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## **Psychosocial Interventions for Community Development**

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Community development has been a central theme of most of the socio-economic planning in India in the last 50 years. After gaining political independence, the popular parliamentary Government formed in India became concerned with finding mechanisms and resources to put India on a fast track of development. Realizing the fact that unless 80 percent of the rural population is involved in the developmental process, no substantial progress is possible a variety of efforts were initiated. Given the diversity and complexity of Indian society, it was a major challenge for the Government, bureaucrats, activists and social scientists to prepare viable community development programmes.

Indian psychologists were late in responding to this call, as the discipline was not attuned to Indian social reality. Psychology as a Western science had nothing substantial to offer in terms of research and methodology to actively participate in the external social world and its developmental processes. As a result, whereas economists and sociologists actively engaged in planning and implementation of the developmental programmes, Indian psychologists remained on the fringe. The scenario did change in the later

decades, as is evident from the Uday Pareek's (1981) analysis of *Dynamics of Social Change* in the Second ICSSR Survey. He extensively dealt with the macro and micro-level factors which influence the course of social change and reviewed Indian work in this area. He also discussed the intervention studies conducted in India, particularly to change the motivational level of entrepreneurs, school teachers and villagers.

Indeed, in seventies and eighties, a number of Indian psychologists were engaged in conducting research to understand the complex Indian social reality and evaluate the efficacy of psychological interventions. McClelland (1961) argued that one of the reasons for underdevelopment in India is low achievement motivation of its people. He pointed out that Hindu parents do not encourage the need for achievement; they do not train their children to set higher goals for excellence, and do not encourage children to strive to achieve them in an individualistic and competitive spirit. McClelland suggested a training programme to enhance achievement motivation. This became the basis for a major initiative in this direction by Indian psychologists like Uday Pareek, Prayag Mehta who developed a training package for entrepreneurs in collaboration with McClelland. Now known as Kakinada Experiment, this training programme lasted for few years and then had to be abandoned for certain reasons. In *Motivating Economic Achievement* McClelland and Winter (1969) claimed that this experiment was successful, i.e., the training increased achievement motivation, and thereby increased entrepreneurial behaviour, though, its effect on the development of the community could not be properly appraised. This experiment was repeated in several parts of the country and its success was claimed (Shah, Gaikward, Rao & Pareek, 1975), though some Indian psychologists

raised doubts about the tenability of the theory in the Indian context (e.g., J.B.P. Sinha & Pandey, 1970).

Several psychological studies were undertaken to evaluate the impact of community development programmes. D. Sinha (1969, 1974) conducted studies using a longitudinal framework to examine the success of community development programmes. He studied success in terms of perception, fears, aspirations and life goals. He observed that even after many years of community development programmes there was no change in aspirations and expectations of the villagers. Rath (1973) has also reported that people from underdeveloped regions showed low levels of aspiration regarding their income, education and occupation. As D. Sinha (1985) noted, these factors being stagnant developmental programmes were not self-generating and self-sustaining.

Taking the lead from Waber (1958) and McClelland (1961), many Indian psychologists also tended to defining development and attributing its absence (underdevelopment!) to the cultural and personality factors. D. Sinha (1980, 1990) reported that poor people were low on perceptual and linguistic skills, low on achievement and self-esteem, high on fatalism and external control. Pareek (1970) attributed poverty among Indians to low need for achievement and extension. J.B.P. Sinha (1980, 1982) observed that dependence proneness, emphasis on personal relationships, belief in hierarchy and preference for aram culture impede economic development. Misra (1982) found evidence for cognitive deficiency among those who had the experience of prolonged deprivation. This tendency to look for deficiencies within the person for poverty and poor achievement was much

influenced by the Western intrapsychic, individualistic notion of psychology and personhood on the one hand and a decontextualized frame of analysis in which social reality was psychologized without further translation in to the concepts and behavioral mechanisms and models applicable in the social world. This tendency of blaming the victims and ignoring the systemic and structural factors, as primarily responsible actors/causes for social inequality and disadvantage, was the common conceptual ethos of the research conducted in 70s and 80s by Indian psychologists.

In retrospect, psychological research in India did not have much to contribute in terms of designing and developing community interventions. Indeed, Pareek (1981) made a bold attempt to deal with this issue in the Second survey by including four chapters on socio-economic developmental issues in volume 2 (Psychology of Poverty in India, Psychology of Inequality, Psychology of Population and Family Planning, and Dynamics of Social Change), and delved on this issue in the concluding chapter. In comparison, the next two Surveys (Pandey, 1988; 2001, 2004) have only sporadically touched upon these issues. Psychological intervention for social change was not a major theme in the last two surveys, which reflect upon the state of research in the field of psychology.

There was mounting research evidence during 1990s that India's economic miracle has not been able to solve the major problems like poverty, malnutrition, disease, social inequality and illiteracy (Arumugam, 1999). The rise in per capita income accentuated the disparities and conflicts in the society. It was realized that unless economic development is supplemented by investment in social and human development, no

sustainable change will take place (Panchmukhi, 2000). The development experience of other economically poor countries has shown that countries where people are healthy, educated, and have discipline, dedication and work culture; could achieve the desired level of socio-economic growth (Sengupta, 1999). Psycho-social interventions, therefore, have to be a built-in component of any community development programme.

As noted by Tripathi (2001), psychological and social interventions aim to achieve an ideal state. All interventionists have a vision of the society and they programme their activities to realize that vision. These visions or ideals are often based on the implicit beliefs about human conditions and the goals they cherish to accomplish. It is, therefore, important to understand implicit theories which interventionists carry in their mind and which get manifested in terms of social actions. It is still the Western model of development which is behind a large number of social action programmes in India. In this model, traditional attitudes, beliefs and values are treated antithetical to development which is consistent with modernization, and align with the economic and scientific rationality of Western industrialized society. The Indian ideal of social development is still not well articulated in development discourse and a debate is still on about the models of development that are fruitful and usable within the cultural ethos and social reality of the country.

This review does not intend to be drawn in the contentious issue of what is development, though this debate is valid in its own right. Psychological import of the concept of development is the central theme of this chapter. This chapter also does not review the

specific intervention studies conducted by Indian psychologists. Such studies are reviewed elsewhere (see chapters by Kiran Rao, and Singhal and Tiwari, on mental health and societal development, respectively in this volume). This chapter aspires to bring out some of the substantive issues regarding conceptualization, social context factors and methodology of community focused psychological interventions for development. It makes an appraisal of the general approach and orientation of Indian psychologists, and their major concerns that form the body of knowledge in this domain.

More precisely, this chapter attempts to highlight the significance of psychological knowledge in promoting community development (CD). It is further argued that CD programmes are presumed to equip and empower the people from deprived and disadvantaged segments of population enabling them to live life with dignity and freedom. To evolve a comprehensive understanding, CD programmes are examined in the historical perspective to learn about the role of psychological factors in mobilizing local communities. The research conducted by Indian psychologists is reviewed to examine the concept of “*voluntarism*” in the Indian cultural context. Few major governmental and non-governmental programmes are discussed to identify the role of psychological factors, both as interventions and outcomes. Psychological factors which impede and facilitate community development are discussed in the light of the literature reviewed. Possibilities for improvising psychological interventions both at macro and micro levels are also examined. It is contended that psychologists need to engage themselves more actively in interdisciplinary action research to overcome methodological and practical challenges involved in the process of intervening at the community level.

## **Historical Perspective**

The first Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru had a grand vision of making India a welfare State, in which it would be the responsibility of the State to take care of the basic necessities of its citizens and to improve their quality of life. Most of the five-year plans of the Government in the first three decades were influenced by this philosophy and ideal.

As early as in 1952, the Indian government started a massive community development programme under the Indo-US agreement. In all, 55 Community Development Projects were launched, each covering 300 villages and a population of 3 lakhs. These projects were intended to be planned and implemented by the local people themselves; government just offering technical and financial assistance (Jain, 1985). The goal was to inculcate a spirit of self-reliance and cooperative action through local bodies. These projects endeavoured to increase rural employment and production through the active participation of all families in the project area. Giving a very high priority to these projects, the apex administrative organ of this venture was the Central Committee, headed by the then Prime Minister. An advisory Board was established consisting of the secretaries of various ministries. There were committees from state level down to the village level to supervise all aspects of these development projects. A cadre of village level workers (VLW) was also created at the lowest, but at the most vital ladder of the administrative hierarchy.

One of the remarkable features of these projects was the concept of '*aided self-help*'. The Central Committee conceived these projects as truly participatory with a provision of active involvement of local bodies. The Government put up a condition of selecting only those villages where people were prepared to contribute to the project activities. People were expected to give 50 percent of their idle time and the Government provided matching technical and financial contribution for the schemes, such as irrigation, drinking water, health, education, roads, etc. Despite being very well thought out, these programmes of aided self-help did not work. They lacked vitality due to unrealistic expectations, lack of coordination and low motivation of the participants.

