

COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

A Study of two Approaches

by
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INTRODUCTION

India's first television experimental service was inaugurated on 15 September 1959. Radio Broadcasting had started in 1927, long before the country achieved political independence. Extension work began in the fifties. All through this long period the discussion has gone on as to how communication may be harnessed to the needs and imperatives of development.

The statistics of communication growth are impressive. At the end of 1986 the country had 183 television transmitters and 11 main centres, 86 radio centres and 162 broadcast transmitters, and a satellite communications network, INSAT - 1B. The extension complex is massive, and covers all regions in India. But the discussion of how communication may be harnessed to the needs of development continues.

Since 1947, the year India became independent, there has been tremendous progress in the areas of technology and agricultural production. But almost half the population still live below the poverty line. An official document entitled Towards an Approach to the Fifth Plan stated:

Economic development in the last two decades has resulted in an all-round increase in the per capita income. The proportion of the poor, defined as those living below a basic minimum standard of consumption, has slightly come down. Yet the absolute number of people living below the poverty line today is just as large as it was two decades ago. And these people living in abject poverty constitute between 1/3 and 1/2 of all Indian citizens (quoted in Kurien, 1974, p.14).

The Draft of the Sixth Five Year Plan (1978-83) declared that "planning must be geared to attack the unsolved problems of poverty, unemployment, inequality and structural backwardness more directly and efficiently" (p.35, emphasis added).

The official strategies of development and development communication have not made any appreciable change in the situation of poverty, especially rural poverty.

The widening gap between the rich and the poor gave rise to nation-wide public protests in the early seventies. Protest has

indeed been a way of life in post-Independence India, but this time it led to the rise of a number of groups and movements, committed to the cause of the poor and the oppressed. These social action groups or people's movements were more than a passing phenomenon. They have continued to function, especially in the depressed rural areas in many parts of India.

These groups are committed to work with the people rather than for the people. The educated young people from the middle classes, who were in many cases responsible for the formation of these groups, called themselves amateurs and not leaders, and saw their role as an enabling one in the empowering of the powerless. They were committed to the development of people, but their understanding of development was radically different from that of the government. So were the strategies they employed. Prominent among such strategies was the use of alternative communication media which drew upon traditional resources and the culture of the people. The popular theatre in particular was used widely. The aim was to build up awareness and develop the consciousness of oppressed people.

A statement which came out of a consultation of church leaders and social activists in Bangalore, India, in May 1984, contained the following description of social action groups:

Broadly defined, social action groups are such groups which by their life and action are linked to the struggle of marginalised sections such as dalits, tribals, women, unorganised workers, the landless and other oppressed sections. They work towards a radical change of the exploitative structures and for achieving greater justice for and participation of the marginalised groups.

In their commitment to basic structural change they are different from groups engaged in traditional forms of charity and in development projects. There are action groups which use traditional forms of service as a springboard for launching into larger struggles of justice.⁽¹⁾

Committed as they are to the total liberation of people, these groups go beyond the "growth" and "dependency" paradigms in their understanding of development. The following description

1. The complete statement and a report of the consultation were published in Religion and Society, Bangalore, December 1984. I take this from the Ecumenical Press Service (EPS), Geneva, 7 July 1984.

of "authentic" development by Denis Goulet captures the essence of this concept:

Authentic development aims at the full realisation of human capabilities, men and women become makers of their own histories, personal and societal. They free themselves from every servitude imposed by nature or by oppressive systems, they achieve wisdom in their mastery over nature and over their own wants, they create new webs of solidarity based not on domination but on reciprocity among themselves, they achieve a rich symbiosis between contemplation and transforming action, between efficiency and free expression. This total concept of development can perhaps best be expressed as the "Human ascent" - the ascent of all men in their integral humanity, including the spiritual, economic, biological, psychological, social, cultural, ideological, mystical and transcendental dimensions (1971, pp.206f.).

One of the most comprehensive articulations of what such "authentic" and "alternative" development means, made by the Dag Hammarskjold Project on Development and International Cooperation, is to be found in the book Another Development: Approaches and Strategies:

Need-oriented, that is being geared to meeting human needs, both material and non-material. It begins with the satisfaction of the basic needs of those, dominated and exploited, who constitute the majority of the world's inhabitants, and ensures at the same time the humanisation of all human beings by the satisfaction of their needs for expression, creativity, equality and conviviality and to understand and master their own destiny.

Endogenous, that is stemming from the heart of each society, which defines in sovereignty its values and the vision of its future. Since development is not a linear process, there could be no universal model, and only the plurality of development patterns can answer to the specificity of each situation.

Self-reliant, that is implying that each society relies primarily on its own strength and resources in terms of its members' energies and its natural and cultural environment. Self-reliance clearly needs to be exercised at national and international (collective self-reliance) levels but it requires its full meaning only if rooted at local level, in the praxis of each community.

Ecologically sound, that is, utilizing rationally the resources of the biosphere in full awareness of the potential of local ecosystem as the global and local outer limits imposed on present and future generations. It implies the equitable access to

resources by all as well as careful, socially relevant technologies.

Based on structural transformation: they are required, more often than not, in social relations, in economic activities and in their spatial distribution, as well as in the power structure, so as to realize the conditions of self-management and participation in decision-making by all those affected by it, from the rural or urban community to the world as a whole, without which the above goals could not be achieved.

These five points are organically linked. Taken in isolation from each other, they would not bring about the desired result. For development is seen as a whole, as an integral, cultural process, as the development of every man and woman and the whole of man and woman. Another development means liberation. (Quoted in Dickinson, 1983, pp.34f.).

The purpose of development, then in such authentic alternative programmes as are undertaken by these social action groups, is not limited to economic growth but to growth in all its aspects. Development becomes a progressive and highly charged human effort to transform and transcend an unequal situation. It is essentially a human effort - and that implies a programme based on participation. There is a mutuality of purpose, and the process of development takes place on an inter-dependent and inter-actional basis. Development is not imposed from outside. On the other hand the oppressed themselves take the initiative and shape the course of development. Thus participation and dialogue are key elements in this process. Education plays a vital role in it. Through literacy programmes the oppressed learn to delineate for themselves not only the values that have been foisted on them but also their own internalised "false" values. They learn to demythify dominant beliefs and systems of thought. They also learn the root causes of their oppression and of ways to break out of what Paulo Freire calls a "culture of silence" to a more complete existence.

In this process of development, communication has a crucial part to play. The popular theatre, songs, music, story-telling techniques, audio-visual aids and simulation games contribute to and learn from the process. My study will focus on the role of communication media in this process of development, especially the role of the popular theatre and its contribution to authentic development.

My thesis is that, whereas the typical top-down hierarchical models of development communication have been largely

ineffective, the dialogical and participatory processes of communication, initiated and practised by the social action groups, have met with a measure of success, and that this success is due to the fact that people are themselves involved in the process and the process is more important than the medium or the content, in the sense that it shapes both.

The study is located in the complex of Indian reality. Within it I attempt to examine the official transactions with development communication on the one hand and the approach of the social action groups on the other. Ideally one should study both in the same villages or localities. But by their very nature the groups can only work at the micro-level, with particular sections of marginalised people. The state concentrates on more or less clearly defined occupational or other sectors, outside its general communication activities meant for all citizens.

The study may be divided into two parts. The first five chapters make up the first part which provides the necessary background information and locates the study in its political, economic and social context. Chapter 1 takes a look at the development debate, examines the major theories related to development and underdevelopment, and reviews a few specifically Indian studies. Chapter 2 focuses on communication and development, and traces the evolution of the dominant paradigm of development communication, from the heyday of diffusion theories through the MacBride and post-MacBride phases. Chapter 3 deals with the history of development communication in India and includes a review of literature related to development communication research. Chapter 4 is a study of culture and underdevelopment in India and analyses the role of the dominant culture in the perpetuation of the caste system and the oppression of the masses. The social action groups practise a strategy of cultural action, and Chapter 5 is devoted to a study of this relatively new phenomenon.

Chapters 6,7 and 8 form the second part of the dissertation, and they are based on my field study in the state of Tamil Nadu in India. The study in Chapter 6, of the process of the production of a Doordarshan development-oriented film, is followed in Chapter 7 by an examination of the officially organised flow of communications in the socio-economic context of horticultural production in Ootacamund, Nilgiris. In Chapter 8 I concentrate on the work of a social action group, mainly the group's use of the

popular theatre. Together these chapters attempt a comparative study of development communication as generally practised in India under government and non-government auspices and illustrate the use of alternative communication models to promote authentic development.

The situation varies from state to state, even from district to district within the same state, but given the overall reality of poverty and underdevelopment, such variations do not affect the thesis that development communication must involve people and that when people are involved, the very process of communication motivates and empowers them to pursue their own models of development. The alternative process of communication, in other words, is a process of conscientisation which can lead to liberation.

CHAPTER I

THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

The Development Debate⁽¹⁾

Over the last two decades, the concept of development has undergone radical changes, both through theoretical reformulations and the process of practical implementation. These changes were brought about because of dissatisfaction with "conventional" theories of development. For example, the failure of the "modernisation" theory to close the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" and the increasing concern over its role in the spread of Western culture, values and institutions led to reformulations of the theory.

The genesis of these theories is clearly related to specific world conditions and reflect the changing power alignments. For example, the heyday of dependency theory was in the seventies, when there was a concerted effort by nations in the developing world to protect their interests. The role of the United Nations in these theoretical reformulations cannot be underestimated. Dependency theory voiced the concerns of the nascent developing world, and expressed the determination of newly independent nations to affirm and safeguard their sovereignty.

The concerns of development have changed over the years. Beginning with an emphasis that was couched solely in economic terms of "growth" and productivity, these now accommodate both the "quantitative" and "qualitative" dimensions of development. Implicit in any theory of development is a commitment to a certain set of values, and these values act as a guide to the process of

1. There is a book with this title by Charles Elliott (1971) which deals with development as a Christian concern. In the first part of the book Elliott has chapters on five distinct emphases in the development discussion: development as growth in income, as progress towards social goals, as change in economic and social structure, as liberation, and as humanization. But these emphases do not exist in isolation from one another, and I subsume them in my study under broader categories.

development and determine its nature and scope. Such values also reflect certain political, economic and ideological stances. It is important, therefore, to realise that development is not value-free, and developmentalists even less so. The neutrality of development is largely a myth. By being consciously committed to a certain pattern of development, and by cultivating and reinforcing particular methods, alternative strategies of development are either excluded or contained. They are made to fit the existing dominant conception of the "what" and "how" of development. And in making this choice, the means and the ends of development are prescribed.

There is no single, unified theory of development. Theories vary in their aims and objectives and in the methods employed. But they do have certain common features, as for example, their commitment, however shallow, to the goals of economic growth and social justice. But the emphasis varies, and reflects value orientations.

The theories of development act as a guide to the understanding of situations and give direction and orientation to the "practice" of development. It is important to appreciate this close relationship between the theory and the practice of development. That relationship unifies and gives meaning to the whole development undertaking.

In this chapter, I propose to deal with some of the main theories of development, trace their genesis, growth, and the changing contours of this growth. Theories of development and underdevelopment have signally contributed to the orientations and the practice of both development and development communication, and that is why I begin with them.

Modernisation: Inheritance, Essence and Pre-eminence

The most influential theories related to development are those collectively known as the theory of modernisation. Over the past thirty years it has had an enormous influence over most developing areas of the world. It was, for all practical purposes, adopted as the strategy of development in the developing world. Its continuing attraction to governments is undoubtedly due to the emphasis on "economic growth" and "productivity". A brief introduction to its theoretical precursors and its evolution towards paradigmatic pre-eminence will help contextualise the study.

The theoretical pedigree of modernisation theory can be traced to the sociological investigations into the transformation of Western society from a traditional to a modern one. The contributions towards the formation of their essentially structural-functionalist character were made by Weber, Durkheim, Tonnies, Marx and Spencer on the one hand, and Parsons on the other who concretised its ethos.⁽²⁾

Among the major contributions to the theory of modernisation are Weber's concept of the Protestant Ethic and economic rationality, Durkheim's notion of mechanic vs. organic solidarity, Tonnies' concept of Gemeinschaft vs. Gessellschaft, Marx's investigation into the transition of traditional society to an industrial one, Spencer's schema of the evolutionary growth of society from undifferentiated homogeneity to differentiated heterogeneity, and Parson's concept of pattern variables.

Although there were significant differences between some of these theorists ⁽³⁾, they were in agreement that the essential characteristics of industrial society were vastly different from those of the feudal society of the past, both in terms of institutions and societal relationships.

A predominantly "money" economy and structural differentiation in the division of labour in the various institutions of society were held up as characterising the shift from feudalism to industrial capitalism. The structural-functionalists conceived of society as consisting of a system of interdependent parts. The focus of investigation was the totality of the system, not any particular part of it. Thus, for example, one could understand the political or economic systems only by relating these to the dynamics of the larger system. In addition, it was felt that each part of the system had a particular function to perform and, in the last instance, this function was to maintain the system's equilibrium. Society, therefore, consisted of various units that were mutually compatible. Adaptation and

2. As for example in the notion of self-equilibrating systems, that of functional specialisation of structures and the normative regulation of change. Some of Parson's sociological contributions are implicit in the Modernisation theory.

3. To take an example, Weber characterised the orientation towards capitalist activity in terms of human values and attitudes whereas Marx saw capitalism as a form of class society based on the logic of accumulation.

integration were essential for the maintenance of the system. The analysis of social change, however, was not given the priority it deserved.

The primacy of the structural-functionalist paradigm was established soon after the end of the Second World War. The United States of America emerged from the war, both politically and economically, as the strongest nation in the world. British and French monopoly over large parts of the world economy had come to an end after the long and financially debilitating war. The task of reconstructing the "free world" was assumed by the United States, and resulted in the formation of two dominant aid policies - the Marshall Plan which was specifically created for the reconstruction of "free" Europe, and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund formed in order to provide short- and long-term loans to developing countries.⁽⁴⁾ The creation of the United Nations and its specialised subsidiary bodies like the FAO and the UNCTAD during the post-war years were also to a certain extent responsible for the increasing acceptance of the policy and practice of Modernisation.

By the early fifties, a number of independent nations had emerged in the developing world. Development was a key priority for most of these countries. Lacking both the finance and the technology for self-generating economic growth, the promise of modernisation through the assistance of exogenous factors had for them an irresistible appeal. The modernisation paradigm was thus transplanted into the vastly different social, political and economic environments of the developing world.

