Bureaucracy and Political Development* (Princeton; New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 16-17.
11. R.B. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
12. Desmond Fisher and D.S. Harns, *The Right to Communicate: A New Human Right* (Dublin: Bole Press, 1983).
13. Sean MacBride, *Many Voices One World, op. cit.*, p.15. It may be pertinent to observe at this point that sectoral policies in respect of education, science and technology, and codes of conduct in relation to press, the AIR and Doordarshan, do obtain in India at present, although there is no policy on agriculture or rural development. Only recently, the Govt. of India announced its Industrial Policy by breaking away from its past heritage. For an overview of these sectoral policies, see Subhash C. Kashyap (ed): *National Policy Studies* (New Delhi: Tata-McGraw-Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., 1990).



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