To effectively implement these projects, the Government created a new Ministry of Community Development in 1956. The projects were constantly monitored and evaluated. The Fourth Evaluation Report in 1956 stressed that the projects should have greater flexibility to adapt local conditions and aspirations, and should be compatible with social and cultural milieu. The Report laid greater emphasis on training people to take up the responsibility of planning and implementation of various development activities (see Jain, 1985). The Government subsequently appointed the Balavantrai Mehta Committee to comprehensively review these projects. The study based on empirical data found that in spite of lofty ideals and professed policies, in real practice, communities were not involved in both, the principles and methods of determining priorities of these projects. The project activities were dominated by the government bureaucracy with too many hierarchies, resulting in lack of coordination and accountability. In fact, the Seventh Evaluation Report in 1960 conclusively showed that

with few exceptions community development programmes failed to attain their stated goals. They primarily remained as government programmes with rare instances of local communities mobilizing resources and running programmes. This failure was conspicuous given the fact that the government machinery was still motivated and charged with the idealism of the post-Independence era. The failure of these projects was a serious setback to the community development movement in India, so much so that the Ministry of Community Development was reduced to the status of a Department in 1966-67. There was definite decline in fund allocation for community development programmes in 3rd and 4th Five Year Plans. The revival of these schemes in 5th and 6th Plans was only marginal and that too without any follow-up strengthening of local bodies (Panchayati Raj Institution).

### **The Changing Scenario in 1980s**

Two major developments in the 1980s and in the later period qualitatively changed the development scenario in India. First was the entry of international funding agencies and the second was rapid expansion of the NGO sector. Not that these two did not exist earlier, but there was never such a heavy inflow of foreign funding for community development in India. Apart from the United Nation's agencies (e.g., WHO, UNICEF, UNDP), many other agencies, like the World Bank, USAID, NORAD, CIDA started pouring in a large sum of money for development projects. 1980s and 1990s witnessed an extraordinary proliferation of foreign-funded non governmental organizations (NGOs) in India. According to the Home Ministry, by the year 2000 nearly 20,000 NGOs were registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. Total foreign funds received

by these organizations rose from Rs 3,403 crores in 1998-99 to Rs 3,925 crores in 1999-2000, to Rs 4,535 crores (about \$993 million) in 2000-01 (New, Economic Times, 2003). The hold of foreign funding can be gauged from the fact that 90% of the voluntary organizations working in the rural sector are dependent on this assistance for their survival. The policies and priorities of these NGOs are much guided by those of their funders. A World Bank Report (1994) revealed that (rather than grassroots planning) project implementation is the most common form of NGO involvement. More than 86 percent of the NGOs receive funding on project basis and their organization structure revolves around implementation activities.

The government indeed put in enormous men and material resources to steer India on the path of speedy development. However, these dreams of the planners are still far from being realized. On the contrary, poverty, unemployment and inequality are on the increase and the goals of health and education for all by the year 2000 proved unachievable. In essence, all those ambitious programmes did not succeed in triggering a developmental process. They failed to motivate rural communities to mobilize local resources for the developmental activities. People did not get involved in the governance of even those development plans which intimately affected their lives. Community participation failed to materialize in spite of all planning and preparations. The apathy and alienation of people were held responsible for the failure of rural development programmes (Dalal, Kumar & Gokhale, 1999).

Mehta (1998) has summarized his 30 years of experience of working with NGOs in developmental work in the volume entitled *Psychological Strategy for Alternative Human Development*. He observed that the State of India has failed to discharge its duties toward its people. *“Instead of pursuing the stated objectives of social development, the programmes have tended to alienate people from the state .... Field experience and the insights provided by the concerned people underlie the urgency for not only meaningful state interventions, but more importantly, for enhancing the morale and motivation of the common people”* (p. 14).

### **Psychological Interventions for Poverty Alleviation**

Psychologists have shown a great deal of interest in developing psychological interventions for the eradication of poverty. The pioneering work of Rath (1982), Pareek (1968), D. Sinha (1980), Pandey and Singh (1985) and Misra and L.B.Tripathi (1980) paved the way for a large number of studies in this area. Most of these initial writings in this area had focused on poor people and tried to find social and cognitive deficits associated with and responsible for their poverty. The psychological interventions suggested, thus aimed to strengthen and equip people from disadvantaged and deprived background with skills and competence necessary for effective functioning within the society. D. Sinha (1990) pointed out that the detrimental effects of poverty are accentuated by the unfavorable proximal environment of the child. Thus, intervention should address not only the cognitive-attentional drawbacks but also the conditions prevailing in the family and school settings. Dalal (1991) proposed an educational resourcefulness model to benefit from the opportunities to learn. It emphasized

intervention at three levels: self-efficacy, sense of personal control and planfulness. Dalal suggested systematic interventions by manipulating success and failure in the school settings to inculcate sense of self-efficacy during early schooling. Misra (1990, 2000) has argued that interventions should be planned to create in people a sense of empowerment to effect change in their environment. Researchers should identify the affordances in the intervention programmes for cognitive enrichment, at the individual and community levels which create and maintain poverty.

For poverty alleviation strategies Mehta (1994) has argued for empowerment of the poor, so that they can assert collectively to influence and change the socio-economic conditions for realizing various social goals. Education, meaningful work participation in civil and other activities contribute to efficacy, enhanced self-respect and learning to assert. Pareek (1994) pointed out that since the expectancy of reward through hard work and personal initiative have been so low for centuries that the capacity to take initiative for change has diminished. j

To conclude, most of the psychological interventions have dealt with the problem of poverty at the microcosmic level. These studies have pointed out cognitive, motivational and personality characteristics of the poor and the disadvantaged (see, Misra & K.N. Tripathi, 2004). What is important is that these micro-level findings are often ignored and not taken into consideration in the course of macro-level planning (Misra & Dash, 2000). There are not many studies in which such an effort has been made.

## **Tribal Development: The Bone of Contention**

Another developmental arena, which needs to be addressed through action research, is the challenge of development in the tribal areas. According to the 1991 Census, India's 8.08 percent population is tribal, which comes to about 810 million. The Government of India has specified a list of tribal communities in consultation with each state to be deemed as scheduled tribes for that state. The Article 342 of the Indian Constitution lays the provisions for identifying a particular community as scheduled tribe, better known as adivasis or janjatis (aboriginal) or vanvasis (forest-dwellers). Though all tribals do not figure under the heading of ST, they are spread all over the country and have been around for three millennia.

Over centuries, the Adivasis have evolved an intricate convivial-custodial mode of living. Adivasis belong to their territories, which are the essence of their existence; the abode of the spirits and their dead and the source of their science, technology, way of life, their religion and culture. They had their own system of governance, outside the domain of the general laws applicable to the other segments of population. The tribal people were considered simple, honest, hardworking, self-sustaining, and had their own social customs and cosmic world of gods, spirits and ancestors. Though they were always exploited, in general, they had a peaceful co-existence. The majority population often places the tribal communities at the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy. They were exploited by the erstwhile rulers and the Britishers for centuries. The creation of a unified albeit centralised polity and the extension of the formal system of governance have emasculated the self-governing institutions of the Adivasis and with it their internal cohesiveness (Bijoy, 2003).

After Independence, the Indian Constitution protected their rights and privileges and the Government of India started programmes for the development of tribal communities by making special provisions for them in the five-year plans. Though in real terms the developmental programmes remained anti-*adivasis*, as not only the forests depleted, the construction of dams, industries, mines and bureaucratic control led to displacement, impoverishment and marginalization of the tribal people. Not to speak of their right to live in harmony with nature is threatened, today, majority of the tribal communities are struggling for their survival. As noted by Mehta (1994), the root cause of underdevelopment of the tribal people is imposition of Westernized-urbanized models for their socio-economic development. The values, practices, needs and expectations of people are not taken into consideration while planning for development. Bose (2001) has suggested that the developmental process in the case of tribals has been very slow. Sinha (1985) has shown that the developmental activities have led to adverse psychological consequences for the tribal population, in terms of their self-esteem, interpersonal trust and sense of personal control.