The Way to Modernisation

A number of assumptions accompanied the paradigm of modernisation. Foremost among these was the belief in the inevitability of development according to the standards set by the West. "Developmentism", as it used to be described, is akin to evolutionism. Advanced capitalist society was seen as a natural end-state that had been reached by following the right "stages of growth". It was the societal counterpart of the Darwinist

4. Both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank or IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) were created at the Bretton Woods Conference, New Hampshire, 1944. The Marshall Plan was launched in 1947, and led to the European Recovery Programme.

conceptions of evolutionary growth and change. The underdeveloped countries had missed the opportunities for development. It was partly due to the fault of colonial governments which had provided economic and political infrastructures but had not fostered the right attitudes to go with such structures. Eisenstadt exemplifies this attitude:

Here existed a basic contradiction; on the one hand, attempts were made to establish broad, modern, administrative political and economic settings, while on the other, these changes were to be limited and based on relatively unchanged subgroups and on traditional attitudes and loyalties (1964, p.313).

But the major reason for underdevelopment lay with the people themselves. Underdevelopment was caused by traditional socio-economic structures and anachronistic attitudes. Traditional societies were characterised by particularistic, ascriptive, subsistence-oriented, non-rational behaviour, and traditional people lacked the capacity for "empathy" and the "need for achievement" that were key elements in the modern psyche. It was felt that through an infusion of Western values and attitudes and through the replication of Western institutions, developing countries would come out of their stagnancy and their inertia on to the road to modernisation.

Modernisation theorists thus advocated the need to change the psychological framework of the peasants and to modernise their societal structures. Development would be brought about by a "diffusion" of attitudes, innovation and finance. The process of diffusion would be geared to affect all levels, the individual and psychological, the institutional and organisational, and the technological and financial.

The Modern Temperament

The psychological variant of modernisation theory suggested that there was a correlation between psychological modernity and modern behaviour. It was felt that the person who had the "right" attitudes was invariably the person who contributed to, and gained from, his or her interactions with the wider society. It is important to note that although psychological variants were given emphasis, the ultimate aim of these theorists was to mobilise people and make them receptive to the structural differentiations that were

supposed to accompany the overall process of change.⁽⁵⁾ Psychological modernisation was not an isolated phenomenon; it was a functional requirement for the modernisation of society. Inkeles and Smith reflect this attitude when they conclude after their 1974 study that their "research has produced ample evidence that the attitude and value change defining individual modernity are accompanied by changes in behaviour precisely of the sort which, we believe, give meaning to, and support, those changes in political and economic institutions which lead to the modernisation of nations" (1974, p.312).

In order to specify the main traits of the successful entrepreneur's psyche, McClelland, for example, believed that "need for achievement" (N-ach) was of critical importance. He tried to prove that there was a correlation between modernisation in society and the incidence of N-achievement in people. Based on Weber's concept of the Protestant Ethic, N-achievement was described as the "desire to do well, not so much for the sake of personal recognition or prestige, but to attain an inner feeling of personal accomplishment" (1971, p.84). Lerner, on the other hand, felt that what was missing in the traditional psyche was the ability to "empathise". A person who possessed an empathetic predisposition could relate to all aspects of a changing environment. The empathetic person had the propensity to be future-oriented and would most usually demonstrate "risk-taking" behaviour. In Lerner's words, the empathetic person was one who could "see himself in the other person's situation".

The psychological theorists of modernisation also felt that psychological modernisation could be validly measured. There was a combination of opinions and behaviour that characterised the modern psyche. By erecting a scale that accommodated the essential attitudes characteristic of the traditional and modern psyches, it was possible to measure the existence or non-existence of individual and societal modernisation. A number of sophisticated measuring scales were erected, especially in the studies of communications and the diffusion of innovations. It was felt that if a majority of the

5. This is a familiar theme in most of the psychological theories of modernisation. Lerner, McClelland and Inkeles/Smith have consistently stressed the importance of psychological change to bring about structural change.

population scored well on the measurement scales, it would be an indication of the extent of modernisation in a society.

The Economics of "Compositional" Change

The economic basis of the theories of modernisation was advanced primarily by Rostow. In his formulation of the stages of growth, he echoed the unilinear conceptions of growth propounded by evolutionists like Spencer. He believed that a country's economy would take off, once it had reached a "critical" stage. This critical stage would be reached when a combination of factors, like a rise in the rate of productive investment, the development of a manufacturing sector and the emergence of a balanced socio-economic and political infrastructure, would spark off self-sustaining growth. According to him, it was the symbiotic relationship between these factors that set in motion a chain of reactions in the productive realm of society that would eventually lead to steady growth. But in order to reach the stage of "take-off", Rostow felt that it was necessary to institutionalise the authority of a group of people who had the capacity to innovate and initiate efforts at production.

Initial changes in method require that some group in society have the will and the authority to install and diffuse new production techniques; and a perpetuation of the growth processes requires that such a leading group expand in authority and that the society as a whole respond to the impulses set up by the initial changes (1971, p.175).

Smelser conceived of growth not in terms of stages but in terms of increased specialisation through structural differentiation. He believed that growth would take place through the modernisation of technology, the commercialisation of agriculture, industrialisation and urbanisation. Specialisation was the key element to facilitate change. It was through the process of specialisation, for example, that the traditional features of the family in relationship to the economy would undergo a radical change, which would effectively separate the spheres of work and leisure and bring about a modern economic system based upon "the independent power of money to command the movement of goods and services". Like the psychological theorists of modernisation, Smelser too believed that it was possible to measure the extent of modernisation - that one "may classify underdeveloped economies according to how far they have moved along this line of

differentiation...the concept of structural differentiation provides a yardstick to indicate the distance which the economic structure has evolved towards modernisation (1971, p.263).

Organisations like the World Bank, IMF and the UN and philanthropic bodies like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, were instrumental in promoting and establishing the practice of development based on theories of modernisation. Through a variety of means, as for example, the establishment of agricultural colleges, granting of long- and short-term loans, involvement in development policy-making and the diffusion of expertise, information and technology, these agencies propounded a Western version of development, based on the canons of increased economic productivity and the virtues of a consumer society.

The main thrust of modernisation theories was to promote a particular version of society based on the example set by the advanced capitalist countries of the West. A number of assumptions lay behind such theories of modernisation. Among them were the belief in the inevitability of historical change according to the path followed by the West, the view that underdevelopment was due to predominantly internal causes - structural and psychological - and the belief in the "trickle-down" theory of growth. The approach to development sought to promote production rather than distribution, and "consensus" rather than structural transformation.

The Critiques of Modernisation Theory

The prevailing orthodoxy of modernisation theories was challenged for a number of reasons from the late sixties onwards. Primarily the challenge came out of the persistence of poverty in large parts of the world and what was perceived as the failure of the theory and practice of modernisation to deal with the mounting situation of inequality. In India, for example, the much-publicised Green Revolution had actually led to increased inequalities⁽⁶⁾ and

6. The Green Revolution refers to the enhanced productivity of land resulting from the application of agricultural inputs like high-yielding varieties of seeds, modern fertilisers and pesticides, and irrigation. Strictly the term means the end-product - increased production - as well as the process - the application of inputs. In a study on "The Impact of the Green Revolution on the Weaker Sections" Oommen concludes:

to the deterioration of the ecology of crop-cultivation. The most influential attacks on modernisation were made by Andre Gunder Frank (1972). He argued that the theories of modernisation had bypassed the international framework of relationships which was chief among the historical and the contemporary causes for underdevelopment. He singled out the colonial and neo-colonial dimensions of underdevelopment and blamed the modernists for being a-historical and ethnocentric. According to him, the unilinear conception of change was based on an entirely one-sided interpretation and it was an attempt to replicate Western institutions and ways of life at the expense of autonomous growth and indigenous solutions.

According to the modernists, developing countries had to follow a universal path of societal evolution. Development could be measured by comparing the structures of a modernising society with those of modernised ones. The indices used for measuring development, like per capita income, modern attitudes, democratic political structures, etc., were now criticised for not being able to capture the real factors favouring change in the developing world. A rise in per capita income, it was argued, could not account for the distribution of income; it was used to cover up for the large inequalities of growth. The traditional-modern continuum of the modernists also came under attack for misrepresenting the essential histories of different developing societies, and for denying the existence of complex social formations and diverse civilisations. The modernists were taken to task for propounding a particular interpretation of the past, involving a selection and valuation, and for presenting it as a universal phenomenon. Modernisation theories were also criticised for ignoring the relationships that existed between the traditional and modern sectors of society and for underestimating the contributions made by the traditional sector to development and growth.

The obsession with attitudinal change came in for criticism from several quarters. McClelland's concept of N-achievement, for

The small peasants do not benefit from the Green Revolution as much as the big farmers and agricultural labourers. Not only is the disparity between the small peasant and the agricultural labourer narrowed, but the former is increasingly getting pauperised and tends to join the ranks of labour. To this extent the class polarisation in the countryside is accentuated (1982, p.335).

example, was criticised for being "psychologically reductionist", that is, for explaining the complex character of social structural transitions, in terms of psychological variables (Bernstein, 1971). Taylor (1979) pointed out that the "entrepreneurial ethic" as presented in McClelland's study in India was not a sufficient factor for instigating economic growth. The absence of the condition for its realisation, i.e., a market-oriented industrial sector, would make all attempts at inculcating N-achievement a necessary failure.

Another criticism of the psychological variants of modernisation theory is that they have neglected the real variables that condition growth in developing countries. As Griffin notes, "If in many countries the rate of growth of agriculture is too low, the explanation should be sought not in the motives, values and behaviour of the inhabitants of rural areas, but in land tenure conditions, in the distribution of economic power and in government policy" (1973, p.17). The measurement scales used in psychological tests were found to be inadequate and contradictory on occasions. For all their complexity, their data and their designs have not been very useful for furthering the thesis of psychological modernity. Joshi has pointed out that traditional attitudes, like fatalism, did "not imply surrender of human initiative or refusal to explore options and exercise choice. It (fatalism) implies recognition of the futility or limitations of human initiative under certain circumstances, or realisation that the choices in a given situation are extremely limited if not absent. There is neither self-denigration nor self-pity in such fatalism but only an appreciation of given realities" (1980-81, pp.455-484).

The economics of the modernisation theory also came under attack. The most trenchant attack came from Gunder Frank who said that developing countries were enmeshed in an international capitalist framework of relationships which effectively reinforced conditions of dependency and unequal development. He also pointed out that the nature of aid and capitalist relationships in general was exploitative and involved a process by which surplus was siphoned off from the developing countries to the developed. Rostow's "stages of growth" thesis was criticised for being an absolute version of societal development, and for denying the fact that growth can occur in different forms and directions, not only towards a version of Western capitalist society. On a more specific level, his concept of "take-off" was criticised for being

non-verifiable and mechanistic. His contention, that society would take off into self-sustaining growth after it had reached a "critical" level, implied an automatic inevitability towards economic growth in a unilinear direction. His stress on accumulation and entrepreneurship would only foster the ethics of Western capitalist society in the developing world, and promote "elitism".

McClelland, Rostow, Hagen and a number of the other modernisation theorists have consistently advocated a style of development that is directed towards the formation of a minority elite, rather than to distributing the benefits of development to the majority. It was expected that a "trickle-down" would take place but, as history has demonstrated, that was a futile hope. The doctrine of individualism was not necessarily consistent with the needs of developing societies.

Smelser has also come in for criticism. His concept of structural differentiation has been accused of propagating the replication of Western institutions, life-styles and attitudes in the developing societies. On a more specific level, his theory of structural differentiation and its role in the transition of a traditional to a modern society, could not account for the "mechanisms" of transition (Smith, 1973). Although, he does mention the role of conflict and resolution, he does not go into the reasons for conflict, the complexities of power politics and the dominant cause of socio-economic change.

The notion of functional interdependence has also come under attack for over-emphasising "harmony" rather than conflict. It was pointed out that the role of human actors in the drama of change was subordinated to the needs and functional requirements of the social system.⁽⁷⁾ Smelser's concept of structural differentiation was not able to capture the subtleties of change; it absolutised the changes in roles and relationships in the context of modernisation.

But the most damaging criticism levelled against modernisation theory in general focused on its inability to account for the variations in the process of change (Long, 1977). This is partly due to its functionalist heritage and its attempt to provide what Smith calls "... a unified theory of change and order, which

7. This is a general criticism, and is found in most critiques of structural-functionalism.

will encompass in one framework the varied and changing structures of society"(1973, p.1). As will be seen later on in this chapter and throughout this study, modernisation inherently leans towards the maintenance of forces of order rather than towards the unleashing of the forces of change.

Second Thoughts from the Field

The inadequacies and the contradictions of modernisation have been documented by a number of social scientists, both in the developed and developing nations. In India, for example, a number of studies have dealt with both the theoretical shortcomings and the practical limitations of modernisation.

Myrdal (1968) was one of the earliest critics of the modernisation theory. In his lengthy and voluminous study of the economical, political and social structures of South Asian societies, he questioned some of the assumptions of the theory, and pointed out its inadequacies when applied in developing countries. He blamed Western social scientists for being ethnocentric and for conceiving "solutions" to problems in developing countries solely on the basis of Western frameworks of experience. In his study of India, Myrdal tries to see the problems that face India from Indian perspectives.

Myrdal criticises the modernists for abstracting isolated factors such as saving and investment, and for neglecting the socio-political and economic totality of societies. His "institutional" approach tries to account for the intricacies of the larger system and to stress the predominant role of traditional values as these influence the nature of change. He believes that since both the attitudes towards life and work and the institutions of developing countries are fundamentally different from the attitudes and institutions in the Western world, it is futile to analyse these societies using Western economic concepts. In the Indian context, for example, he questions the adequacy and relevance of the economic indices of modernisation such as savings and growth. In countries like India where endemic poverty is a dominant reality, any "savings" were more likely to be channelled towards the conserving of life and energy than towards investment. In his chapter on the "Problems of Labour Utilisation", he questions the validity of using such concepts as unemployment and underemployment within their Western frames of reference. He believes that the

problems of unemployment and underemployment are not merely related to the existing economic conditions, but to the particular nature of the social system and its values. It was this combination of factors that led to low labour utilisation. Myrdal also blames planning in developing countries for concentrating on the economics of growth and productivity and for ignoring the human dimension.

But for all his criticism, Myrdal remains a modernist himself. He blames the persistence of poverty in India on indigenous factors, such as the traditional structures of attitudes and beliefs and an archaic religious system that militates against change. As Geertz put it, Myrdal "regards the central task of economics - or at least the economics of development - to the location, analysis and modernisation of the social, cultural and psychological factors which most powerfully affect economic behaviour. What he means by "modernisation" is not quite as clear, but in essence it comes down to the creation of the sort of institutional structures the West would like to think of itself as possessing"(1969, pp.26f.).