Tribal development has for the last three decades been caught in the quagmire of political and religious controversies. For almost a century, the Christian missionaries have been working in the tribal areas with the implicit objective of converting tribals to their faith. The missionaries are silent but dedicated their efforts leading to conversion of a vast belt of tribal population in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Chhattisgarh States into Christian fold. It is alleged that they use money and coercive tactics to convert and bring people to their fold. This has led to the rise of many counter movements, particularly by

the organizations such as Ramakrishna Mission and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, who seriously object to the activities of Christian missionaries and have put massive efforts to bring back these tribals to the Hindu fold. This has often caused enormous social tension, the most tragic of them being the burning alive missionary Graham Staines and his two sons by a Hindu extremist. The strong antipathy which the Sangh parivar and its offshoots, like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad, Seva Bharati and Bajarang Dal have shown toward Christian missionaries and a very favourable stance taken by the Congress and the Left parties have resulted in a purely developmental issue into a heated political debate. Tribal development projects have become tools to establish control over the tribal population. It is seen as if the secular forces are pitted against the Hindu fundamentalism. What is missed out in all these controversies and vested interest is the overall development of tribal people. The dismal picture of their declining living conditions and quality of life is for every one to see. In Rajasthan State, which is on the lowest ladder for female literacy among the tribals, the literacy among the females according to the 1991 was less than 4 percent. It increased to 7 percent in 1996 according to another estimate (Bajpeyi & Goyal, 2004). The other developmental statistics are equally dismal. The Government's Eighth Plan document mentioned that nearly 52% of STs live below the poverty line as against 30% of the general population

### **Changing Concept of Voluntarism**

India has a long tradition of voluntarism, where self-less service for other's good is held as most desirable social behavior (*paramartha*). Forgoing self-interest is the best way of

taking the self to the exalted heights of paramartha and finding happiness and liberation. It said that the essence of entire texts of 18 Puranas Vyasa says only two things: Paropkar (helping others) is Punya (good deed) and Parapidan (hurting others) is papa (sin). Tyaga (sacrifice), Ahinsa (non-violence), Dana (charity), keeping only what is essential (Aparigrah) have been considered as components of Dharma to be followed by every one (Krishnan, 2005). The notion of Loka Samgraha clearly emphasized the value of positive social action meant to facilitate social welfare. These ideas make the case of strong traditions of socially driven actions in personal life. It suggests that voluntarism is in-built in the relational notion of selfhood or the idea of “being” – personal existence -delineated in the Indian thought which has the elements of individual and social both aspects as central in its construction

Rajani Kothari (1998) observed that Indian society is fundamentally a voluntarist society. For ages, community services primarily relied on the generosity of the local people. There are instances of excellent work being done by such people in improving the quality of the life of the underprivileged. There is a strong religious foundation in the voluntary act of performing public good in India. Thus, at a very fundamental level there is no difference between voluntary work, or work for the self in the Hindu philosophy. It is Karma that has to be performed. Karma is duty and the duty is to be performed with devotion. Karma or duty with devotion, involves helping others and doing good to the world. Apparently, this is to help others, but in essence it is self-help, or to help ourselves.

The Hindu belief system cherishes service to others, sacrifice and renunciation. A householder (Grihastha) is supposed to take care of others as he is in the debt to others. The concept of Rinas (debts); bhuta (all living beings), deva( gods), pitri( parents), guru (teacher), rishi( knowledgeable ones/seers/sages) clearly emphasizes the significance of offering to others. The Gita proscribes to undertake such actions without any expectations of reward. These values and beliefs promote voluntarism. However, other Hindu concepts, like maya (that the world is an illusion) and Karmaphala (that one's present lot is a consequence of the misdeeds of the past lives) tend to downplay the virtues of charity and compassion (Patel, 1998). Though charity still flourished in India, the Hindu worldview as translated into rituals restricted it in three ways. One, charitable acts are performed as an obligation towards the departed kith and kin, or to repay gratitude toward a deity. Two, charity is confined to the religious space and does not readily expand to the wider secular space. Temples and shrines were the focal points for charitable acts. Three, outside the religious space, charity remains confined to the kinship groups, where the concern was to help their own kinds. These philanthropic activities centered on the individuals and there were little efforts toward organized voluntary action (Patel, 1998).

Three moral values were cherished in this process: *karuna* (compassion), *daya* (mercy) and *dana* (charity). Compassion refers to deep empathy for others' suffering effectively reinforced by Gautama Buddha, and Mahavira and many local saints and social and religious reformers. Not only did kings and monarchs perform charity, traders did it too. These three values - *karuna*, *daya* and *dana* remained the cornerstones of voluntary activity in the Indian civil society for almost three thousand years. Religious institutions

were the main beneficiaries of the traditional acts of charity and voluntary activity. Some change in this came about only in the late-19th century when inter-state migrations in search of better living standards began in western India. This migration was mainly from rural to urban areas in search of better business prospects (Kothari, 1998).

These values did not change much even during the Muslim and Moghal regimes. Islam preached *khairaat* (charity). A devout Muslim was to keep aside a fixed part of his daily income to be donated for public good. Charity and donations had complete religious and social approval. The State also, along with business leaders and the rich in society, donated towards the building of sarais (inns), dharamshalas and other community structures used as common utilities. A devout Hindu or Muslim found solace in helping the poor.

During the colonial rule, a need was felt to regulate philanthropic activities. The Bombay Public Trust Act and the Society Registration Act of 1860 were indicators that a need for legalizing social organizations was felt much before economic development activities were taken up by voluntary organisations in the country. With improved social awareness and the legal framework, voluntary activities covered hospitals, dispensaries, school buildings and health education trusts. In the villages, individuals and small family trusts undertook the voluntary activity of building social and physical infrastructure.

After India's political independence, economic development took priority over human development. The pressing issues were population, low food production and high unemployment. Modernization implied industrialization. The expansion of capitalism was shunned, and the country adopted a socialistic pattern of development. Promotion of

a mixed economy and development through centralized planning became the main strategies. Another major shift witnessed was the patronizing of voluntary efforts. The benefactors who belonged to the business and entrepreneurial class shifted their attention to the mainstream economics and the flow of financial support to social activities slowed considerably. Further, the proposed government programmes required relatively large funds that could not come from the private sector. Many of the voluntary organisations turned into delivery organisations that attempted to deliver honestly what the government thought was right for the people. This scenario prevailed till late 1970s.

The concept and practice of voluntarism has gone through a metamorphosis in the last two decades. With the change in government policies and increasing availability of funding, a large number of NGOs have started working on various development projects. They, in a way, started supplementing the work of government departments to meet official targets. These service organizations started hiring people for specific jobs for specified pay and perks. A new breed of advisors and consultants was emerging to provide professional services to the service organizations. If poverty was a big business in the 1980s, voluntarism became so in the 1990s, with every non-gazetted officer (ngo) starting an NGO (Bankar Roy, 1996).

According to Bhatt (1992), there has been an increase in competition, conflict and rivalry among the various voluntary groups. There are also some adverse effects of professionalisation. The spirit of voluntarism is yielding to the forces of commercialization. All these trends, according to Bhatt, do not augur well for NGOs and their credibility. The general concern relates to the emerging lifestyles and work-styles of

NGOs that receive international funding. These NGOs and volunteers are part of the problem, not of the solution (Petras, 1997).

With massive influx of foreign funding for various development projects, social service indeed became a lucrative career. The foreign funding agencies lay great emphasis on professionalism, training, documentation, programme evaluation and scientific management. The project staff could be hired by offering high salaries, so much so that many programme managers get salary at par with the senior executives of multinational companies. They live in style and run their business of development from five star luxuries. Community participation for them is a matter of strategy to achieve goals of their programmes.

On the contrary, the village level workers sweating in the project have a hand-to-mouth existence. They are unpaid volunteers who are expected to work hard to meet the targets. The [WHO Manual \(1994\)](#) for community based development clearly states that these village workers should generate local resources and that they should be self-supporting. They mostly come from the poor strata of society and the major incentive is the social prestige they acquire due to their affiliation with some reputed (aptly, an international) agency. They faithfully obey the commands of their masters to mobilize people for participation in project work. The contrast becomes glaring and baffling to a common villager when high-flying programme managers and advisors descend on their village centres. Suspicion, servility, jealousy, and mistrust are the hallmarks of such a lopsided relationship between project managers and village workers. Participation of the larger community in this set up is bound to remain a goal unrealised.

In many parts of the country, NGOs have to work in a relatively hostile environment. In many parts of the States like Kashmir, UP, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Jharkhand, and in some north east regions many terrorist and militant groups rule the rostrum. In such regions, NGOs and activists cannot achieve their goals just by soliciting goodwill and support of the people, but have to work within the limits set by such groups. They often risk their lives, as these militant groups not only demand protection money but also seek to alter the objectives of the NGOs (Sethi, 1998).

Kothari (1998) has talked about the new breed of volunteers who are engaged in building political consensus on issues vital to the survival of the civil society. They are concerned about broadening and deepening the democratic base of Indian society. Such movements are located in the larger context of a world in transition, and can be seen as an expression of emerging consciousness, a new conception of rights and responsibilities. This could be seen in the macro-formations, such as Jan Vikas Andolan, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Azadi Bachao Andolan, etc., and their conglomeration, the National Alliance of People's Movements. In the areas of health, disability and education there are many such alliances, which are not engaged in advocacy and building public opinion. These initiatives are very recent and it is any one's guess how they will shape in future.

### **Gandhi and Intervention for Social Development**

Towards the beginning of the 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi, lovingly called Bapu (father of nation) brought about significant changes in the concept of voluntarism in the

Indian civil society. Mahatma Gandhi added a very significant dimension to the already existing *jeevadaya* and philanthropic traditions. In a small 31-page booklet, titled *Constructive Programme, its Meaning and Place*, Gandhiji (1945) concisely set forth his views on economics, education, women, welfare, etc. It was his idea of creative and constructive voluntarism for human development (Gandhi, 1945).

Gandhiji's influence began from the 1920s, and over the last 80 years the voluntary movement in the country has continued to be influenced by his philosophy. Along with the major political agenda of freeing the country from the British, he also had clear views about the socio-economic development of Indian society. In 1909, he had already penned *Hind Swaraj*, depicting in it the India of his dreams. Gandhi considered social transformation more important than political freedom from the Britishers. The political movement that he led had mobilized a large number of youth full of idealism and commitment. Encouraged by Gandhiji, this youth force, after spells of intense political activity, turned its time and energy in peaceful times to rural reconstruction. Hardly any other political leader elsewhere has been able to combine both political protest and social reconstruction, as Gandhiji was able to do. With his great insight he could combine the drafting of ultimatums to the Viceroy with the cleaning of toilets and the tending of goats. Gandhiji's call for constructive work for development changed the tenor of voluntary activity in the country.

Gandhi's approach towards social good also had an element of spirituality, cutting across different religions. His vision of an ideal community are fully explicated in *Young India*

and Harijans, the two weekly publications edited by Gandhiji. He candidly admitted Christianity's influence on his thinking and action and he recognized Islam as being one of the important religions of India and sang prayers from the Holy Koran. The daily *bhajans* sung at Sabarmati Ashram included verses from all the religions and saints. His approach was religious in that he accepted bhakti (devotion) and prayer as the tenets that gave spiritual strength to an individual. His insistence on truth and non-violence provided immense moral courage in the fight against injustice of any kind. By saying that “*my life is my message*” Gandhiji was able to bring in transparency and expanded the scope for multilevel dialogue between self and others. His agenda of reconstructing society was pragmatic and realistic, involving educational programmes and developmental activities, including economic activities such as spinning on the charkha<sup>1</sup> and producing khadi (handmade cotton fabric). He knew that the real independence of India would only be achieved when we are able to remove poverty and provide a dignified livelihood to every citizen of the country. India would be free when society got rid of such social evils as caste discrimination. Gandhiji had an economic, social, and of course, a political agenda, which he professed to realize through spiritual path.

After Independence Gandhi wanted the Congress-men to quit politics and engage in ‘constructive work’. Constructive work did not separate material well-being from spiritual well-being. It stressed cultural and social regeneration of the individuals and society as a whole (Sheth & Sethi, 1991). Though most of the Congress leaders were keen to enjoy the fruits of state power, there were few committed Gandhians, like Vinobha Bhave, Jai Prakash Narayan, Baba Amte, who fully committed themselves to

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<sup>1</sup> Spinning wheel to prepare cotton thread for weaving .

self-less social service. Weighing the relevance of Gandhian approach, Pantham (1995) has pleaded for serious appreciation of the global significance of Swaraj and Sarvodaya, particularly for the uplift of the downtrodden.

### **Examples of Some Major Community Interventions**

As mentioned in the earlier sections, a large number of community intervention programmes were initiated by the Government, NGOs and social activists. It is not possible to review all those programmes, nor is it the objective of writing this chapter. In this section, some of the major community development initiatives are examined to bring out the psychological factors critical to their success. These are ongoing programmes focusing on different developmental priorities, but concerned about the overall well-being of the people. It may be mentioned here that in the community programmes discussed here psychological factors are not explicitly introduced but are implied, both as intervening steps and as consequences. A scan of the research reveals that there are not many studies conducted by Indian psychologists to examine the efficacy of these programmes.

#### **Integrated Child Development Programme (ICDS)**

The ICDS Programme was introduced by the Government of India in 1975. It is the world's largest early intervention programme for child care. It aimed to promote holistic development of children in the age group of 0 to 6 years through building the capacity of parents and communities to cater to health and nutritional needs of infants and children. The programme offers health, nutrition and hygiene education to mothers, non-formal

preschool education to children aged three to six, supplementary feeding for all children and expectant and nursing mothers, growth monitoring and promotion, and links to primary healthcare services such as immunization and Vitamin A supplements.

The ICSD Scheme targets the most vulnerable groups of population including young children, pregnant women and nursing mothers. The main focus is on those belonging to the poorest of the poor families and living in disadvantaged areas including backward rural areas, tribal areas and urban slums. The identification of beneficiaries is done through surveying the community and locating families living below the poverty line.

These services are delivered in an integrated manner at the *anganwadi* (AW), or childcare centre. Each centre is run by an anganwadi worker and one helper, who undergo three months of institutional training and four months of community-based training. Besides this, the AW is a meeting ground where women's/mother's group can come together, with other frontline workers, to promote awareness and joint action for child development and women's empowerment.

In the last three decades the ICDS programme has expanded covering the whole country with over 42,000 AW centers nationwide. The programme today covers over 4.8 million expectant and nursing mothers and over 23 million children under the age of six. Of these children, more than half participated in early learning activities. Since its inception in 1975, the programme has matured and expanded, despite difficulties in adapting to the vastly different local circumstances. The programme is presently supported by UNICEF and the World Bank.

The surveys conducted by the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) in 1992 showed clear evidence that the programme was having its impact. Where the programme was operating, there were lower percentages of low-birth-weight babies, lower infant mortality rates, higher immunization coverage, higher utilization rates for health services, and better child nutrition. The percentage of children suffering from severe malnutrition, have significantly declined from 15.3 percent during 1976-78 to 8.7 percent during 1988-90 (figures published by National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau). Overall, the programme has many positive outcomes in states where it was better implemented (Ramchandran, 2004).

A recent World Bank evaluation report (2005) observed that child malnutrition in India fell only slowly during the 1990s, despite significant economic growth and large public spending on the ICDS program, of which, the major component is supplementary feeding for malnourished children. To unravel this puzzle, the authors assess the programme's placement and its outcomes using National Family Health Survey data from 1992 and 1998. They find that program placement is clearly regressive across States. The States with the greatest need for the program - the poor northern States with high levels of child malnutrition and nearly half of India's population - have the lowest program coverage and the lowest budgetary allocations from the Central Government. The authors also find little evidence of program impact on child nutrition status in villages with ICDS centre (Das et al., 2005).

The ICDS is perhaps one of the better-conceived programmes; yet on travels around the country one realizes that there is a huge gap between what is expected of the programme and the ground situation. Perturbed by the state of affairs, the Supreme Court (Order dated 28 November 2001) ordered that every settlement must have a disbursement centre and that every child aged 0-6, every pregnant and nursing mother and every adolescent girl be covered under the ICDS. Four years later, the GOI and the State governments are yet to implement this order. On 29 April 2004, the Supreme Court issued another order directing the government to file (within three months) a time-bound plan for compliance. Once again the deadline passed with no concrete action or plan on the part of the government.

### **Integrated Rural Development Programme**

In 1999 the Ministry of Rural Development, acting as a catalyst effecting the change in rural areas through the implementation of wide spectrum of programmes, aimed at poverty alleviation, employment generation, infrastructure development and social security. Over the years, with the experience gained, in the implementation of the programmes and in response to the felt needs of the poor, several programmes have been modified and new programmes have been introduced. This Ministry's main objective is to alleviate rural poverty and ensure improved quality of life for the rural population, especially those below the poverty line. These objectives are achieved through formulation, development and implementation of programmes relating to various spheres of rural life and activities, from income generation to environmental replenishment.

Integrated Rural development Programme (IRDP) was largely a response to the failure of the trickle-down theory of development and the productivity-oriented community development programmes which failed to reduce and often exacerbated rural poverty.

All IRDPs had the following three major objectives:

- (a) Some form of local participation in the identification of the needs of the people and even in the planning of the projects to fulfill them;
- (b) A multisectoral delivery system, including agricultural infrastructure and inputs, and access to credit, health, education and other social services;
- (c) An organizational mechanism ensuring delivery of services to the needy households.

IRDP programmes were launched in almost all regions of the countries with varying degrees of success. In most States the programmes have been run by the same centralized bureaucratic structure, such as the ministries of rural development and local self-government that supervised the community development programmes earlier. The required changes in style and attitudes, however, did not match the vocabulary and the jargon associated with the new programme. However, there were some successful models of IRDP.

In order to ensure that the fruits of economic reform are shared by all sections of societies five elements of social and economic infrastructure, critical to the quality of life in rural areas, were identified. These are health, education, drinking water, housing and roads. To impart greater momentum to the efforts in these sectors the Government had launched the Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY) and the ministry of rural development was

entrusted with the responsibility of implementing drinking water, housing and rural roads component of PMGY

During the 9th Plan period, several anti-poverty programmes have been restructured to enhance the efficiency of the programmes for providing increased benefits to the rural poor. Self Employment Programmes have been revamped by merging the IRDP, the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), the Supply of Improved Tool-Kits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), the Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), the Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) and the Million Wells Scheme (MWS) into a holistic self-employment scheme called Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY).

Keeping in view the needs and aspirations of the local people, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) has been involved in the programme implementation and these institutions constitute the core of decentralized development of planning and its implementations. The Ministry is also vigorously pursuing with the State Governments for expeditious devolution of requisite administrative and financial powers to PRI's as envisaged under 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India (Act). On 25th December 2002, under Drinking Water Sector, a new initiative 'Swajal Dhara' empowering the Panchayats to formulate, implement, operate and maintain drinking water projects were launched. In order to further involve PRIs in the development process, a new initiative 'Hariyali' has been launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 27th January, 2003. Hariyali has been launched to strengthen and involve PRIs in the implementation of Watershed

Development Programmes namely IWDP, DPAP and DDP. The latest in this sequel is Rajiv Gandhi Rojgar Yojna, launched in 2005.