Epstien's two "economic-anthropological" studies in Karnataka, India, (1962, 1972) trace the economic, political, social and cultural changes in two villages and the variations of change involved. In her 1962 study, she was able to show that it was not necessarily the introduction of technology that led to structural differentiations in the two villages that she studied, but whether or not the villages lay on the fringe or in the path of irrigation. Although in both villages there was a change from a subsistence economy to a cash economy, there were significant variations in change between the two villages. Dalena, one of the villages, experienced significant changes in its social-political and economic structures. Due to increased economic opportunities, work was disassociated from its traditional moorings, and the resulting involvement in an urban wage economy contributed to radical changes in the traditional hierarchy. Hereditary relationships involving patronage disappeared and the "immutability" of traditional leadership based on the caste factor was eroded. But, strangely enough, the role of women in Dalena remained unchanged. This was because change in work opportunities had not brought with it change in "status". So the women continued to work in the fields. But in the case of Wangala, the other village, change was minimal because the benefits of the irrigation system accrued to the people who had the most resources. The traditional caste-based structure played a

vital role in accommodating, dictating or coopting the process of change. It retained its role in directing the contours of change because economic roles and relationships had not undergone any radical alteration. But there was a change in the "status" of the women which was brought about by the increase in prosperity, and as a result they no longer laboured in the fields. Epstien's study showed that modernisation theories lacked the capacity to account for the variabilities of change and the difference in responses, both internal and external, to change.

Sharma's study of politics, competition and control in a village near Varanasi in North India (1978) comes up with similar findings to those of Epstien. She too finds that the imperviousness of the dominant traditional structures is a barrier to change. Her study also shows that the mere existence of democratic institutions like the "panchayat" and even adult franchise does not in any way lead to political democratisation, because these are appropriated or manipulated by the rich. The new economic opportunities in the village are also cornered by the rich.

Similarly, Gough's study of Kumbapettai, a village in Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu, (1981) reveals that the "trickle-down" effect is largely a myth. Her study shows that because of a combination of factors, like the fertility of the land, the unavailability of land and the concentration of a large mass of landless labourers, there was here a consolidation of the interests of landless untouchables which led to unionisation and organisation for better wages. It has also been shown that the relative non-unionisation of labour in other parts of Tamil Nadu is partly due to existing opportunities for non-agricultural employment and the availability of land.

As Long points out:

Structural analysis enables one to make post hoc statements about the types and magnitudes of institutional changes that have occurred between two or more time periods or to formulate highly generalised propositions about the kind of structural change expected to occur under the impact of certain external factors. But it cannot adequately deal with the variability and flexibility of social systems, with the problem of isolating factors responsible for change, nor can it handle the question of the differential responses to change shown by different groups or categories within a given population (1977, p.18).

Theories of modernisation often assumed the efficaciousness of the "aid-package". This too has been undermined by a number of studies that have recorded the "other" side of growth. Francine Frankel's study of the process and progress of the Green Revolution in India (1971) has shown that through the diffusion of innovations, mechanisation and the concentration of production in certain well-irrigated regions in India, there has actually been an exacerbation of both poverty and inequality. Growth has occurred, but it has occurred at the expense of a gradually increasing mass of impoverished landless labourers. The elitism involved in the policy of the Green Revolution -- the concentration on the large farmers -- has meant that the state subsidies are directed towards this affluent minority. In order to cultivate "high-yielding varieties"(HYV), input is needed in the form of fertilisers and pesticides. But small farmers can ill afford the expenses involved. The growing gap between the rich and the poor is recorded by Frankel in her chapter on the Green Revolution in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. She notes that a number of factors, including elite domination of cooperative and credit societies and the impermanency of the situation of tenancy, have contributed towards the reinforcement of inequalities. On the rich getting richer, she cites the following example:

Perhaps the most striking evidence of the large gains among this group - and of their growing orientation towards commercial agriculture - is the acute shortage of bulldozers and tractors that recently developed in Thanjavur district. Compared to less than 200 tractors available for distribution in the whole of Tamil Nadu state during 1968, Thanjavur alone received 200 loan applications for tractors - all from farmers with 30 to 40 acre holdings(p.104).

But there has also been evidence of the indirect effects of the Green Revolution. Jha (1980) notes that in 1972, not only had the price of fertilisers increased, but there was disturbing evidence that the soil used for the cultivation of high-yielding varieties was progressively becoming poorer, because of a loss of nitrogen, phosphates and micro-nutrients like zinc, sulphur and iron. This is supported by the findings of scientists at the Punjab University. They found "that under the intensive rice-wheat cropping pattern currently in vogue in Punjab and Haryana, the soil ... needs double the quantity of nutrients to obtain the same per acre yields as eight years ago!" They went on to conclude: "It hardly needs to be stressed that what is happening in Punjab and

Haryana is bound to take place sooner or later in other areas where high-yielding varieties and chemical fertilisers have come into use"(quoted ibid. p.25)

There is thus a certain amount of evidence to prove that the net benefits of exogenously induced packages of aid are not necessarily beneficial to the majority of people. The "trickle-down" envisaged by the modernisation theorists has little chance of materialising in the context of the highly unequal societies in most developing countries. Unless the agrarian structure is changed and unless land reforms and land ceilings implemented, modernisation will only accentuate an already unequal situation.

The Genesis and Rise of Dependency Theory

During the late sixties and the early seventies, there was mounting disillusionment with the dominant paradigm of development. The promise of growth was shattered by the disturbing revelations from developing countries of the increasing gaps that modernisation had brought about. There was also growing despondency among developing nations over the polarisation of the world into two distinct camps, and the resulting antagonisms that threatened the sovereignty of these nations. This period was also marked by the growing concern over the rise of neo-colonialism manifesting itself in the form of multinational corporations and through the various ramifications of the international framework of capitalist economy, which had bound the developing world in increasingly unequal relationships with the international economy. The formation of the OPEC oil-cartel, the examples of development in China, Cuba and Tanzania, the emphasis on neutrality and "non-alignment" and the growing "voice" of developing countries in international bodies like the UN, demonstrated the desire of developing countries to protect their interests and safeguard their sovereignty. The call for a New International Economic Order reflected the mood of the times.

This secular discontent was matched by an academic one that had its roots in the rediscovery of the concept of imperialism in the works of Lenin, Hilferding, Burkharin, Rosa Luxembourg and Trotsky. Until the early sixties, the definitive accounts of the nature and causes of imperialism were those provided in the works of Hobson and Schumpeter. Hobson believed that imperialism was extrinsic to the nature of capitalism and that it was basically an

aberration caused by a situation of over-production in the West and the consequent need to find markets for the accumulated stock of goods. Hobson believed that an increase in domestic consumption would reduce the need to expand overseas. Lenin, on the other hand, believed that the phenomenon of imperialism was rooted in the very fabric of capitalism. Imperialism was the "highest stage of capitalism" according to Lenin, and it was caused not because of an over-accumulation of monopoly capital and goods in the West, but because of a declining rate of profit in the capitalist countries and the need to invest in the untapped colonial regions of the world to maximise profits. He believed that the connection between colonies and monopoly capital was a major characteristic of this particular stage of capitalist development.

The role of imperialism as one of the major factors for the historical basis of underdevelopment in the present-day developing world is a fact attested by all the 'neo-Marxist' theorists of development and underdevelopment. Some of the central concerns of the dependency theory came to light through the pioneering efforts of scholars at the UN Economic Commission for Latin America. Raul Prebisch (1980), one of the major exponents of the theory, divided the world into two distinct spheres - the centre and the periphery. He was of the opinion that the real reason for underdevelopment was the stranglehold exerted by the developed capitalist countries over the international commodity markets and the unequal terms of exchange offered to the periphery nations. Paul Baran (1957), another early exponent of the dependency theory, was instrumental in concretising some of its main issues. He was even more emphatic about the real nature of the relationship between the centre and the periphery, and he was of the opinion that Western capitalism had developed at the expense of the present-day underdeveloped world. He was able to show that capitalist aid and investment had served to extract capital rather than pump in capital.

But the main propounder of the dependency thesis was undoubtedly the Latin American economist Andre Gundar Frank. Writing from his experiences of underdevelopment in Chile and Brazil, he criticised the modernisation theorists for ignoring the role that the colonial situation had played in the "development of underdevelopment". He pointed out that modernisation was in fact a cover for perpetuating neo-colonial forms of dependency. Through the diffusion of innovations and aid, the advanced capitalist

countries were reinforcing relationships of dominance and dependence and impoverishing the developing world. He criticised Rostow's theory of the "stages of growth" for obfuscating the historical reasons for development and underdevelopment. The West had never been underdeveloped; it had been undeveloped. Underdevelopment was only experienced by the colonies. The developing countries in the present-day world were neither late starters in the scramble for development nor had they inflicted underdevelopment on themselves. The reason for continuing underdevelopment in the developing world is related to the fact that they were involved, in the past as in the present, in a "single historical process of capitalist development" (1973, pp.95-104). Since the beginning of colonialism, a network of centre-periphery relationships has extended, and tied even the toiling agricultural labourer in the internal periphery to the international capitalist framework. And in this unequal relationship, surplus is siphoned off in a variety of ways to the metropolitan centres in the West. Frank believed that capitalism had penetrated even the remotest areas in the world and that it had left nothing untouched. It is the international economy that should be at the centre of the study of development and underdevelopment and not the structural and psychological shortcomings of traditional societies. Frank, therefore, advocated that the location of the study of development and underdevelopment should take account of external factors, and the relationships between the elites of the centres and the peripheries.

Dos Santos describes dependence as a situation in which "the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relationship of interdependence between two or more economies, and between this and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and be self-sustaining, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion...."(1973, p.109). Underdevelopment, therefore, is a "perpetual" predicament caused and controlled by extrinsic laws and factors.

The historical factors for present-day underdevelopment and development are clearly illustrated in Frank's works. He shows how the preoccupation with profits has distorted and destroyed the essential characteristics of many third world societies. He also shows that some of the most underdeveloped regions in the world

today are precisely those from which the maximum profit was siphoned off by the metropolitan countries. He gives the example of Bengal whose cotton and jute industry contributed to capitalist expansion. After completely exhausting the potential of the land and its resources, and after over-exploiting its market, Bengal was left to stagnate and underdevelop. Baran quotes Brook Adams to show how Bengal plunder had financed England's Industrial Revolution:

Very soon after Plassey (1757) the Bengal Plunder began to arrive in London and the effect appears to have been instantaneous: for all the authorities agree that the industrial revolution, the event which has divided the nineteenth century from all antecedent time, began with the year 1760" (1957, p.146).

In order to facilitate the maximisation of profit, traditional ways of life were changed and traditional modes of production destroyed; both in industry and agriculture, traditional structures of society were altered to suit the requirements of the colonial governments. Bagchi (1982) notes the disruptions that were caused by the introduction of the Zamindari and Ryotwari systems of land tenure in colonial India. Owing to the policy of large-scale commercialisation of agriculture, a number of small-holders of land lost their rights to land, and consequently became "free" landless labourers.

Pantham (1980) illustrates the maximum-advantage policy of colonial rule to point out the insidiousness of colonial policy. He shows that exploitative systems like caste were not destroyed but reinforced through the new systems of land tenure. But the system of patronage, which had existed for a few thousand years, was destroyed, and its destruction meant the end of the "security" which the tenant had previously enjoyed. He became a "free" man, unbound but a prey to the money-lender and exploiters of labour. Unequal terms of trade was another way in which surplus was maximised. For example, the eventual destruction of the Indian cotton industry was facilitated by the inordinately high duties that had to be paid for Indian exports to Britain, while British exports to India had to pay only negligible duties. There was in effect a systematic impoverishment of the colonies, through de-industrialisation and a policy of non-investment, which the dependency theorists point out as the chief cause of the underdevelopment of the present-day developing world.

Apart from the historical reasons for of underdevelopment, the dependency theorists also paid attention to the persistence of new forms of dependence, long after the downfall of "formal" colonialism. Institutions involved in the diffusion of aid and technology have been singled out for their role in perpetuating new forms of dependency. The World Bank, the IMF, and the Ford Foundation, for example, have been accused of stunting the autonomous growth of developing countries by prescribing excessive and often extraneous "conditions" to the recipients of aid. Omvedt mentions the compromises that the Indian government had to make in their development policy in order to qualify as a recipient of an IMF loan of \$5.7 billion in 1982. In order to receive this "tied loan", the Indian development strategy had to "maintain policies appropriate for stimulating production and capital investment in the private sector ... lessening restrictions on multinational companies that come in the way of export ... and finally, (consult) with the IMF on all major policies and provide all necessary information to the IMF"(1982, pp.132f). Apart from economic dependency, the advanced capitalist countries have been accused of imposing cultural hegemony through their media-empires and of hindering the growth of autonomous, indigenous cultures. The role of MNCs in the developing world in the exploitation of cheap labour and their overall domination of the international market structures have been condemned as strategies by which surplus is drained from the developing world.

The dependency theorists played an important role in demystifying the myths of modernisation. The historical nature of development and underdevelopment and the contemporary forms of neo-colonialism have been empirically studied by them, and their insights have shed much light on the analysis of the persistence of underdevelopment.

Dependency on the Retreat?

During the seventies, dependency theory itself came under attack. Bill Warren (1980), for example, defended new forms of imperialism on the grounds that, through the extension of technology and new forms of large-scale capitalist enterprise, imperialism would actually act as the great "leveller" and contribute to the progress of developing nations. He gave instances of some of the South-East Asian countries and their remarkable progress over the

years. But it was shown later by Ahmed (1983) and others that Warren's thesis was based on highly selective evidence. Large-scale industrialisation brought with it diverse forms of exploitation -- for example the ban on the unionisation of labour, the formation of highly exploitative alliances between elites in the centre and periphery, and the role played by certain MNCs in the destabilisation of some of these economies. Although Warren's thesis was not based on objective empirical proof, it nevertheless brought to the surface some of the contradictions inherent in dependency theory.

Frank's thesis that capitalism's centre-periphery relationship is uniform and homogenous the world over was criticised for not being able to account for the variations that existed in colonial and neo-colonial centre-periphery relationships. In other words, dependency was criticised, as by Ley (1977) for being too general a theory. Frank's thesis that capitalism is the only form of economic relationship that persisted from the colonial days was shown to be untenable, as for example in the study by Ley who shows that feudalism was not necessarily destroyed through its contact with capitalism, but that capitalism, with its maximum advantage policy, encouraged and even created new forms of feudalistic relationships. Ley has further criticised dependency theory for being overtly "economist" in its analysis and for neglecting the role of politics and ideology in the processes of underdevelopment. More importantly, he has attacked the theory for mystifying the nature of the class struggle through projecting it as the prime mover of history. Carter (1973) has criticised dependency theory for not being able to take account of the complexities that existed through relationships of dependency at local levels.

After Dependency - Modes of production?