The empowerment of rural women is crucial for the development of rural India. Bringing women into the mainstream of development is a major concern for the Government of India. Therefore, the programmes for poverty alleviation have a women's component to ensure flow of adequate funds to this section. The Constitutional (73rd) Amendment, Act 1992, provides for reservation of selective posts for women. The Constitution has placed enormous responsibility on the Panchayats to formulate and execute various programmes of economic development and social justice, and a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes are being implemented through Panchayats. Thus, women Members and Chairpersons of Panchayats, who are basically new entrants in Panchayats, have to acquire the required skill and be given appropriate orientation to assume their rightful roles as leaders and decision makers. To impart training for elected representatives of PRIs is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations. The Ministry of Rural Development also extends some financial assistance to the States/UTs with a view to improve the quality of training programmes and to catalyze capacity building initiatives for the PRI elected members and functionaries.

### **Swadhyaya Movement**

The Swadhyaya movement started in 1958 when a group of affluent people from Mumbai, who were influenced by the discourse of Sri Pandurang Shastri Athawale, decided to go to villages to spread the message of love, equality and dignity and work for

the development of unprivileged communities. Athawaleji asked them to consider it as God's work. This initial trickle of love and active devotion eventually took the shape of a mass movement in the western region of the country. Today the Swadhyaya movement has a following of more than 3 million people, spread over 20,000 villages. It has a disciplined cadre known as Swadhyayees involved in a variety of programmes and activities, geared for individual and social development.

Swadhyaya is a socio-spiritual movement for self-development and social transformation (Giri, 1998). It upholds equality and dignity of all human beings, sharing of resources, concern for well-being of everyone in society and endeavours for the growth and development of the community (Shah, Sheth & Visaria, 1998). Swadhyaya implies inner purification through self learning. Swadhyayees meet every week and learn prescribed lessons and undertake bhaktipheries (goodwill visits to non-swadhyayees). They take up projects like Matsyagandhas (boats for fishing expeditions for fishing communities), Yogeshwar Krishi (collective farming by local communities), Vruksha Mandir (collective orchards), Sridarshanam (collective farming by about a group of 20 neighbouring villages) to collectively raise economic resources to be distributed among poor and needy members. Community work is considered as bhakti where skills and labour are taken as offerings to the Lord.

A Swadhyaya project in Sabarkantha, Gujarat, is one of the many examples of use of religion for community development. It is based on the concept of krutibhakti (social action as devotion to the Divine), and willing participation and contribution of the

Swadhyayees. Such a programme is supposed to have psycho-spiritual implications for both the community and Swadhyayees.

The experiment of Yogeshwara Krishi (YK) was started there in 1985. There are detailed guidelines and procedures for starting a YK project, its functioning, maintenance and reporting of accounts that the local members of Swadhyaya maintain. Each project required sanction from the head office in Mumbai, subject to fulfilling the following conditions: (a) rural community is relatively small, and (b) more than 60 percent of the families are members of the Swadhyaya Parivar. They hire on a three-year basis a small plot of land, measuring one to two acres. A committee of five-members is formed to oversee all arrangements and farming activities. A pair of members, selected through lottery, is expected to work on the farm for two full days in a month for the whole year. It is here that members of different castes work together and forge a feeling of belonging to a larger family. Since it is Yogeshwar's (Lord Krishna) farm, quite often village members offer infrastructural facilities free of charge and also contribute in running expenses. Consequently, running expenses on such farms are minimal.

A detailed account of the income is maintained, one third of which can be used by the local members for necessary purchases, helping needy members and celebrating festivals. The remaining two-third income is put in the bank account and can be spent on developmental projects (education, health, roads, public toilets, etc.) with the permission from the head office. These experiments became so popular that in 10 years time such projects were running in 72 villages in Sabarkantha region (Shah, Sheth & Visaria, 1998).

Swadhyayees carefully shun any publicity of their work. It continued to expand silently for 30 years in Gujarat and Maharashtra, and other nearby regions. Even after the death of Athavale in 2004 the movement is still gaining popularity in other parts of India and abroad, particularly in Britain where a large number of Gujaratis live.

### **Ralegaon Siddhi Experiment**

Ralegaon Siddhi, about 85 kilometers from Pune, was a drought-prone area of Maharashtra, with rainfall of about 15 inches a year; for the last two years it was less than six inches. The total land of the village is about 2, 200 acres. Of this about 1, 700 acres is arable. The soil is of poor quality, the land undulating so that water runs off quickly. Only about 70 to 80 acres were irrigated through wells. The village was destitute: about a fifth of the families ate just once a day; half to two-thirds borrowed grain from other villages at a high cost. There was little work in the village. Men went outside to earn a pittance breaking stones; women suffered prostitution. Family after family was in debt, major proportion of the land had been mortgaged to money-lenders. This was the condition of the village in 1975 when Anna Hazare, an army truck driver decided to settle in this village and work for its uplift. Anna participated in the 1965 Indo-Pak war, and also posted in Nagaland to check insurgency. Twice he had miraculous escape from certain death. This convinced him that he had been spared for a purpose. He foreswore marriage and took early retirement from his job and decided to help his village.

Prompted by his intuition and powered by the settlement funds from the army, he renovated the village temple and began to live (as he does till this day) in a small two-room house. Slowly people began to come and meet this man and hear his ideas of development. By now he had earned their trust as the Maharashtrian honorific, 'Anna'. The road out of the village's problems had to be built with contributed labour or '*shramdaan*'. Each of the 250 families had to send one volunteer per day per week. Each day's labour was counted as Rs.30 contribution and earned Rs.70 from the government. Thus, began small watershed works. As soon as about 60 small bunds, check dams, trenches and percolation ponds had been built, there was a dramatic change: the water table rose throughout the village. Anna had changed a despairing mind set and set the pace for galloping changes.

Within three years farmed acreage grew from 80 to 1300. Farmers gave away over 500 acres in the catchment areas. Village labour engineered these for harvesting all the rain that fell. Soon they were raising three crops a year and exporting stable produce to the cities and even overseas. They worked out a water use regime: water withdrawal and crop selection is strictly regulated based on the rainfall and by sounding the water table. Today nearly 90 per cent of the arable land is farmed. Along the way, Anna persuaded the villagers to accept the 25 Dalit families as their own, fought off the liquor barons, chastened the wife-beaters [he had them thrashed in public], drove tobacco out of town, began a massive reforestation programme, built 11 bio gas plants, community wells, and as a crowning innovation, started a Grain Bank at the temple site: anyone can 'borrow' grains when in need and return when able, with a little 'interest' added. Not many

borrowers these days, though mostly farmers come bringing a little of their surpluses to add to the bank's reserves.

In 1992, the village built itself a school with its own funds and labour. Today 850 boys and girls study in it, only 650 of them Ralegaon children. In the boys' hostel are 250 kids from all over Maharashtra. To be eligible they need to be dropouts; if they have failed in their studies their chances of admission are better. Yet, over 90 percent of the children pass high school. The school has science laboratories, computer courses and a big library. There's a retired army sergeant who drills fitness into them. Kids rise at 5.30 a.m. for a shrieking, mass run through the village. The school has vast playgrounds. Children run a nursery, and actively plant and care for trees. Girls are taught to swim, to ride bicycles and lately bikes. Anna believes that development in society isn't possible without women playing an active part. The village is run by an elected all-woman panchayat and decisions are taken by the entire village sitting together in the Gram Sabha.

Ralegaon has become a legend. There's a steady stream of politicians and leaders who come to see for themselves a miracle in happening. Buses drove constantly bringing villagers from distant places. Trips were organized for people to understand and implement similar projects elsewhere.

Anna wanted to prepare community leaders to replicate his success story. He contacted ten college Principals to send him their alumni list. He sent them letters if they will be interested in propagating the Ralegaon experiment. They would be trained for six months.

Each day they would have to work from 5 am to 10 p.m. They must learn to clean the streets and toilets. Live a simple life and expect little money. After training they would have to spend years in villages, as backward as Ralegaon was before 1975. They would be paid reasonably. Would they be prepared for this challenge of rebuilding India? Anna got 403 responses. He picked 110 volunteers. When the street cleaning part began 14 of them left. As the applied training began a few more left. But in the end there were 75 potential leaders who stayed put. They were trained rigorously. This kind of leadership training has continued.

The criteria for selecting the villages for development were severe. They had to be a minimum of 20 kms from any big town. The villages needed to have a population below 4000 and had to be located in a drought-prone district. The objective was to transform them by focusing on watershed development. His trainees screened many villages and selected 75 clusters. Each covers a 2500 hectare area. They are all over Maharashtra. Some were deliberately chosen for mixed populations. Anna visited every one of them before a final selection was taken.

Anna's moral code of conduct is also quite strict. Anna believes that punishment is an essential component of the process to bring about conformity to social morality. He emphatically observed total prohibition in the villages he worked. Public beating was used not to create terror but to bring public shame on the defaulter so that he/she exercises more self-control. People are proud of Ralegaon's achievements and they

have a share and a stake in its glory. Therefore, they would not do anything which will hurt Anna or bring a bad name to the village.

Anna worked as a crusader to curb corruption in public life. Twice he sat on fast unto death for the removal of corrupt minister. In 2003 he again threatened to sit on fast even though his health was failing. As a true Gandhian and a highly spiritual person Anna is still a force behind social transformation in Maharashtra.