Such theoretical inadequacies of the dependency theory led to a number of reformulations. Emmanuel's theory of unequal exchange⁽⁸⁾ and Wallerstein's world system analysis⁽⁹⁾ tried to

8. This shows how, through relations of unequal exchange, the proleteriat in the developed world earn better wages than the proleteriat in the developing world who earn less because of the distorted system characterised by relations of unequal exchange.

9. Wallerstein's world system analysis places emphasis on the relations between core-core and periphery-periphery as central factors in the analysis of development and underdevelopment.

go beyond its limitations. But both have been found wanting. Perhaps the most important theoretical advance over dependency theory has been the theory of the modes of production.

Historically, Marx had conceived modes of production as a progressively growing, each mode of production being replaced by a higher and more advanced mode of production. Marx had treated capitalism as a natural evolutionary advance over feudalism. But the modes of production theorists, like Rey, believe that pre-capitalist modes of production do not disintegrate on contact with capitalism. On the other hand, capitalism "articulates" with these pre-capitalist modes of production. Capitalism coexists with these non-capitalist formations, even evolves transitional modes of production and destroys non-capitalist formations only if they do not facilitate capitalist growth. The most important advance over dependency theory is the emphasis by these theorists on the existence of different modes of production in co-existence, especially in the developing world. More specifically, the focus of attention is on the relations of production at local levels, and the historical analysis of the contemporary forms of surplus-producer surplus-appropriator relationships. It replaced the predominant concern of dependency theory with the economic dimensions of underdevelopment with a much wider and more holistic framework that included the social, political and economic dimensions of development and underdevelopment.

In India, the modes of production debate⁽¹⁰⁾ has contributed to the understanding of the forms of Indian agriculture today. But in its analysis, there has been a tendency to cerebrate on narrow and increasingly unconnected issues.

A Note On the "Location" of Freire⁽¹¹⁾

Paulo Freire's essential contribution towards the development debate lies in his restitution of "values and ethics" and the "quality of life" as central features in the "praxis" of

10. The debate took place in the columns of The Economic and Political Weekly, between 1970 and 1973. McEachern has summed up the essential features of this debate in the Journal of Contemporary Asia, No.4, 1976.

11. I include this note on Freire here because a good deal of alternative development communication in India owes much to his understanding of development.

development. Perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of the Freirian approach is the primacy given to the human actor as the central character in the drama of development. Unlike, for example, in modernisation theory, development is not merely associated with economic growth and productivity, nor for that matter with the neo-Marxist emphasis on the class struggle. On the other hand, both economic growth and class struggle are given meaning through the realisation of human growth towards the fullness of life. And in this process of development, theory and practice are vitally interlinked. Theory is not removed from the practical dimensions of development. On the other hand, the historical vocation of theory is realised through its praxis.

Freire believes that development implies liberation, a freeing from both the mental and physical shackles of existence within a "culture of silence" to the humanisation of the "self", and the realisation of the self as a part of the community. Authentic development is a process whereby through an intense process of learning, characterised by the twin elements of action and reflection, the oppressed as a class confront and overcome the culture of domination and create meaningful alternatives for their own future. Freire's method is essentially "dialogic" and it is through a continuous dialogue that the process of conscientisation or awareness-building takes place.

The fundamental difference between the Freirian approach and the preceding approaches to development is that the distinction between theory and practice, which is a marked characteristic of most approaches to development, is replaced by an approach that realises itself through the symbiosis of theory and practice. A further feature is that it is essentially a micro-level approach to development. The Freirian methodology is not an absolute one. And it cannot be easily transplanted from one culture to another; it has to be related to the specificities of the local situation. This flexibility in the Freirian approach is one of the reasons for its growing popularity in the developing world.

The Analysis of Social Change in India

The theories of development and underdevelopment have in many ways influenced the nature and orientation of social scientific research in India. The influence of structural-functionalism is especially evident in the orientations of both sociological and

social-anthropological research in India. The contemporary preoccupation with the changing character of the caste system, for example, can be traced back to the early investigations by American and British cultural and social anthropologists into the "structure" and "continuity" of the caste system. These early studies emphasised the ritual connotations of the caste system and its religious basis. They also stressed the "harmonality" of the caste system and its functional interdependence. With the theoretical dominance of structural-functionalism in the West, its modes and methods of investigation made an impact on social scientific research in India.

This structural-functional orientation is clearly seen in the studies by M.N.Srinivas (1963) who is in many ways the most important social-anthropologist in India. His concept of Westernisation, for example, is similar to the concept of modernisation; the difference between the two concepts lies in the fact that Westernisation accounts for the continuity of tradition in the process of modernisation. Srinivas also studies the processes of social differentiation that were changing traditional institutions and ways of life. But his most important contribution to the analysis of social change in India is undoubtedly his concept of "Sanskritisation". According to Srinivas,

Sanskritisation is the process by which a "low" Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently "twice-born" caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community (1973, p.6).

Srinivas emphasised the role of Sanskritisation as a prime element in the democratisation of the caste system. Research therefore focused on this movement, and on aspects of social mobility. In the event, the study of "inequality" was not granted any significance at all. As Beteille puts it,

The view that the traditional Indian society was a caste society together with the definition of caste in terms of a set of ideal principles has led to the construction of models from which economic and political conflict has been virtually excluded (1969, see pp.17-31).

The emphasis was therefore on a change within the caste system. This emphasis reinforced the legitimacy of the caste system and its institutionalisation of inequalities. Both Carol (1977) and

Bandyopadhyay (1978) have criticised Srinivas for reinforcing the Brahminic "ideal" and for the concern with "elite-emulation". As Bandyopadhyay points out, Sanskritisation is inherently an elite concept, because only castes who were already high up in the caste hierarchy could move up the ladder:

While Srinivas mentions the Sanskritisation of the Coorgs and the Okkaligas, he does not mention the Medas and the Poleyas for whom not Sanskritisation but only migration to the coffee plantations provided such opportunities as existed for altering social positions (p.120).

The dominant orientation of social scientific research in India is to study "change" as a functional manifestation rather than as a result of conflict. The study of inequality has been relegated to the background. But over the last few years there have been attempts to study the nature and causes of inequality in India. The study by Djurfeldt and Lindberg (1975)⁽¹²⁾ and that by Menscher (1978) try to situate the examination of poverty and inequality within the larger socio-economic and political structures of society. Using a Marxist framework of analysis, they study the economy as a social process in two different parts of Chinglepet District, Tamil Nadu. They have provided a number of fascinating insights into the various dimensions of the agrarian political economy.

Both studies found that caste was still the dominant form of social consciousness but they also found that the formation of class-consciousness was prevented by the machinations of the superior castes. Menscher, for example, found that the formation of a common class consciousness among the two untouchable communities, the Pariyans and the Vanniyars, was prevented by the upper castes by consciously encouraging Vanniyar superiority. She also notes the ineffectiveness of land reforms, the existence of outdated tenancy laws, the low-caste competition for tenancies and a ponderous bureaucracy that reinforces inequality and poverty. She has this to say on the system that denies unequal access to governmental resources:

12. It is interesting to note that Djurfeldt and Lindburg used Epstein's methodology, but failing to "replicate" her study, they switched on to a Marxist framework of analysis and were thus able to account for the complexities in the system and its role in the reinforcement of inequality.

In the eight villages studies in 1970-71, only one Pariyan was able to get a government loan for a tube well very few have been able to manage to take advantage of the new government programme for turning dry land into irrigated land The fact is that few ever are able to get the finances to manage the most critical improvement, mainly water"(p.149).

Djurfeldt and Lindberg (1975) try to trace the reasons for the persistence of poverty in Thaiyur Panchayat, Chinglepet District. During their investigations they found that two-thirds of the grain produced was appropriated by a very small percentage of the rich in the village. They also show that the "ideology of caste emancipation" prevents the organisation of class consciousness. Both these studies have contributed to an understanding of the reasons for the persistence of poverty, inequality and underdevelopment. But such studies are scarce. They are a reminder of the vast gap that presently exists in the analysis of social change in India.

Conclusions

The debate that has gone on has contributed to a better understanding of the various historical and contemporary causes for development and underdevelopment. The emphasis of the dependency school on the crucial role played by the international framework in the structuring of development in the developing world was a marked advance over the a-historical and naïve characterisations of development propagated through the theories of modernisation. But for all the fecundity that marked the debate, there has been a propensity to theorise for the sake of theorising. For example, as already mentioned, in the debate over the Indian agriculture, an inordinate amount of cerebration on the minutiae has merely led to polemical debates, without contributing to the growth of theory. There has also been a good deal of theorising which gave insufficient attention to the praxis of development. The class struggle, for example, is a blanket term used by most neo-Marxist theoreticians, but they have consistently avoided any elaborations on the practice of class struggle. Freire, Amilcar Cabral, Che and Mao are probably among the handful of people who consistently related theory to practice. This unity in their thought between the theory and practice of development gives it meaning and validity.

The theories of modernisation continue to be pervasive and influential, an indication of the "power" of development according to the gospel of the advanced capitalist countries. Nyerere's recapitulations in Tanzania are an example of this. The persistence of the modernisation model is also an indication of the paradoxical and contradictory nature of the elites in developing countries. The Congress government in India has consistently championed the cause of the New World Economic Order and the New World Information Order, but they have avoided changing the structures that foster dependence within the country. Modernisation being the main focus of development strategy in India, social scientific research has also taken on the dominant concerns and methods of the modernisation paradigm. This has resulted, for example, in less emphasis on research into the agrarian social structure which is the key factor in the study of development in India and an over-emphasis on analysing the functional characteristics of social change in Indian society. Research in India has shied away from posing alternatives, whether in the study of development or (as will be seen) in the study of communication and development. Both theoretical and methodological exercises have generally been reluctant to take up the in-depth study of the main variables of development and underdevelopment. It is also ironic that the study of inequality has received more attention from Western social scientists than from their Indian counterparts. Perhaps this state of affairs reflects the average Indian social scientist's predilection to steer away from the analysis of the persistence of poverty and inequality, and instead to emphasise the "harmony" of change. It is also an indication of the conservativeness of institutions in India that are involved in social scientific research.

In the following chapter I turn to communication and development and, as will be seen, the investigation is intimately related to the theories of development and underdevelopment.

CHAPTER II

THEORIES OF COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Relationship of Communication to Development

Any attempt at harnessing communication to development is based on a theoretical foundation which serves to explicate the interrelationships between the processes of communication and those of development and to provide a basis for a coherent methodology whereby communication can be applied to the task of development. Development communication theory consists of assumptions, on the one hand regarding the role of communication in development and, on the other, its methodological realisation within a specific construct of development.

It is important to recognise that both the theoretical and practical orientations of development communication are conditioned by the prevailing climate of development orthodoxy. This prevailing ethos of development regulates the process and the extent of development and conditions the role of communication within that process. The relationship between development and development communication is a symbiotic one; while the specific practice of development communication is prescribed by the dominant ethos of development, this ethos is in turn reinforced and legitimised and its priorities and concerns emphasised through the practice of development communication. The practice of development communication is a response to a specific development situation, conditioned by the dominant ideological, political and economic imperatives. These dominant imperatives, on both national and international level, determine the nature and role of communication in development.

Any strategy of development communication shows certain distinct preferences in values, attitudes and beliefs, and these preferences in turn, colour the formulation of research problems, the process of conceptualising research design, the choice of variables and the methodological orientation of research. Thus, for example, in the early sixties development was conceived in terms of

change towards the dominant characteristics of the advanced capitalist countries both at individual and societal levels. The lack of right "information" and relevant "ideas" was seen as the major factor in the continuing underdevelopment of the developing world. The role of communication was to provide information (Schramm, 1964) or ideas (Rogers, 1969). It was felt that this would lead to changes, in attitudes and values at an individual level and in societal organisation, from a stagnant, traditional way of life to a dynamic, modern one.

Accompanying this orientation was a set of methodological tools to explore the "effects" and the "effectiveness" of information and ideas on the audience. Thus the sample survey and the correlational analysis have been the standard methodological tools of the dominant paradigm of development communication research.

The changing paradigms of development communication research are a reflection of changing national and international relationships, power realignments and the rise and fall of various development orthodoxies. In this chapter, I shall explore the changes in development communication theory and practice and their relationship to particular ideological, political and economic imperatives.

The Evolution of the Dominant Paradigm of Development Communication

The development and the direction of research in communication have been related to the concerns and priorities of the established paradigms of social-scientific research. For example, the "Mass Society" thesis, with its preoccupation with societal anomie and individual rootlessness, spawned a research tradition that investigated the direct and unmediated effects of the media on the individual. This predominantly psychological approach gave way in the 1940s to a socio-psychological approach. Lazarsfeld's studies on the presidential campaigns (1940, 1944), demonstrated the importance of existing "mediating" relationships and their role in the formation of individual opinion and responses to the mass media. It is interesting to note that this change in emphasis in the mass media-audience relationship reflected the concerns of an ascendant paradigm, namely structural functionalism. While sociological research concentrated on investigations into the functional interdependence of societal units, i.e., the family,

education, etc., communications research turned its attention towards the measurements and evaluations of the "effects" and "effectiveness"⁽¹⁾ of political and advertising campaigns. It was the age of a nascent consumerism, and communications research duly emphasised the centrality of the market. This era of communications research is important for the study of development communication because it produced two important concepts - the "two-step flow" and the "opinion leader".⁽²⁾ Historically, both these concepts evolved out of political effects studies and were later associated with advertising and market research. The implications of this primarily consumerist background were far-reaching, especially in the context of its introduction in the developing world as a part of the strategy of development communication. The creation of both the modern individual and the modern society, reflecting the values of the market economy, has been a central objective of the dominant paradigm of development communication. The market has in fact been a crucial factor in the direction and orientation of development communication research.

Because of the very nature of the "campaign", media research almost entirely concentrated on the measurement and evaluation of short-term effects on the attitudes and behaviour of individuals. It resulted in a proliferation of studies which concentrated on the discovery of personality traits that could be amenable to persuasion. It neglected the study of long-term "latent" effects and the larger social meaning of mass media production. The evolution of the dominant paradigm of communication research as a response to market and administrative imperatives is criticised by Gitlin(1978) for its inherently consumerist and pro-status quo orientations. Gitlin criticises the "politics" behind Lazarsfeld's research and for his posing questions "from the vantage of the command posts of institutions that seek to improve or

1. There is a difference in meaning between these two words. While "effects" refers to the intended and unintended consequences of media operation, "effectiveness" means the potential of the media for accomplishing objectives.

2. Both these concepts originated in the context of media research in the USA in the early forties. The concept of two-step flow directly went against the dominant grain of thinking about media effects - that they were mediated rather than resulted from direct contacts between stimulus and respondent. The concept of the opinion leader laid stress on the importance of personal influence, that of opinion leaders, in the study of media effects.

rationalise their control over social sections and social functions. The sociologist, from this point of view, is an expert who addresses problems that are formulated, directly or indirectly, by those command-posts, who are concerned in essence with managing the expansion, stability and legitimacy of their enterprises and with controlling potential challenges to them" (p.225). Gitlin's critique is relevant to this study because, as will be shown later, the "political" implications of the dominant paradigm of development communication, especially in the context of India, characterised as it is by its concentration on pro-administration oriented opinion leaders, have been largely responsible for the continued ineffectiveness of development communication as far as the majority of people are concerned. Related to this is the fact that the central concern of development communication in India has been the formation of the modern individual and modern society for the market. The human angle is largely bypassed.

The Correlational Approach

Perhaps the most widespread version of this approach is that popularised by UNESCO (1961). This version shows a high correlation between the growth of mass media and indices of economic development in the developing world. Thus newspaper consumption, newspaper circulation, cinema seats and radio receivers per hundred of the population are positively correlated to high per capita incomes, growing literacy, urbanisation and industrialisation. Using a similar scale, Lerner found high correlations among urbanisation, literacy, media participation and political participation in 54 countries. He believed that it was the critical minimum, i.e., ten per cent urbanisation, that triggered off the other processes of development.

Rising production and distribution of the media usually occurs only where and when there is minimal urbanisation required for modern industrial processes. By the same token, urbanisation requires rising literacy for industrial participation. At a certain point, when urbanisation has done its work, literacy becomes the independent variable in the process of growth and a new phase of modernisation begins. But the growth of literacy itself, in this phase, soon becomes closely associated with the growth of the media. The media teach literacy, and growing literacy develops the market which consumes the media product (1957, pp.268-69).

Behind this version of change is the implicit belief in the replicability of this Western model of development in the developing world. Western ideas, institutions and the formation of the market economy are seen as historically logical conclusions in a unilinear conception of national development. There is also the belief that development would occur through the mutual interactions between these correlations in the "spirit of functional development" (Schramm, 1963). A number of studies tried to replicate Lerner's correlational analysis of growth. Farace (1966), in a study that included 54 variables and 12 indices of mass media development in 109 countries, concluded that the development of the media is closely tied to many aspects of a country's "nature" and "process" of development. It is interesting to note that in this study the indices were arranged along a single, universal continuum of national development and there was an implicit belief that these correlations could explain the standard of life and relative development among nations.

The role of the mass media within this process of development is conceived of as both an index and an agent of development. According to Schramm (1964), the role of the mass media in developing countries is that of watchman, policy-maker and teacher; the media also serves as a "measure" of relative development. Schramm believed that one of the reasons for underdevelopment in the developing world was the lack of relevant information - technical knowledge, political and economic knowledge, new and potentially modernising information. The role of the mass media was to disseminate such information and help create a "climate for national development" (pp.43-44). In fact media theorists like Schramm and Lerner endowed "information" with mythic qualities. Schramm, for example, is convinced that mass communication has a major role to play "in the greatest social revolution of all time - the economic and social uplift of two-thirds of the world's people" (p.91). Lerner, in the same vein, believes that the "mass media ... are a major instrument of social change" and that the contribution of the mass media is the "critical input to satisfaction in emerging nations and to citizenship in new states" (1958, p.335).

The Mass Media and Psychological Modernity

The mass media's role in the formation and reinforcement of attitudes and values sympathetic towards modernisation is perhaps

most clearly expressed in Lerner's study, The Passing of Traditional Society (1958). In this study covering six Middle-East countries, Lerner concluded that one of the factors that characterised modernity was the positive reaction of the individual to the mass media. The mass media, according to Lerner, have the capacity to depict "new and strange situations" and help familiarise people "with a range of opinions among which they can choose" (p.412). In other words, the mass media can contribute to the formation of an "empathetic personality". A person who has empathy is one who can "identify with all aspects of a changing environment". Empathy is formed by two psychological mechanisms, through "projection", by which a person recognises qualities of one's own individuality in others, and through "introjection", whereby a person takes on the desirable characteristics of other people.

According to Lerner, the mass media could contribute to the dissemination of empathetic values and attitudes which could then be the linchpin for stimulating economic production. Traditional society was characterised by low achievement motivation, lack of entrepreneurship and lack of risk-orientation. Through the dissemination of empathetic values, the mass media could help mould the empathetic human being, i.e., change his/her traditional values and behaviour towards those of a "modern" human being conceived as a "cash customer, radio listener and voter". Empathy would also create "psychic mobility" and this was a necessary prerequisite for social mobility and eventually for social change.

A similar role for the mass media is projected in the studies by Inkeles (1969-70) and Inkeles and Smith (1974). Although their main focus is on the role of education as a major variable in the process of modernisation, the mass media are given an important role in the formation of the modern personality.

In most places the mass media bring men information about many aspects of modern living; they open them up to new ideas, show them new ways of doing things, demonstrate accomplishments which can contribute to a sense of efficacy, reveal and explore diversity of opinion, stimulate and justify heightened aspirations for education and mobility, glorify science and sing the praises of technology - all of which should induce greater modernity in any individual open to influence (1974, p.152).

Inkeles (1969-70), believed that one of the characteristics of the modern personality was the ability to listen to and read national and international news vis-à-vis news that was

only of parochial or local interest. In his study of individual modernity in six countries - Argentina, India, Chile, Israel, Nigeria and Pakistan - Inkles noticed a consistent link between psychological modernity and modern behaviour. Exposure to the mass media was found to be an important component in the formation of the modern personality. Inkles also believed that a cumulation of such behaviour and attitudes in the majority of the population would lead to socio-economic growth: "... societies that have more modern individuals, or a larger proportion of the population scoring high on modernity, will experience accelerated structural change towards increased modernity" (1971, p.278).

Critiques of the Correlational and Psychological Approaches

Being firmly embedded as it is in the modernisation tradition, much of the criticism levelled against the dominant paradigm of development communication is based on its theoretical antecedents and practical limitations. The neglect of structural factors on the one hand and the over-emphasis on individual, psychological factors on the other, as constituting the major impediment to development, are consistent features of the dominant paradigm of development communication. More often than not, the individual is blamed for causing underdevelopment and for perpetuating poverty. The system has been relatively ignored as the major cause for poverty and underdevelopment.

The correlational approach has been criticised for the inherent ambiguities in the construction of its methodological continuum. Urbanisation, political participation and industrialisation were perhaps the sociological characteristics that reflected Western societal growth, but the fact that such indices were postulated as universal features of societal growth meant that these development communication theorists were denying the possibilities of other ways and forms of development based on the realities of local situations. Variables were chosen in a highly arbitrary manner and they could not capture the rhythms of development and underdevelopment in the developing world. Instead, these theories of development communication reinforced the structural and psychological attributes that typified Western societal and social growth and neglected the formulation of theories and methods of development communication based on the socio-economic-political realities of the developing world.

Again, indices such as "literacy" or the "number of radio sets per capita" are extremely dubious constructs because they do not capture the qualitative dimensions of the situation. Literacy, for example, was defined by the UNESCO as the ability to sign one's name - which hardly makes one literate. And as Golding (1974) points out, the number of radio sets per capita does not in any way indicate media distribution or use. More importantly, the mechanisms that trigger off societal change have scarcely been explained. Lerner, for example, believes that urbanisation would spark off a multiplier effect that would lead to large-scale societal change, but he does not elaborate on the societal processes that lead to urbanisation. Instead, urbanisation appears from nowhere and produces the magic-multiplier effect. It is interesting to note that Schramm and Ruggels (1967) tried to replicate Lerner's study, but failed in their attempt. They found, for instance, that the media could grow independently of urbanisation. Fagen (1964) shows that modernisation does not necessarily lead to a rise in newspaper circulation among the elite and the literate. On the other hand, increased newspaper production is negatively correlated with its consumption by the higher echelons of society.

Some of the findings of correlational analysis are not only dubious but also absurd. For example, one of Farace and Donohew's (1965) findings is that the "Population in countries of increasing press control tend to have lower growth rate and to have decreased life expectancies" (p.266). The arbitrary and extremely subjective formulation of indices is seen in Farace's (1966) study where the index of agricultural productivity is seen in terms of the production of meat, grain, cereals, fertilisers and tractors. The non-universality of these characteristics, especially in a cross-cultural study such as his, is scarcely acknowledged. Instead, technology and increased production are seen as the panacea for solving the problems of the developing world.

The role of information as sufficient cause for societal change appears most frequently in the studies done by Schramm. This unflagging interest in the transformative capacity of information is perhaps a convenient facade that hides the necessity of investigating the impediments to change within the dominant structures of society. Schramm, Lerner and Pye, among others, have also consistently upheld the doctrine of the "free flow of information". This predominantly one-way flow has been criticised

by Schiller (1969) for its role in perpetuating cultural hegemony in the developing world.

The psychological variant of development communication theory has also come under criticism for reducing a predominantly "structural" problem to a psychological one. Lerner's concept of empathy has been criticised for its glorifying the consumerist mentality. Empathy, according to Lerner (1958), would help endow "a person with the capacity to imagine himself as a proprietor of a bigger grocery store in the city, to wear nice clothes and live in a nice house" (p.342). Psychic mobility brought on by attitudinal change would, according to Lerner, lead to social mobility. This, in turn, would lead to increased urbanisation and eventual change in societal structures towards the model set by the advanced capitalist countries. Lerner does not take into account the role played by the power structure in thwarting the ambitions of the poorer classes. There is an implicit belief that access to opportunities is freely available to everyone, regardless of one's social status. Lerner's conceptualisations of social change are too general and cannot account for the complexities of the change processes in the developing world.

Inkeles and Smith have been criticised for the contradictions in their "modernity scales". They found a consistent link between psychological modernisation and individual modernity. Armer's (1977) critique of their studies concludes that "general inadequacies and contradictions in the measuring of psychological modernity, inadequacies in design and limitation of the magnitude of effects" have placed their methodological constructs in doubt. Godwin (1974) has suggested that the modern personality has more likelihood of being an effect than a cause of modernisation. In another criticism of the individual modernity thesis, Armer and Schnaiberg (1975) have pointed out the inability of the methodology to account for "personality variations between and within societies". Portes (1973) succinctly states the drawbacks of this variant of social change when he says:

A single sum of individual orientations cannot be automatically translated into congruent societal change, since in order to do so it must be organised in such a way as to deal with, transform or recreate established structural arrangements (p.259).

On Communication and the Diffusion of Innovations

The most widespread and most replicated research model in development communications research is that known as the diffusion of innovations. Rogers (1969) locates the role of communication in this version of development when he says that communication should facilitate the spread of ideas into a social system "in order to produce higher per capita incomes and levels of living through more production methods and improved social organisation" (p.7). Primarily he sees the role of communication as a mobiliser of ideas, in order to facilitate productivity. Through a process of "exogenously-induced change" (Golding, 1974), ideas, innovations and finance are diffused through the developing world in order to bring about change. The role of communication in this change process is not only to diffuse information and knowledge, but also to mobilise people and to persuade them to adopt innovations and ideas consistent with the ideals of modernisation.

With its roots in North American rural sociology and in the American propaganda studies of the late forties, the ethos of diffusion studies is unmistakably American. Not surprisingly, the imprint of both the American psychological and socio-psychological traditions of research is visible in both its theoretical formulations and methodological orientations. The dominant features of the theory of the diffusion of innovations show distinct affinities with the psychological variant of modernisation theory, with its emphasis on empathy, achievement-orientation and other subjective factors, and its economic variant on the other, with its understanding of development purely in terms of economic criteria. But diffusion studies also have a number of characteristics of their own, like the emphases on the role of the opinion leader and the change agent in agricultural extension and family planning, and on the combined use of the media and interpersonal channels.

An important characteristic of diffusion research is its emphasis on the notion of the two-step flow. Originating from the early studies by Lazarsfeld (1944), the concept of the two-step flow dethroned the stimulus-response model of communication research, and underlined the importance of the opinion leader as a significant link between message transmission and message reception. The opinion leader was seen as a person who showed a greater responsiveness to the mass media and thereby had a potentially important role in influencing his/her peer group. From the development communication

point of view, the opinion leader could help put the development message or idea across, mould people's views, and contribute to the successful adoption of the innovation or idea by the population. Rogers saw the role of opinion leaders as crucial in the later stages leading to the adoption of an innovation. The role of the mass media was important in the early, pre-adoption stage, where it could be used to create awareness of the innovation.

Research on the diffusion of innovations has concentrated on investigating the differences in character between early and late adopters, the creation of technological inventories, and on explaining the various stages in the adoption of innovations among different people in the socio-economic spectrum. The stages leading to the actual adoption of the innovation have been elaborated and refined, and the investigation of these stages of diffusion has been an important focus of diffusion research. In his study (1965), on mass media exposure and modernisation in Colombia, Rogers gives a central role to communications in the process of change: "Exposure to the mass media is a crucial cause of large-scale directed social change and economic development in developing societies" (p.614). Using a correlational analysis, Rogers found, among other things, that there were significant correlations between exposure and empathy and between exposure and trips to cities. Using mass media as the intervening variable, he shows how education, social status, age and cosmopolitanism are correlated with empathy, innovativeness, political knowledge, achievement and aspiration.

In the developing world, much of this diffusion research has been done through aid foundations, such as USAID and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. Through the establishment of agricultural colleges and by influencing the orientation of development strategies, these agencies have created, maintained and reinforced the ubiquitousness of this model of development communication in the developing world.

Critiques of Diffusion of Innovations

This tradition of research has been criticised by a number of social scientists, both from within the "fold" and from outside it. Beltran (1975) criticised diffusion studies for ignoring the structural factors, especially the power structures of society that are of crucial significance in the adoption of ideas and innovations. Similarly, Grunig (1971) shows that the over-emphasis

in diffusion studies on "communications exposure" and "communications behaviour" of peasants has diverted attention from the structural situations that condition both media use and the adoption of innovations. In his study on the economic decision-making process among Colombian peasants, he found that out of the six types of "minifundistas" (agrarian strata) that he studied, it was the sixth type, the entrepreneur, who benefited most from the process of development. This group scored high on "problem-solving, economic rationality ... adoption and achievement motivation". He goes on to say that this group also had access to "good quality land, markets, credit, transportation and technical assistance" (p.594). In other words, it was the relative availability of opportunities that led to the adoption of innovations - and the lack of opportunities that lay behind their non-adoption. He pertinently points out:

Both communications behaviour and accompanying social-psychological characteristics are derived from the situation in which the individual is found. Unless we consider the structural situation in which communication takes place, we are merely engaging in a vicious cycle of relating characteristics of development to other characteristics of development while ignoring the reasons which brought them into existence (p.582).