### **Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra**

The Soliga tribals have for centuries lived in the Biligiri Rangana (B.R.) Hills of Karnataka State, for most of that time leading 'a life of abundance and peace, surviving by hunting and shifting cultivation', worshipping God in nature and living in harmony with it. From about the 1950s, however, their forests started to be cleared for industry and modern agriculture, their land expropriated by others, and the Soliga sank into a condition of utmost poverty and exploitation.

Sudarshan graduated as a medical doctor in 1973 and decided to work with poor communities. He joined the Ramakrishna Mission health project in 1975. Four years later he arrived in the B.R. Hills to work among the Soliga tribes. Vivekanand Girijan Kalyan Kendra (VGKK) was founded in 1981. The objective of VGKK is to empower the tribal people to realize their dream of a self-reliant, united and progressive Soliga community. Towards this, VGKK has been successfully carrying out several programs in education, health, community organization, revitalization of traditional medicines, bio-diversity

conservation, sustainable agriculture, rehabilitation of displaced tribals, low cost housing, social forestry, tribal cooperatives and promotion of appropriate technology in this tribal region.

VGKK differs from most such enterprises in that it is based on a respect for the tribal culture and the principle of self-determination. This clearly reflects in their training programmes to develop requisite skills and capabilities among the tribal people. To make them self-reliant is the eventual goal of VGKK's. The work done to achieve all the targets of 'health for all by 2000' and resettlement of the tribals is a clear testimony that the goal they have set is not optimism in vain.

The 450-pupil school, constructed by the tribal people, aims at spontaneous blossoming of a child's personality with an attitude of service, pride and confidence in their culture. The curriculum covers all normal subjects taught to national standards and also things such as environmental workshops, herbal gardening, value education, especially with regard to tribal values, and encouragement of tribal culture. More than 88 per cent of children now get primary education. Some Soliga children from the school are now going to university, and several graduates and post-graduates have returned to serve their community.

VGKK's vocational training scheme gives instruction in 16 crafts. Over 60 per cent of Soliga people now get a minimum of 300 days' employment a year from the Forest Department, other agencies and a system of Tribal Cooperatives set up by VGKK, which employs 1,200 Soliga directly. VGKK has also pioneered the sustainable extraction of non-timber forest products and the creation of Tribal Enterprises to process them.

VGKK considers its most significant achievement to be its fostering of self-organisation among the people. It has a governing board of which 15 out of 17 people are Soligas and every village has its own Sangha (council), through which the people solve their internal problems and fight for their external rights. Most of their barren land has now been restored to its fertility. Soliga candidates have also done well in elections and two tribal women are chiefs of the local council. Sudarshan has expressed his philosophy thus: "To eliminate disease you have to remove poverty. The only way to do that, I have realized, is to organize the people for their rights."

Sudarshan is also the convener of the Rejuvenate India Movement (RIM). RIM is a network of organizations and individuals working together for India's development. The goal is to catalyze a mass movement to strengthen democratic processes toward self-reliant development. RIM works by sponsoring volunteers who work full-time in a village on the felt needs of the villagers. The volunteers are selected and trained by the coordinating NGOs and work under their close supervision. RIM is impacting 30000 people in 100 villages in 11 states, through 65 sponsored volunteers and 25 partner NGOs.

### **Rain Harvesting: Tarun Bharat Sangh**

Water is precious in India especially in the state of Rajasthan, which receives scant rainfall. In last 4-5 decades, the few rivers that traversed this state almost vanished, or turned into monsoon drains. With these rivers, the people lost their only source of water.

Neglect of rivers, lack of recharging of aquifers, government apathy and massive deforestation led to this disaster. With no source of income, a lot of people migrated to bigger cities and took up unskilled jobs. This was the scenario when Rajendra Singh, a government employee fed up of his routine job decided to work for the rural communities. He joined Tarun Bharat Sangh, an NGO working for the rehabilitation of tribal people in Alwar district.

Singh realized that water is life and without its availability no other development is possible. He organized people to revive traditional water harvesting techniques by building small check dams - known as 'johads' along the flow of the river. These check dams allowed water to seep into the ground and recharge the aquifers that provided the water source for rivers. Besides reviving the rivers, the construction of check dams also provided employment to a lot of people in the area. Due to all these efforts, 4 rivers began to flow all year round. Fish life in these rivers was revived and slowly people started coming back to the villages to work on their farms, now that plenty of water was available. Singh and his team have so far constructed 3000 such structures, mostly in the arid zone of Rajasthan.

As it happens in India, the bureaucracy is schooled in the colonial tradition of ruling rather than working with people. Grass-root democracy is an alien concept in India. So, instead of development being a collaborative effort between people and the state, it's actually people versus the state. The irrigation department which deals water resources, or for that matter the district administration or the local politician, is really concerned not so much about the needs of people but how much money has to be spent on which

project. After all, an official's performance appraisal is based on how many big projects he has run or set up, not on helping people build johads.

In nutshell, the government in the beginning tried to prevent the construction of johads, by claiming state ownership on monsoon water and its management. The irrigation department slapped a case against Singh and his NGO, alleging attempt to stop the monsoon water, under section 55 and section 58 of the 1956 Rajasthan Irrigation and Drainage Act. Not to be left behind, the Forest Department imposed a penalty of Rs. 5,945 on the villagers; believe it or not, for planting trees. In the more than 15 years of working in the area, Singh have had to face 377 cases from the forest department; many of them because of the archaic anti-people forest laws we have.

Interestingly, once the first few Johads were built near Sariska in Alwar, and the river revived, the government surfaced from nowhere to assert its claim over the resources people had generated. The government started awarding fishing rights to contractors etc. The community resisted. Is the state the owner or the custodian of natural resources? Rajendra Singh fought hard on behalf of the local communities and continued his crusade. The non-governmental organisation Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS), which Rajendra Singh leads as its general secretary, has since 1985 built some 4,500 earthen check dams, or johads, to collect rainwater in some 850 villages in 11 districts in the State. The Tarun Bharat Sangh has also and helped revive five rivers that had gone dry. He was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 2001. The award is not only recognition of his creation and conservation efforts but also an acceptance of the traditional wisdom of the people of rural Rajasthan in this endeavor.

Rajendra Singh's activities are indeed multifarious. He has set up educational institutions, mahila sangathans, forest protection committees and now a brotherhood for water conservators - jal biradiri. The TBS conducts padayatras extensively in order to reach out to the people. It has initiated and participated in long marches to bring awareness among people.

Rashtriya Jal Biradari, a conglomeration of similar organizations, started a massive campaign to create awareness to save Jal-Jungle-Jameen from the first day of the Year 2003. To have a wider impact in the country, decision has been taken to organise several camps, conferences, and conventions in all over the country during this campaign and to hold marches and prabhat-pheris (morning walk) for the environment and natural resource conservation. This is gradually building a national awareness about the huge crisis and scarcity of water all over the country; and also creating alternative ways to build water harvesting structures, such as johad, taal, pal, bandh, checkdam, anicut in water draught areas.

## **An Overview**

A brief presentation of some of the community development projects in the preceding section has brought out many markers, which distinguishes the success stories from those of the failure stories. It is clear that the success mostly depends, not on the availability of monetary and material resources, but on human factors. In most of the cases it is the commitment, involvement, tenacity and perception of the person who initiates a developmental programme. In the atmosphere where social service is a big business, people are skeptical and guarded in their response. But once the community accepts the

bonafides of the people at the helm of the programme, it clicks. In an evaluation study of 8 major community based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes from different parts of the country, it was found that it is the perception of the genuine concern for people which makes a leader acceptable to the community (Dalal, Kumar & Gokhale, 2000). Charismatic leadership is a critical factor in acceptance of a programme and grassroots participation and in that programme. In the programmes discussed these were the people like Anna Saheb, Pandurang Shastri, Sudarshan and Rajendra Singh who are the heroes of the success stories.

Another important marker, which has come out is the compatibility of the programme with local beliefs, practices and aspirations. The phenomenal success of Swadhyay is a good example of how a programme can thrive on local beliefs and social practices. Once a programme strikes a positive cord with what feelings of the people, it gathers its own momentum. Such programmes are self-evolving and self-sustainable. Participation is a problem when a programme with a rigid structure is imposed from outside. Such programmes take people as beneficiaries, not as partners; as it happens in most of the government programmes. Yet another factor is the perception of fairness and justice. Any programme which aims to cater to only one section of deserving population will only create more cleavages, mistrust and conflicts. Programmes which have transparency and openness are joined by a greater number of people than those controlled by a handful of people at the apex level. In other words, it is the democratization of programmes which creates its mass base.

In the following sections, these issues are further discussed in the light of the literature review. The focus is primarily on the psychological factors which impede and that which facilitate the success of a community programme.