The stress laid on information as a key factor for change has been criticised for ignoring the contexts of media message production and distribution, and their effects on the adoption of innovations. Tichenor et al., (1970), found in their study that the flow of information tended to create and reinforce a knowledge gap. This knowledge gap came about because those who were already well educated had the capacity to absorb and retain knowledge. These people tended to come from high-income groups. The knowledge-gap hypothesis was demonstrated in the early 1950s, when Star and Hughues (1950) found that in an education campaign in the United Nations, directed at adults in Cincinatti, those who were reached by the campaign were the already well-educated and stood in the least need for a campaign.

Shingi and Mody (1975), on the other hand, reporting on an instructional television experiment in Delhi, observe that because of a "ceiling effect", the actual gains in knowledge occurred among the small farmers rather than the big farmers. They conclude on a note of optimism that

"agricultural television seems to have the potential capacity of equalising inequitable information distribution" (p.93, emphasis author's). But what is significant in their analysis is that information is once again given the central place in development. The tragedy, as they term it, of the socially and economically privileged people being more frequent viewers is not merely related to their levels of education, but also to the fact that they have the means to structure the environment of television exposure. Status and political-economic power are perhaps at the root cause of this situation. Information on its own cannot bring about change; there are structural factors that need to be overcome before information can succeed in its role in development. Those who have land and come from the richer classes have also the capacity to influence the organisation and orientations of development communication.

Drake (1971), in the context of a study in Colombia, shows the power of the wealthy to control the media and regulate their output. The inequities, in terms of access to scarce resources, are revealed in Hale's (1974) study in India; he found that even in the sanctioning of loans, there were unequal terms of interest - a powerful faction had to pay only 9% interest while lower-caste farmers had to pay interests which ranged between 36 and 72%. Thus, the combination of wealth and power determines the access not only to information but also to the inputs of development, finance, technology, fertilisers, etc.

The trickle-down effect of development implied in diffusion studies has been criticised for its overt optimism about the central role of the opinion leader in the change process. More often than not, the opinion leader, by virtue of his wealth and status, manages to corner most of the benefits for himself. His role in the diffusion of innovation and ideas is at best very limited. Diffusion is basically an elite-centred theory and its inherent bias has been one of the reasons for the establishment and reinforcement of social inequalities in the context of Indian agricultural development.

Much of the criticism against the methodological weaknesses of the correlational and psychological variants of development communication theory is also applicable to diffusion studies. The lack of "causal" evidence in diffusion

studies has been one of the major criticisms levelled against it. Correlations, as has been pointed out, do not imply causation. Valkonen (1970) criticises diffusion studies for their tautological nature and their theorists for their study of variables that are "conceptually or causally too closely related". He also criticises diffusion methodology for its "mechanistic" building of correlations. He says:

In developing a theory it is more important to know through what processes correlations have been brought about than it is either to find the largest possible number of statistically significant correlations or to present a very high percentage of explained variation in a multiple regression analysis (p.163).

Despite the criticisms that have been levelled against this approach, it still retains a significant influence in the development strategies of the developing world. With its emphasis on productivity and a consumerist version of society, diffusion has been a favourite extension approach in many places. Its pro-status quo orientation and emphasis on individual change and its belief in the trickle-down theory, have found favour with governments in the developing world, especially among those who prefer the policy of incremental change to that of transformative change. Its belief in economic productivity as the most important aspect of development appeals to a number of third world governments.

Instructional Technology - The Case of El Salvador

Since the early forties, the media have been used for the purposes of both formal and non-formal education. The Canadian farm radio forum is perhaps the earliest example of the use of broadcasting for community listening, where radio programmes drew upon the priorities and deliberations of the community of listeners. This type of non-formal education depended on a regular feedback between the audience and the media. Since this pioneering attempt, radio rural forums have been used extensively in India, Ghana, Costa Rica, Malawi, etc., in the context of community development. Elsewhere, for example in Nicaragua, Mexico, Kenya and the Dominican Republic, the radio has been used for the purpose of formal education. From the early sixties, television too has been used for both formal and non-formal education. While SITE is an example of the latter, the educational television programmes in

American Samoa, Niger, El Salvador and the Ivory Coast are examples of the former.

The example of El Salvador's Educational Television Programme (ETV) demonstrates both the advantages and the disadvantages of such media-based programmes in the context of a developing nation. Its implications for the SITE in India will be discussed later on in this study. But apart from its most obvious drawbacks -- like the exorbitant costs involved and its reliance on educational technology as a substitute for well-trained teachers, -- its long-term consequences, both economic and cultural, are not necessarily beneficial. They arise out of the various dependencies like aid, technology, training, evaluation patterns, etc.

Educational reform was a major priority of the El Salvadoran government in the early and late sixties. It was felt that one of the reasons for the relative stagnation of economic and social development was the lack of well-qualified manpower, trained in a curriculum that "reflected real life employment opportunities". It was also hoped that by reorganising the educational system, El Salvadoreans would have the right mix of values commensurate with the needs of a strong "trading nation". By concentrating the ETV experiment between the 7th and 9th grades, the "Plan Basico", as it was known, also hoped to act as the great leveller in terms of democratising educational opportunities. It was hoped that educational reforms would be complemented by reforms in other parts of the system. Schramm was of the view that a multiplier-effect would take place if ETV was well integrated into the system. ".... television must be built into a system ... Its ability to help bring other elements of the system into existence may be more important than its direct effects on students" (1977, p.173).

The ETV experiment in El Salvador was started in the late sixties with a fair amount of financial help from USAID (\$1 million in grant, \$2 million in loan), IBRD (\$4.9 million in loans) and from UNESCO, UNICEF and others who provided \$2 million in loan. Apart from financial aid, the presence of USAID advisors in the creation, organisation, programming and implementation of the ETV experiment was a continuous feature. The first studio, for example, was entirely assembled by USAID experts, with the result that the El Salvodereans did not learn much from this experience. Mayo, et al, in their 1976 evaluation study of the programme, point out the

presence of the sixty or more USAID advisers who "were instrumental in getting the reform programme under way". But it is interesting to note that the Stanford evaluation team reports, Hornik, et al (1973) and Mayo, et al (1976), downplay the continuing presence not only of USAID educational advisers but of the overall United States presence in El Salvador. The strategic importance of El Salvador to US interests is not stressed. On the other hand, the altruistic motives of US involvement is subtly stressed throughout these evaluatory studies. LaFeber provides a different picture of US involvement in El Salvador. As he points out:

Besides training Salvadorean officers at the Canal Zone's School of the Americas, the United States posted twenty-two military advisers in El Salvador in 1968. At times, North American pressure verged on the absurd. Ambassador Murat Williams complained to the State Department in 1963 and 1964 that more U.S. officers worked with the embassy's air-force mission than there were aviators in the entire Salvadorean Air Force (1984, p.176).

The evaluatory studies of the ETV experiment show that between 1968-73, there was a three-fold increase in students after the implementation of the educational reforms. It has also shown that students who were exposed to ETV scored more on learning scales than students who were not ETV based. The studies also show that there was an increase in student aspirations and that more students wanted to go to universities. But the Stanford evaluation reports were cautious about over-emphasising the positive effects of the experiment. They found that students with greater aspirations, were not inclined to work in "middle-level jobs", which was one of the avowed motives of the Plan Basico. Instead, they had much higher ambitions in terms of work. With a high rate of unemployment, the capacity to absorb this workforce was limited. ETV's role in fuelling a potential catastrophe was noted by Mayo (1977, p.67): "... the data gathered, in the five-year period conveyed a warning: the aspirations of students for both education and jobs were so high as to present a real problem to Salvadorean planners in the future."

More importantly, the El Salvadorean experiment with ETV illustrates the fact that however much faith one has in education as an aid to reform, it cannot by itself effect changes in other parts of the system. That can happen only through political and economic reforms. The El Salvadorean ETV experiment was doomed from the very beginning, precisely because economic and political reforms did not precede or accompany it. For example, the power of the oligarchy,

who comprised 2% of the population and owned more than 60% of cultivated land, was scarcely challenged. As Karush (1978) points out, this oligarchy stood in the way of effective reform: "They protect their interests, control national credit and commerce, and manipulate the process of political change to ensure the continuance of political stability and the existing economic order" (p.71). Without radical and far-reaching reforms, both in the political and economic systems, the democratisation of the educational system could only produce short-term effects. When it comes to the crucial factor of employment, a whole host of factors would help the more advantageous section of students towards better job opportunities.

The long-term effects of the various dependencies are clearly illustrated in the El Salvadorean ETV experiment. The dependence on financial aid and the professional standards of conduct imported from the West merely helped to maintain and reinforce Western systems of organisations and ways of thinking (Golding, 1977, p.305). Cultural dependency could result from the foisting of an alien curriculum, with subjects far removed from the real needs of the people. Arnove (1975, pp.147-48) notes that in El Salvador "outside curriculum specialists have played a key role in working with local educators to design a curriculum that reflects cosmopolitan values more than indigenous ones." A pedagogical exercise that reflects extraneous concerns can only reinforce existing inequalities.

In the El Salvadorean experiment there was an overt emphasis on the ability of instructional technology to surmount and solve the problems related to the educational situation. This resulted in the marginalising of the role of the teacher within the educational system. The rights of teachers were denied, and educational policies were often taken without consulting them. This culminated in two major teachers' strikes, in 1968 and 1971, which led to large-scale disruptions in the ETV programmes. Such uncritical reliance on instructional technology was supported by the government and its American allies and any criticism by teachers of the existing educational system brought swift retribution. LaFeber (1984, p.245-246) notes the extent of the repression carried out against critical educationalists: "Between 1972 and 1977, 150 teachers suspected of union activities vanished, three dozen others were killed, and the head of one teacher was placed in front of a school as a lesson for would-be reformers."

Given the political situation, the evaluatory studies by the Stanford University teams and their a-political stance can be seen as yet another attempt to reinforce the dominant paradigm of development communication. The Western concept of development is implicit in these evaluatory studies. The reliance on technology, aid and finance from outside is seen as a prerequisite for development. The reliance on the magic-multiplier effect is also evident; it was hoped that the emergence of a large number of literate people would automatically lead to foreign investment in El Salvador and thus to more technical jobs. Carnoy captures the essence of such educational strategies when he says:

Implicit in this spread of formal schooling is a fundamental belief in the ability of capitalism to provide everybody with work through the market, and in the ability of schooling to turn traditional unproductive human beings into productive elements in capitalist development. Neither of these premises seems to hold empirically (1974, p.51).

Unless there are far-reaching reforms that help ensure adequate employment opportunities, such educational experiments are bound to flounder. In the context of a developing nation, perhaps it is more important to consider the harnessing of less capital-intensive technology to purposes of educational reform. Based on local situations, the curriculum should reflect the concerns and priorities that emanate from such situations. The El Salvadorean ETV experiment is an example of a lop-sided educational development programme. It illustrates that technology is no panacea for a country's ills, and that in fact it may be used by a government as a diversionary tactic; it may reflect a government's unwillingness to implement genuine reforms, resorting merely to cosmetic changes. The El Salvadorean ETV experiment demonstrated once again how widespread and insidious the influence of the dominant paradigm of development communication is; so does SITE in India, as will be seen later.

The "Other Side" of the Dominant Paradigm - the Thesis of Media Imperialism

The emergence of the thesis of media imperialism is closely related to the ascent of the "dependency" thesis. The most important contribution of the thesis of dependency was to locate the study of development and underdevelopment within the context of the international capitalist framework. This was accompanied by a shift

in emphasis - from the emphasis on and the analysis of indigenous social and socio-psychological causes for underdevelopment to an analysis of its historical and contemporary causes, determined by a colonial past and a neo-colonial present.

The thesis of media imperialism similarly involved a shift in emphasis, from glorifying the free flow of information, goods and services from the North to the South, to a more cautious assessment of this flow. More specifically, it drew attention to the "transnationalisation" of the advanced capitalist communications industries as a vital factor in the dissemination and legitimation of Western belief-systems, attitudes and forms of organisation. The concentration of information-technology in the hands of a few nations and the consequent "commoditisation" of information have led not only to economic but also to cultural dependencies. By the strengthening and the diversification of the transnational empire, situations of domination and dependence are created through the practices of transnational news agencies, television networks, advertising agencies, computer firms, satellite networks, etc., acting both singly and in collaboration with one another.

The empirical evidence for the thesis of media imperialism has been provided by media-scholars from both developed and developing nations. Through the analysis of the flow of information between the North and the South, through semiotic studies of the content of Western magazines and comics and the specific studies of the milieu in which the organisation and the production of communications in the developing world take place, a good deal of light has been shed on the inequities that exist in the international communications situation.

Varis (1973), Harris (1976) and Somavia (1981), for example, have traced the predominantly one-way flow of information that persists between the North and the South. Beltran (1978, p.75), in the context of the analysis of television programmes in the Latin American situation, has shown that the images portrayed are not consonant with the ideals of indigenous development. Instead, "Individualism, elitism, racism, materialism, adventurism, conservatism, conformism, self-defeatism, providentialism, aggressiveness and romanticism" are the kind of the values mediated. Dorfmann and Matellart (1975) show how dominant values and attitudes can be internalised and dominant structural relationships reinforced through the reading of the seemingly

innocuous pages of the Disney comic. Both O'Brien (1979) and Golding (1977) show how images of "professionalism" are transferred to the developing world through transfers of technology and blueprints of media organisation and through training programmes based in the West that reinforce situations of dependence. It is this overwhelming exogenous media influence and the analysis of both its "manifest" and "latent" effects that together comprise the study of media imperialism. Boyd Barrett defines media imperialism as "the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interest of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected" (1977, p.117).

The genesis of this situation of information imbalance between the North and the South can be traced to the formation and legitimation of the principle of the free flow of information. Theorists of media imperialism like Schiller (1976) maintain that the principle of the free flow of information is basically an ideological smokescreen that veils both economic and political motives under an ethical garb. A brief study of the origin of the principle of the free flow of information will contextualise both the study of media imperialism and the role of the UNESCO in this debate.

The Free Flow of Information

The devastations of the Second World War brought to an end the period of British and French imperial ascendancy. Until then, both England and France had control over large areas of the world. In order to facilitate the efficient business of commercial trade, Reuters and Havas were formed. Britain's domination of the oceanic cables gave it undisputed power over the control of the flow of information within its empire. With the end of the Second World War, the United States emerged as the dominant world power, and wanted to form and consolidate economic spheres of interest overseas. And in order to establish its interests overseas, the doctrine of the free flow of information, goods and services was held up as an integral feature of the democratic ideal. The ethical argument was used as an ideological weapon to break the commercial-information monopoly that was shared by Reuters and Havas. As Schiller (1976, p.24) puts it, "The policy of the free

flow of information and the imperial ascendancy of the United States was not fortuitous. The first element was one of a very few indispensable prerequisites for the latter." Not surprisingly, Western-based development programmes upheld the virtues relating of the free flow of information, goods and services (Schramm, 1963: Lerner, 1963). Originating in neo-classical economics and the American democratic ideal, it was elevated to the level of a democratic imperative, and a vital component in the ethos of all free nations. Both the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1941) and the UN Declaration of Freedom of Information (1946) championed the cause of the free flow of information.

Central to this ideal of the free flow of information is an implicit belief that information-dissemination and the laws pertaining to it should be exactly like the laws pertaining to the dissemination of goods and services. Private ownership of information production and marketing is at the root of this principle. It is also based on the belief in the free and equitable conditions of trade and exchange. As Schemant et al (1984, p.166) put it, "The ideal of perfect competition, based on the assumed existence of perfect information among buyers and sellers as well as free entry into the market place by equal competitors stands at the conceptual core of capitalist economics." The doctrine of the free flow of information does not merely hide the inequities in the "flows" between nations. It is used on an individualised basis and linked to the notion that the free flow will increase the likelihood of the formation of the global village, based on reciprocal contacts between peoples and nations. Schiller (1984, p.113) deals with the reality of the existing situation of information flows, characterised by information-dominance by the transnational media empire, and he exposes the distorted line of reasoning behind this idea. "This linkage permits property rights - the ownership of media facilities - to be substituted for personal rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution."

According to theorists of media imperialism, the "facade" of the free flow of information has been used to perpetuate dependencies in the developing world. Aid agencies and transnational empires that facilitate this one-way flow of information, goods and services, advocate the use of a specific package of technology in aid of development. But these package deals are not necessarily

consonant with the productive and distributive requirements of the developing world.

For example, the policy and practices associated with the Green Revolution in South Asia were based to a large extent on the directives of international aid agencies like the Ford Foundation and USAID. The institutionalisation of inequalities was inevitable in this system of agricultural development, and its ethos was not in consonance with the real needs of developing countries where more appropriate technology and equity in distribution are more relevant, in their situation of overwhelming poverty. The long-term effects of the transfer of technologies and its associated practices include the formation of new divisions of labour based on the logic of commodity manufacture, and the dissemination of an individualistic ethos based on the principle of production.

In the context of broadcasting, the studies by O'Brien (1977) in Senegal and Algeria, and Golding (1977) in Nigeria, show how dependencies are fostered through the transfers of media technologies, and the detrimental effects of the "professionalisation" of broadcasters in these countries and their "internalisation" of exogenous values and standards that contribute to the reinforcement and the legitimation of the "reproduction of institutions and practices from the advanced countries" (Golding, 1977, p.305).

The Study of Media Imperialism

Most of the studies on media imperialism have concentrated on the analysis of the flow of international news as in Harris (1976), Somavia (1981), Matta (1981), and of the flow of television programmes as in Varis (1974). Somavia's study shows how the transnational news structure employs a number of methods whereby news about the developing world is structured around a concept of news values that is Western in origin. Through an arbitrary selection of news, ethnocentric ways of information-gathering, reporting and image-making, the distortion of significant events and the exaggeration of idiosyncratic happenings, and the use of "adjectives" and "labels", the developing world is reported in terms of its value to the Western transnational empire. An example of this distortion is the way in which the OPEC oil cartel has been portrayed as irresponsible power-mongers and the major factor contributing to world inflation. Similarly, the legitimation of

US-backed violence in El Salvador and the de-legitimation of authentic liberation struggles around the world are in part due to Western news media reporting.

Harris's (1976) study of the content of Reuters' West African wire service shows that both news and news-values were predominantly British or American in origin. Compared to the information given about Western politicians and Western politics, information on West African affairs and politics was presented only in terms of its interest to the advanced capitalist countries. There was also a preponderant emphasis on the conflict aspect of news. The economic structures of underdevelopment in West Africa were not considered newsworthy. Similarly, Matta's (1981) study of the content of the 16 Latin American newspapers during a week in November 1975 shows that because of domination by transnational news agencies and the internalisation of the dominant values at the level of the regional and local newspaper industry, local political, economic and social realities were downplayed and a spurious importance was given to issues that emanated in the West but were of little concern to people. In a content analysis, Matta found that out of 1,308 news items, 506 items (39%) came from UPI and 270 items (21%) came from AP. In other words 60% of all news items in 16 Latin American newspapers originated from these two dominant news agencies. Matta also shows that important events like the birth of the Republic of Surinam on 25 November 1975 were scarcely reported in these newspapers. Not surprisingly, the few who reported this event looked at it from the point of view of an American bauxite company that had interests in Surinam, and not from a perspective that placed Surinam in the limelight. Varis, writing on the topic of global traffic in television, has this to say on the unequal flow of newsfilm between Eurovision and four Latin American countries and the Arab world:

In the regular newsfilm exchange via satellite between Eurovision and four Latin American countries (Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela), the flow between March 1971 and June 1972 consisted of 2,461 news items from Europe to Latin America and only 45 news items from Latin America to Europe. Of the 252 news items dealing with the Arab world carried by Eurovision in 1971, only 16 originated in the Arab nations themselves. 209 came from the Big Three newsfilm agencies and the rest came from other European or American correspondents (1974, p.109).

Behind the facade of the free flow of information is the reality of a predominantly one-way flow of information that brings with it certain dominant conceptions and images of media organisation and programming. The widespread presence of these dominant images and attitudes has resulted in the internalisation and the replication of the Western model of media development in the developing world. These are manifest consequences, but the latent consequences are equally important in the study of media imperialism. Dorfmann and Mattelart (1975) show that dominant ideology is not spread only through the visible structures and practices of the media, but also through the "taken-for-granted" columns of comics and magazines. For example, the Disney character Donald Duck upholds the values of capitalism, including those of extreme individualism and economic opportunism. The non-Western world is portrayed as dangerous places populated by people who are rather silly and easily fooled. This "steady and unexamined play of attitudes" (Hall, 1973, p.87), inculcated and legitimised by the media, has received considerable attention in the study of media imperialism.

The Limitations of the Thesis

The thesis of media imperialism has been an important advance both theoretically and methodologically over the narrow and a-political framework adopted by the propagators of the dominant paradigm of development communication. Taking it out of a predominantly socio-psychological framework, the theorists of media imperialism situated the study of development communication within the international framework, and concentrated not only on the media audience but also on the organisation of production, the analysis of manifest and latent content and the media's role in the reinforcement of dominant structures and ideologies. The conditioning and homogenisation of endogenous cultures through the various forms of transnational influence -- the transfer of technologies, content, professional values and attitudes -- have been a major focus of enquiry by the theorists of media imperialism. Their methodology too has been eclectic; it has transcended the static methodological inclinations that were a characteristic of the dominant paradigm of development communication. Using a mixture of methods including survey, content

analysis, semiotics and observational studies, they have presented more in-depth analyses of the contemporary state of communications in the developing world.

But unfortunately most of these studies have concentrated on the analysis of the one-way flow of information between the North and the South. The role of the transnational media in the perpetuation of media imperialism is condemned without specifically explaining how it leads to situations of dependence in the developing world. Most of the evidence has been circumstantial, and many of the attempts to link the ideology within the message to transnational interests do not explain the links between ownership and control on the one hand and their influence on media production on the other. There is an underlying presumption in these studies that the interests of the ruling classes, both material and ideological, can be explained through a content analysis of the flow of information between the North and the South or through the statistical evidences of economic concentration in the national and international media industries. While these studies have changed the tenor of enquiry in media research in the context of the developing world, the specific mechanisms whereby these influences are exerted have rarely been explicated. Correlational exercises have been given causal importance.

Another criticism levelled against these studies relates to the predominance of the Latin American perspective. The influence of the transnationals is a reality in the Latin American situation, but there are a number of countries in the developing world where the transnational influence is less dominant. In such a context, there is a need for studies on the national media, their relationships with the dominant institutions in society and with exogenous institutions and spheres of influence, and their role in the perpetuation of dependency. More importantly, the thesis of media imperialism has been criticised for not providing practical and possible alternatives to the dominant paradigm of communications. Long-term effects of alien television and radio programmes on the audience in the developing world have not been given the attention they deserve.

UNESCO, MacBride, the Non-Aligned Movement and the NIIO

The contribution made by the theorists of media imperialism has been significant, particularly in locating the study

of the media within the larger economic, political and social frameworks. Through both macro and micro studies, the linkages and interrelationships between the international and national media systems and the specific practices leading to media dependency in nation states have been empirically demonstrated. But for all their virtuosity and intellectual innovation, these studies have for the most part concentrated on specific instances and practices of media imperialism and have neglected its study on a global scale. They have also bypassed the formulation of alternative theoretical and practical counter-information systems to combat the dominant structures and practices of the existing media system.

The most important contribution made by the UNESCO and the non-aligned group of nations was to identify the global character of media domination and dependence as a topic that must find a place on the world's political agenda. These organisations have also been used as forums by the developing nations to voice their interests and to legitimise alternative economic and information structures as a basis for a new world order. There is an implicit recognition of the fact that a mere alternative information system is meaningless unless it is complemented by new political, economic and social structures, based on the principles of equitable distribution and social justice.

It is interesting to note that the contemporary role of the UNESCO in the concretising and consolidating of the information debate from the perspective of the developing world is significantly different from its earlier stance. This change in both rhetoric and practice is a reflection of the political realignments that have taken place in the world and within the UN and other international bodies. The politicisation of the information debate is a direct result of this change in power alignments, and stands in marked contrast to the UN's earlier apolitical directives on the role of information and the conditions for its use for development.

The following quotations illustrate this change in ethos. In Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly (1948) the principle of the free flow of information is recognised as a primary democratic ideal.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive

and impart information or ideas through any medium and regardless of frontiers.

The recognition that the principle of the free flow of information in effect sanctions a predominantly one-way flow and there is need for nation states to restrict and control this flow is evident in the following two statements. In the Declaration of Guiding Principles on the use of Satellite Broadcasting for the Free Flow of Information (October 1972, UNESCO), the protection of national sovereignty in the age of the direct broadcast satellite is held up as a key concern: "...it is necessary that states, taking into account the principle of freedom of information, reach or promote prior agreements concerning direct satellite broadcasting to the population of countries other than the country of the origin of transmission" (quoted in Schiller, 1979, p. 351). The recognition of the close links between the call for a new economic order and a new information order is evident in Article VI of the Declaration of Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War (UNESCO General Conference, November 22, 1978):

For the establishment of a new equilibrium and greater reciprocity in the flow of information, which will be conducive to the institution of a just and lasting peace and to the political and economic independence of the developing countries, it is necessary to correct the inequalities in the flow of information to and from developing countries, and between these countries. To this end, it is essential that their mass media should have conditions and resources enabling them to gain strength and to expand " (Quoted from Androunas and Zassoursky, 1979).

UNESCO's own involvement in the study of development communication problems has a long history. For example, the UNESCO conference in Bangkok, 18-30 January 1960, was specifically related to information problems in South-East Asia. Similarly the UNESCO conferences in Santiago, Chile, in February 1961, and in Paris in January-February 1962 looked at the information problems in South America and Africa. In the 1969 UNESCO meeting of the Experts on Mass Communication and Society, Montreal, the need for "cultural privacy" was one of the topics on the agenda.

In a similar vein, the Non-Aligned Movement's call issued at its conference in Algiers, 1973, for a New International Information Order as part of a New International Economic Order endorsed the need for new communication structures for development. In March 1976 at Tunis and later that year in New Delhi, the Non-Aligned Movement resolved to pursue the "emancipation of the mass media in developing countries". Although "access to" and "control of" the mass media were two of the vital principles of the NIIO, equal participation, right to national sovereignty, the development of national media infrastructures and policies that would control foreign media software imports were also emphasised. (Hamelink, ICSCP, No.34).

The culmination of this new emphasis on the democratisation and the decolonisation of information was reached with the formation, during the 19th UNESCO General Conference at Nairobi, 1976, of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems. The Commission was given the responsibility for the study of the "totality" of communications problems in the developing world, and it presented its final report in 1980. The MacBride Report, as it is popularly known, is a communications study of encyclopaedic proportions. It discusses a number of communication-related issues -- the right to communicate, right to reply, communication as a social necessity, access for women and minorities, the meaning of participatory communications, the diffusion of control from the North to the South, etc. But unfortunately, as critics have pointed out, the Report is a compromised one. This mood of compromise is reflected in the reformulation in the call for a new world order. The original call for the NIIO as a part of the NIEO is replaced by a call for a "New, more just and more effective world information and communication order". The emphasis on transformation, both of the existing economic and political structures as a prerequisite for a new world order is rejected for a formulation that upholds incremental reform in preference to structural transformation. Furthermore, communication is once again given primacy as the means of effecting change.

As Jayaweera (1981, p.17) remarks, there is "generally a failure to recognise that the struggle for the NIIO should be waged primarily at the level of economic and political relationships rather than at the level of communications, information and culture,

which are largely the epiphenomena of economics". The Report has been criticised by both Hamelink (1980, p.47) and Schiller (1980, p.57) for not implicating the "transnational system as the engine behind the accelerated movement towards informisation in the international communications arena" (Schiller, p.57). The Report has been criticised for advocating links between the developed and developing nations in order to facilitate infrastructural development, training facilities, and transfer of technology and knowhow from North to South. This, according to its critics, can lead to greater dependencies and to the strengthening of the present system. As Schiller notes,

Increased linkages, broadened flow of information and data, and above all, installation of new communication technology, are expected to serve nicely the world business system's requirements. That this can be considered as constituting a new international information order is so much additional icing on the transnational cake" (Quoted in Hamelink, 1980, p.4).

Schiller's fears were compounded by the line of thinking expressed in the Declaration of Tallories⁽³⁾ and supported by journalists and media specialists from the developed countries. They believed that outside influence through "...technological training, increasing professional interchanges and equipment transfers" (Singh and Gross, 1981) would lead to the solving of communication problems in the developing world.

The most visible practical impact of the stands taken by both the UNESCO and the Non-Aligned Movement is reflected in the formation of alternative news agencies in order to provide qualitatively better and more relevant news to the countries in the developing world. The Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool, which was founded in January 1975 with the help of the Yugoslavian News Agency, Tanjug, and the Inter-press Service that was established in Rome, 1964, have both tried to put into practice some of the recommendations of the NIIO. But given the overwhelming influence

3. The Declaration of Tallories, was signed by anti-UNESCO media scholars and journalists from the developed world. They affirmed the virtues of the principle of the free flow of information and decided that the best way to close the information gap between the North and the South was to diffuse technology, financial aid and knowhow from the developed countries to the developing countries. Ironically, the MacBride Report advocates a rather similar line.

of Western news agencies, the impact of these alternative news agencies has been minimal.