### **Psychosocial Barriers to Community Participation**

Community participation is contingent on a wide range of considerations: social, political, economic, historical, etc. All these are valid contenders for a serious discussion on augmenting community participation. Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen (2002) have argued for instrumental and intrinsic significance of participation. Their plea is that democratic participation is very essential in the Indian context where feudal system and mindset still prevails. Dalal, Kumar and Gokhale (1999) found in their evaluation study of CBR programmes that community participation was generally low when the programme was seen as imposed from outside. People expected services and benefits to be delivered rather than working towards mobilization of available resources. In an extensive evaluation study of fifteen social sector schemes in two districts (Saharanpur and Varanasi) of U.P., Pant and Pandey (2004) noted that the main cause of the poor implementation of the schemes was low involvement of programme functionaries, particularly of the beneficiaries. The challenge before social scientists is to understand the barriers in community participation and bring about change in perception and interactional patterns in a community. Social scientists have to think about the factors facilitating community participation.

### **Oppressive Village Environment**

Many community development programmes view villages as cohesive functional units. Village community, for example, in WHO literature (see Stirrat, 1996) is presumed to be an integrated, peaceful, mutually caring society, which lack resources and technology for development. Such a glossy picture does not project the realities of Indian villages which are fragmented along the lines of caste, religion, lineage, etc. There is often mutual mistrust among various groups who are competing for scarce resources. In villages, 10 percent of the rich and influential control about 90 percent of the village resources. They control most of the development funds in villages. Any serious effort towards involving the underprivileged is considered as a threat to their hegemony and privileged status. In a large number of places, a long history of exploitation and oppression has numbed the spirit of the downtrodden. They do not raise questions, nor do they demand participation in the programmes which affect their lives. Paternalistic and humiliating relationships are embedded in the social structure, in which the wealthy patronize the servile poor, who in exchange of charity have to show proper gratitude to those who paid them low wages and perpetrated exploitation (Petras, 1997).

Indian villages are plagued by criminalization and power politics. The criminalization is so rampant in eastern UP that an estimate suggests that 70 percent of the elected block heads have criminal cases pending against them. These people have their clout at all levels and it is difficult to keep them out of the community services (Dalal & Pande, 1997). They would grab all opportunities to hog the limelight and run community programmes as their personal ventures. The pretence of community participation provides a cover to their self-serving vested interests.

However, with greater media exposure (TV particularly), political awareness and with rising expectations of a better quality life, Indian villages are ushering into a new era. There is now greater resistance to injustice everywhere. The disadvantaged people are realigning to claim their share in the development-pie. They are not prepared to accept the hegemony of feudal masters, resulting in frequent clashes within the community. The widening gap between the rich and poor is unleashing the forces of realignment and fragmentation, which are operating simultaneously. People are demanding accountability and transparency. This awakening is providing a new meaning to community participation.

### **Culture of Dependence**

It is widely believed that Indians in general, and the poor and underprivileged in particular, look outward for solutions of their problems. People endure suffering in the hope that one day a saviour will appear on the scene and will set things right. Such a saviour syndrome leads to a passive wait for some influential person to arrive from outside, take charge of the situation, and, as if with some magic wand, transform the situation and redeem their lives. People lose faith in their personal and collective efforts. All local initiatives are seen with scepticism and are ridiculed. On the contrary, an outside agency or individual, when perceived as resourceful, easily becomes a rallying point for the masses. The legends of avatars which have deep impressions on the Indian psyche only tend to reinforce people's faith in saviours.

The charitable societies and social welfare schemes of the government have reinforced this culture of dependence in the last five decades. The poor and underprivileged often get carried away by the promises and rhetoric. This situation is ideal for the rich and the powerful who, by default, get a free hand in planning and spending funds. They patronize and favour those who accept their authority. The exploiters feign saviours. Ramchandran (October 1, 1997) wrote in the Times of India, "*If the poor rise in revolt, there will be million mutinies. It is the faith that their status is predetermined, which makes them mute witness to rapacity perpetrated in their name. Because they never participate in programmes shaping their future, they never ask for accounts of hundreds of billions of rupees spent to elevate living standards of the poor.*" This culture of dependence is cultivated and sustained by engaging in rituals and rhetoric of participation that masks the real intentions of the vested interest.

Dube (1990) has, however, contested that people really manifest a saviour syndrome. He argued that much depends on the structure of opportunities. When the community people exhaust all possibilities and meet repeated failure, they learn to accept the consequences in a spirit of resignation. When non-traditional opportunities surface, or when new technical choices were available, the same people do not lack in trying out. These were often the poor and disadvantaged who learn to accept their fate and feel helpless. Again, when it comes to religious and social activities, people show initiative, independence and collective action in planning and implementation. The question is how this spirit of collective action can be harnessed for development programmes.

### **Crisis of Trust**

In the initial decades of Independence, the country's atmosphere was charged with hope and enthusiasm. People trusted that the Government bureaucracy would play an active role in the speedy socio-economic development of the country. Though the bureaucracy was never fully trusted, the turning point was the emergency imposed in the country in 1975. It resulted in disillusionment and loss of trust in bureaucracy in the eyes of common men (Beteille, 1999). The institutions of governance were no longer taken in high esteem. Lack of commitment and rampant corruption further eroded the public image of government bureaucracy. This mistrust in the Government machinery was evident in poor public response to the launching of the new social schemes and programmes.

The people also gradually learned not to trust the NGOs. In 1980s, there was a mushroom growth of NGOs. The Government delegated increasingly more responsibilities to these NGOs. To survive and to stay in competition, these NGOs often made tall promises. People frequently felt cheated by these NGOs. Today, the rural scenario is plagued by the environment of mistrust and apathy. In such an environment it is a very challenging task for a well-intended social organization to ensure public support and cooperation.

### **Disempowerment of Local Communities**

Despite all talks of decentralization and democratization of developmental programmes, nothing much has changed in the last 40-45 years. All programmes are initiated and planned at the higher level and even decisions about implementation are not taken at the

ground level. Tendency toward bureaucratization of programme implementation and tendency for centralized decision making deenergizes the field work and weakens people's involvement in the programme. It goes against the field level functionaries, including volunteers and social workers (Mehta, 1998), who find very limited role for them in the programme planning and execution.

In the present scenario of community development, there are two categories of people: the **doers**, which include programme functionaries, government officials, funders and privileged people; the other category is of those who are the **beneficiaries** – poor, disadvantaged, physically challenged, illiterate, etc. Stirrat (1996) argues that this divides the world into *us* and *they*, bound by an unequal power relationship. This is a colonial legacy in which the ruling class is justified to work for the unprivileged, and in the process maintain their hegemony. Empowerment becomes a misnomer in this context.

NGOs, which were expected to work in close cooperation with the local people have very often replaced the government but retained its working style. Their dependence on the government and funding agencies for survival made them more prone to accepting their dictates. The funding agencies on their part find it more convenient to deal with a small group of people at the apex level rather than dealing with the whole community. This is more true about the international funding agencies which control the utilization of their funds from a distance and owing to language and cultural barriers have to rely on few people who manage the project funds. Rural development projects in this sense are inimical to empowerment of the target communities.

### **Undermining Native Knowledge**

A lot of noise is often created about using local knowledge in developmental plans. People have been struggling against adverse life conditions for centuries and have developed their own survival strategies. The traditional systems of health care, education, communication, collective action are still integral part of their social life. This indigenous knowledge is contrasted against the expert knowledge which is provided by the developmental agencies.

In an incisive work, Bastian and Bastian (1996) have noted that despite all rhetoric, developmental activities are dominated by experts and consultants. These experts proscribe the solutions without any direct contact with the local realities. Often times these solutions are incompatible with the beliefs, practices and knowledge base of the target people. As Stirrat (1996) argued, people have their own ways of resisting the domination of outsiders and one powerful tool they employ is passivity. They shun interest in such developmental programmes and prefer to be observers than active participants. This explains why the same people actively engage in social and religious events but remain on the periphery when it comes to developmental programmes.

In recent years, participatory rural appraisal (PRA) is considered as an ideal tool to generate local knowledge and thus initiate a process of participation (Kumar, 2000). This tool is very widely used all over the country and has shown good results (Dalal, et.al. 1999, Padaki, 1995). However, PRA, and other such participatory practices change

nothing. The message implicit in PRA report is, “We have been there; we have talked to people and we know the facts”. Paradoxically, PRA can be used to legitimize the top-down approach to developmental planning (Stirrat, 1996).

## **Psychology of Community Participation**

Community participation is a buzzword today which no NGO working in the rural areas can ignore. It is part of the new orthodoxy in community development. It holds to democratic ideal of development by the people, for the people, and of the people. Participation evolves through the efforts of people who make participation happen. As a tool of development participation is rooted in faith in human intentions and ability to transform themselves. Participation is not merely for working on a programme but it is an intrinsic quality which connects people, giving them a sense of belonging. People’s participation for development has, thus important philosophical, social and practical underpinnings (Dalal, 999).

Most of the national and international agencies now profess participatory development and make it a major consideration in their project approvals. Such is the popularity of this term that it is now difficult to find a rural-based development project which does not claim to subscribe to participatory development. Despite so much emphasis, community participation is the most unrealized goal in a large number of developmental projects. This is a problem of perception and motivation of the people, and depends on the power relations within the community, and with the NGOs. Many

innovations are going on in the field which has provided insight about the process of participation and what works in different settings. Few such aspects are reviewed here.

### **Building on Local Resources**

Community participation which builds on local knowledge and resources is more likely to succeed than those which are dependent on the outside experts and specialists. Each community has its own strengths and it is important that this strength is acknowledged and incorporated in the village-sponsored development programmes. The physical and economic resources of the community are needed to be solicited for developmental activities. There are local groups working for the similar goals can be brought together. There is substantial time tested organic knowledge rooted in practical experience of the community. There are instances in which tribal people provided better skills and knowledge for reforestation than outside experts. The local knew about the climate, soil, and water, and could predict more accurately what will grow in that land. Given support and a free hand, often communities have shown their skills in pooling local resources and in taking a collective action.

There is a presumption in the development sector that traditional values and practices are antithetical to socio-economic development (MaxMuller, 1982; McClelland, 1961). This kind of myth has been perpetuated by many NGOs also who see lack of modern education and technology as a major cause of rural poverty and backwardness. (Tripathi, 2001, 2003). Traditional beliefs and attitudes are held as impediments in speedy development. Many western writers have considered tradition as the root cause of India's

low economic development (e.g., Max Weber, 1958). McClelland and Winter (1969) alleged that Hinduism does not encourage need for achievement and is responsible for low aspirations, which characterize Indian personality. This view is not only myopic but restricts the definition of development only in terms of economic progress. A holistic view of development should take into consideration the network of relationships which define the well-being of an individual in the Indian context.

### **Spirituality and Development**

Spirituality, in terms of transpersonal shared existence, motivates and allows losing one's ego and the negation of ego is facilitates expansion of the boundaries of self. It is often seen that when it comes to festivals and social events there is a spontaneous response from the whole community. People organize themselves to share responsibilities and work as a cohesive-motivated group. There is a long tradition of community participation in religious functions, which need to be harnessed for development activities. The strong spiritual faith of the community which binds them all together can be a guiding spirit for socio-economic development also. The social reformist movement of Anna Hazare in Maharashtra and Swadhyaya Movement of Shastri Athawale are the examples of using spirituality for development. The programmes build around religious centres in the community are very likely to be accepted by people as their own programmes. The danger is that one successful project cannot become a prototype, as all communities work in different social, political, economic, and cultural environment. As spirituality manifests in different ways in different communities, these communities must work out their own plans of sustainable development.

### **Leadership for Change**

The book "*The Waste Land*" by Nandita Roy (2003) unveiled the organic process of the emergence of village leaders. While some of the qualities of leaders and leadership are hard to teach but evolve out of experience, the training provided by NGOs to their staff should focus on recognizing and developing these qualities. For this purpose the literature developed to educate managers can also be adapted and simplified using local examples to help train village workers in leadership qualities and to enlarge their horizons.

The most effective workers that can change behavior and develop new consciousness within the poor and the marginalized are peer educators. Within an NGO's organizational structure, village workers are typically managed and lead by professionals, who come from a different value system and working style. The highly educated urban worker may have more knowledge, whereas the village worker has better ability to implement. It is the combination of the two that forms a whole. Both need to be respected by others and by each other.

### **NGOs-Government Collaboration**

The other problem to confront is raising this consciousness about developmental issues, without creating an antagonistic relationship between the public and various arms of the government. Doing so would undermine faith in the system and such lack of trust once established is very hard to overcome. Since we believe in a democratic system, creating

an antagonistic relationship is not a desired strategy or even an acceptable tactic (Gupta, 2003).

One of the domains where NGOs and the Government can work together is to revive the defunct schemes. If the Government schemes function effectively, there is no need of having other agencies to work. Unfortunately most of the Government programmes and schemes are defunct and their benefits do not reach the target population. This necessitates that the Government and people's organizations work towards the common goal of reactivating various schemes.

NGOs cannot function assuming that they are or can be an alternate to the government. They can, at best, be society's conscience and advocates of a civil society. The very long-term goal of any NGO should be self-termination or metamorphosis into a CBO. Once its target population has been empowered to negotiate its planning and development, an NGO becomes irrelevant. Fortunately for the NGOs, this eventuality is not of immediate concern, as the desired empowerment will take decades to complete even under the best of circumstances. In short, until the government can deliver basic services to all, the public has to respect the role of the NGO in developing a civil society

### **Participation as Self-development**

Voluntary participation in social movements and community work also need to be viewed as an opportunity for self-development. This aspect is relatively neglected in voluntary sector where the emphasis is on finding and preparing volunteers for social action. NGOs

also emphasize their contribution to the society and have little understanding of how this very participation is transforming the person. S.Roy (2001) in his book 'Beyond Ego's Domain' observed, "Public order is threatened by the split between man's concern for his own good and that of the good of others." (p.5)

As Giri (2001, 2004) has argued self-development is a critical factor in sustaining voluntarism for any community action. Unless the volunteers have sense of personal growth, they are often found pursuing parallel goals – one for the larger community, the other for their own self. Any conflict between the two surely jeopardizes the larger community goals. Aristotle and Gandhi asked people to transcend self-interests for public good. S.Roy (2001) discussed in his characteristic way the Indian ethos where following one's dharma (duty) results in a growth pattern. This individual growth continues from one life to another and forms the basis for working for common good in the Indian tradition. . .

That self-growth is an important concern is evident from the immense popularity of swadhyaya movement where swadhyayis saw public work as means to self-education and self-purification. Giri (2005) has argued that what Jesus and Gandhi did was not only meant to alleviate the suffering of others, it also played a part in their self-realization and self-development. It was a source of creative pleasure and happiness for them. If such opportunities for self-development are not identified and properly nurtured, then the actors of voluntary action may feel frustrated and dissatisfied. The recent initiative in

voluntary sector for capacity building training and creating environment for self-growth are pointers in that direction.

### **Thinking Ahead**

One can deduce from the preceding discussion that as an academic discipline psychology has still a long way to go to deal with the macro-issues of community development. Indian psychologists need to more actively engage in understanding and intervening in rapid social and economic changes that Indian society is witnessing in recent years. Psychology as a science of mind and behaviour is better equipped to manipulate and measure micro-level variables. The research methodology of psychology is modeled on the paradigms of physical sciences, which is inadequate to study complex social processes. Though this scenario is slowly changing and psychologists are increasingly engaging in action research and are employing methods of other social sciences.

Apart from methodological inadequacies, the academic training of Indian psychologists does not impart in-depth understanding of Indian culture and society. There is little in their training to prepare them to play a catalyst role in bringing about desired social change. In most of the universities it is not a disciplinary requirement. There are few instances in which psychologists were called upon to actively participate in nation building (D.Sinha, 1990). The other social sciences – economics, anthropology and sociology have their role carved out in various government bodies and developmental agencies.

The paradox is that psychology has a rich knowledge base to change perceptions, attitudes and motivation of people whose participation is desired in the field. Psychological theories and practices can provide a good deal of insight in cultural and individual blocks in collective action. A large number of developmental projects fail because psychological aspects are not taken into cognizance. Among the developmental experts there is a growing realization that psychologists are better placed to implement attitude change programmes, both at individual and group level. In the programmes pertaining to population control, health awareness, primary education, environment, etc., attitudes of the participating groups is critical in predicting their success.

It can also be mentioned here that programme evaluation reports also need to focus on psychological consequences. Most of the success indicators are in terms of number of beneficiaries, meeting targets and utilization of funds. The indicators, such as group cohesiveness, resulting cleavages and mistrust, alienation and bitterness, and instances of social violence are generally not part of an evaluation reports. These are the factors which become major impediments in sustainable development. Since psychologists are rarely on evaluation teams, these aspects are often ignored, or are handled by those who have no qualification.

Training in psychology needs to be reoriented to meet the challenges of the contemporary society. There should be provision in the course curriculum to familiarize students to Indian social reality, engaging them in field experiments and encouraging them to work with NGOs and other service organizations. Unless these are built-in part of the

psychology training, psychologists will remain on margin, as far as socio-economic development of the country is concerned. What B.N. Mukherjee (1980) stated in the Second Survey in this context is still very relevant. As he observed, improvement in the training program will equip to some extent the future generation psychologists in India in their attempts to effect social change. Better types of training in applied social sciences are likely to help the young generation by way of formulating realistically the problem and research questions of practical importance, finding new techniques of behaviour modification and social change and reformulating a more comprehensive theory of social change than the one currently available.

It is important in this context that opportunities are created for universities-community interaction, where academic departments take up social-developmental projects. There is a real dearth of studies to understand community work within the Indian context. There is need for social work to draw from difference social sciences and build up a theoretical framework as a basis for practice (Siddiqui, 1997). The field is vast to accommodate all interest groups. An ideal model would be University-NGO-Community interface, in which all three work in unison toward enriching community life. The universities can provide theory and knowhow; NGOs take the responsibility of field operations and community provides logistic support. It would lead to mutual learning and pooling of resources to ensure success of a programme. There are many instances where such a praxis model is in operation and. psychologists are actively participating in the developmental activities. Properly conceived and implemented, community interventions based on such tripartite participation can not only synergize developmental activities but

also unleash the creative potential of the participating groups. Herein lies the future of psychology as a vibrant and socially relevant discipline in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. .

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