The most important consequence of this debate has been a shift in the focus of interest to the international rather than the national dimension of communication-related problems. Unfortunately this has resulted in the denigration of the international system and a lack of emphasis on the need for developing countries to democratise their own communication structures. A number of Western media critics⁽⁴⁾ have criticised UNESCO for de-emphasising the need for reform in national media structures and practices. Much of their criticism is misplaced.

Righter (1978), Pool (1977), Rooy (1978), Snijders (1978), and others accept a technological determinist point of view and support the legitimacy of the existing pattern of media relations. But some of them have pointed out that UNESCO and the Non-Aligned Movement can be used by a few totalitarian states to divert attention from their own repressive policies and media practices. Righter (1978) quotes the example of Mrs Gandhi during the period of the emergency (1975-1977). Mrs Gandhi had criticised the Western media during the Non-Aligned Summit at Delhi in 1976 for misrepresenting the "real" nature of the Emergency, while at the same time she had enforced a rigorous press censorship, intimidated her critics, denied basic human rights and abetted unaccountability at all official levels. It will be fair to say that although a number of well-intentioned international forums have taken on a pro-developing world information perspective, they have tended to perceive the information debate in terms of the overwhelming dominance exerted by the transnational and Western media systems and failed to deal with the media structures within the developing world

4. The West, especially the USA, has been consistently critical of the information policies adopted by the UNESCO and other international bodies. For example, in 1960, at a UNESCO conference in Bangkok, a resolution for regulating the practices of commercial radio broadcasting was supported by the representatives of South-East Asia, but the final report echoed the "wishes" of the USA and supported unfettered commercial broadcasting. Similarly, in 1972 at the UN General Assembly, the US was the only nation to support "direct broadcast satellites". Over the last few years, the US has spearheaded the Western move for disassociation from the UNESCO. Because of its dominant role in world politics, the USA has been able to emasculate, time and again, resolutions by international bodies advocating changes in the existing economic and information systems.

that are as culpable in the perpetuation of dominance and dependence within nation states.

As they demand the democratisation of communication structures at an international level, it is imperative for developing nations to change their own media structures and political economic systems. Campbell, in the context of the study of the democratisation of the press in Guyana, strikes the right note: "A new information order and another information are not designed to replace the domination of the transnationals by that of national bureaucracies, however well-intentioned; they are not a move towards a more restricted press but towards a freer one" (1984, p.29).

The Myth of the 'Passing' - Towards a Popular Strategy of Development Communication

There is a relative scarcity of material on alternative strategies of development communication. The Chinese and Tanzanian strategies have been widely studied, but apart from a number of practical insights that these studies have provided, their contribution towards the formation of a genuinely popular communication strategy, based on popular aspirations, is strictly limited. Although decentralisation, democratisation and participation are central tenets in their practice of development communication, the long-term effect of such strategies in the formation of genuinely popular structures and systems of thought has not been studied. There have been a number of studies on the short-term effects of these strategies, but in general, they have been to an extent romanticised.⁽⁵⁾

In the Tanzanian case, for example, in Hall's (1974, 1974, 1975) studies on media health campaigns, incremental change through the media is given major importance. The transformative role of the media in affecting not only physical health but also mental as well as material well-being is not given much importance. Long-term effects of alternative development communication are not documented.

5. An uncritical acceptance of socialist communication strategies can be misleading. Western media scholars have enthused, for example, on the Tanzanian strategy of development communications. But the failure of the Tanzanian "socialist" strategy of development is related to the failure of the government to radically change the structures and systems of society. A parallel economy, supported by the rural rich, was allowed to exist side by side with the policies of Ujaamisation. Communication was used only for short-term development, not towards long-term and authentic development.

During the last decade, the most widely spread development communication plan has been a reformulated version of the dominant paradigm of development communication. Its most popular version is expounded in Rogers' The Passing of the Dominant Paradigm (1975). In this study, Rogers is mildly euphoric about the "passing" of the dominant paradigm, characterised as it was by lop-sided priorities and biased strategies of development, and he welcomes a new phase of development communication that has as its central concern communication through participation. But unfortunately these reformulations have not been made on the basis of a critical evaluation of existing political, economic and social realities in the developing world. The objectives of development and development communication are not based on popular aspirations and on the "real" needs of the people. Instead, it is hoped that a reformed version of the dominant paradigm will lead to development. Semantic qualifications, through the use of such words as self-development and participation, cannot make up for the implicit uncritical acceptance of the virtues of the traditional media and the traditional ways of doing things.

It is important to realise that words like participation denote more than their obvious, surface-level meaning. Participation in self-development does not come about through the mere physical process of gaining access to information, credit, technology, fertilisers, etc. In the context of a genuine strategy of development communication, participation must mean an "equal" involvement by the majority of people in all aspects of the mode of cultural production, of the creation of its content, and of its appropriation for the realisation of popular objectives as well as in the effecting of changes in its form. Genuine participation cannot be imposed from above, however well-intentioned the strategy may be. It can only come about through the will of the majority of people. Participation, within a genuine strategy of development communication, is a dynamic process, ensuring long-term effects.

The traditional media are not value-free, and their uncritical appropriation often leads only to the reinforcement of dominant structures. Rogers (1975) rightly feels that traditional media have a good deal of potential as tools for development, primarily because of the credibility it has among the people. But these forms of media have been pro-status quo oriented and have played a major role in reinforcing and legitimising the rural class structure

and its practices. In order to use them for authentic development, traditional media need to be transformed, both in content and form; they must reflect, both in their content and form, the evolving ideals of an alternative structure of society and an alternative belief-system.

The dominant paradigm still continues to hold sway. The forms may have changed, but they still focus on production and not distribution and there is still the belief in the myth that economic development is the answer to a country's development problems.

But the practice of development communication is closely related to the goals and objectives of development in a country. Such goals and objectives are conditioned by both external and indigenous factors. In the next chapter I deal with development in India and its bearings on the practice of development communication.

CHAPTER III

COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

The History of Development Communication in India

The history of the involvement of the mass media in development in India can be divided into three phases⁽¹⁾:

(1) Pre-Independence (1936-1946), (2) Post-Independence (1947-1974), and (3) SITE and Post-SITE (1975 to the present day).

Notwithstanding the fact that these three periods have quite distinctive features of their own, they are linked to each other and share elements of a common ethos. The link between the pre- and post-Independence period is often downplayed or misread. Awasthy, for example, typically concentrates on elaborating the conditions prevalent during the early years of rural broadcasting, rather than on tracing the enduring links between the two periods. He has this to say on the state of rural broadcasting in pre-Independence India.

This was too poor a network to make any impact on rural areas, coupled with the fact that sets were costly, listening conditions unfavourable, finances stringent, electric power largely absent, the limited number of radio stations and transmitters inadequate in strength (1961, p.100).

While there is no denying the fact that the inception of rural broadcasting in India was plagued by a variety of teething problems, the subsequent growth and orientation of development communication in India is related, in terms of both infrastructure and ideology, to these early pioneering attempts. The current policy

1. This is a convenient division but the linkages between them are important. Thus, while the decade of the television, i.e., the Site and the post-Site period, is quite distinctive in terms of its growing involvement with new communications technologies, its rationale still exhibits its kinship to the ethos of development communication in India formed during the pre- and post-Independence periods.

- and ideology - of centralisation, for example, is a colonial hangover. But while the colonial power had sufficient reasons for centralising broadcasting, given the situation where its presence was increasingly unwelcome and where broadcasting had to be used to counter Congress propaganda, its continuing control after more than thirty-five years of Independence is indefensible. Masani has this to say on another enduring anachronism:

All India Radio got its name, its present administrative structure and its present programme pattern between 1937 and 1940 when India was part of the British Empire. It came into being under imperial auspices, in a form suitable for a colony, but, after three decades during which vast political, economic and social changes have taken place in the world and in India, the only change in the AIR is an increase in the number of installations (1976, p.1).

Pre-Independence Period (1936-1946)

Both in policy and practice, the similarities that exist between pre- and post-Independence situations are perhaps more significant than the differences.

For example, the importance of localised broadcasting and the need to use the local dialect is as much a contemporary issue as it was during pre-Independence days. The following statement taken from the Basic Plan for the Development of Broadcasting in India, First Draft, 1944, is perceptive in so far as it recognises the conditions for successful rural broadcasting:

A given rural programme will rarely be of utility outside a circle of 50 to 70 miles because (1) it is quite usual to find such large variations in cropping and irrigation methods, sowing and harvesting seasons and in types of crops raised that the informative material used in these programmes has to be varied a great deal to suit the locality, and (2) it is necessary to broadcast at least one programme in each principal dialect and such dialects rarely prevail over large areas (p.24).

Similarly, the importance of employing manpower in a systematic manner in order to manage the technical aspects of communication infrastructure and facilitate feedback is clearly stated in the following, taken from the Report of the Delhi Rural Broadcasting Scheme, 1944-45. The section deals with the role and function of the technical supervisor:

During the period under review he visited every village twice a month on an average to check up the receiver, the time-switch and the battery and generally to gather reactions to the broadcasts and to

the service as a whole. Besides these regular rounds, he had also to visit the villages as and when he received any complaint regarding the defective working of the receivers, and to readjust the time-switches to the changed timing of the rural programme at the beginning of winter and summer (p.2).

The technical supervisor, in the context of the organisation of contemporary development communication in India, is a fast vanishing breed. Although his role has been highlighted during the various development communication experiments in India, for example during the early days of the Radio Rural Forums and during the SITE programme, it is at present largely neglected.

Perhaps the greatest similarity between the pre- and post-Independence situations of development communication is to be discerned in their ethos. A Lernerian emphasis is distinctly visible in the following statement on the objectives of development communication. The aim was to educate the masses on agriculture and health practices and on the virtues of thrift, and "... to prepare the ground for social and economic development, to educate the public in the broadest sense of the word and more especially to awake a desire for better things" (Ibid).

It is important to recognise at the outset that the colonial set-up and its ethos have left their mark on the present structure and ethos of development communication in India. As will be shown later on in this chapter, the colonial legacy of administration and "administrative ideology" has been a major cause for the continuing underdevelopment.

The very first attempts at rural broadcasting were made from Peshawar and from the Agricultural Institute in Ahmedabad, both in the year 1935. This was followed by rural broadcasts from Calcutta in 1936. By 1938, the first community sets were installed in 62 villages in Madras; the era of regular rural broadcasts had begun. In the following year, community sets were installed in a number of provinces, including Delhi, Punjab, Bengal, Lucknow and Madras. There were variations in the administration of community sets. While, for example, the community sets in Delhi were directly administered by the government, in the case of Madras the Panchayat Board and the Municipal Council jointly administered the operations.

While a substantial part of the content had to do with agricultural programmes, the major accent, nevertheless, was on entertainment. For example, in 1944-45, out of a total of 270 hours

and 55 minutes, the Delhi Rural Broadcasting Scheme spent 59 hours and 17 minutes on information on market rates, news, topical talks and dialogues, 27 hours and 32 minutes on talks and dialogues on rural development, and 184 hours and 6 minutes on entertainment, music and plays (*ibid*, p.5). The developmental programmes included programmes for women, i.e., Angan, and programmes that provided information on "veterinary, agricultural and cooperative subjects" (*ibid*, p.6). From Madras, there was a 30-minute farm broadcast five days a week called For the Rural Areas and there was a similar programme from Trichy called For the Villages (*ibid*).

But broadcasting was not the only medium used for purposes of development. Both film and interpersonal forms of communication were also used for spreading the message of development. The following statements taken from News from India (Publicity Section No. 25, Serial No. 6, 25 February 1946) highlights the use of both film and field publicity: "The scheme for the production and distribution of publicity films is intended to spread knowledge of the essential facts concerning India's social and economic problems and the reconstruction and development schemes of the government." It continues on the role of field publicity:

As regards the Field Publicity Organisation, it is primarily concerned with publicity in rural areas... With the cessation of war, its publicity emphasis has shifted to Government's post-war development schemes and in general to explain plans for the general improvement of the social and material condition of the people as a whole - rural development plans such as improved methods of cultivation, better livestock, organised marketing, financing of agriculture, relief of indebtedness, anti-erosion, irrigation reclamation measures, etc. (p.1)

It is important to note that while the impact of pre-Independence attempts in development communication was necessarily limited, it nevertheless laid the foundation for the present system of the use of both mass and interpersonal forms of communication for development in India.

Post-Independence Period (1947-1974)

Without doubt, the post-Independence period is a crucial watershed in the history and growth of development communication in India. It has a number of salient features which include (1) Expansion - in the infrastructure of both development and development communication, and in the growth of both hardware and software; (2) The hardening of an ideology of development

communication that is closely allied to the prevalent ideology of development. It was never elaborated as such, but has persisted; (3) Planned development, which was a key feature of this period. It meant that certain key sectors in the Indian economy came under a centralised administration, and broadcasting continued so. It meant that politics played a large role in the haphazard growth of both development and development communication.

With Independence, power was effectively transferred from the colonial government to an Indian ruling class that largely comprised an industrial and agricultural bourgeoisie. But the legacy of colonial rule should not be seen merely in terms of the power that was handed over to an indigenous group of people. It went far beyond that. It included the legacy of an administration and an administrative ideology, and a class of people who had been consciously cultivated by the colonial rulers to look after the administrative system they had built up. While it is true that during the post-Independence era power was to an extent devolved to certain sections of the society, it has not been used for effecting far-reaching and fundamental changes in the structures of Indian society. Rather, power has been used to maintain and reinforce institutions and ideologies that are basically colonial in origin. The stagnation of both the institutions and practices of development and development communication in contemporary India can be attributed to the unwillingness of the government, for reasons of expediency, to evolve structures of society and value-systems compatible with the ideals of a socialist state.⁽²⁾

The institutions and the ethos of administration created during the colonial era were specifically meant to further the policy of growth-maximisation. With this intention, the colonial power had consciously cultivated an urban and rural elite who would look after the tedious business of administration, including the collection of taxes. A rural elite was created through the enactment of legislations like the Permanent Settlement of Bengal⁽³⁾. In

2. Indian leaders have untiringly stressed the goal of Indian development - a socialist society. But the term has been so marketed that it has lost much of its meaning in its use in Indian politics.

3. The Settlement which was enacted in 1793 had a major impact on the agricultural economy of India. In effect the traditional village establishment was destroyed and the way cleared for the development of capitalism in agriculture.

effect it meant that land, which was hitherto the common property of the village community, was granted exclusively to the Zamindars and the Talukdars⁽⁴⁾ in the respective regions, who became the only legitimate owners of land. This policy led to large-scale pauperisation, and to the break-up of the material base of the village community. But while the material base of the rural society was thus destroyed, its ideological foundations which were rooted in the ethos of the caste system were allowed to continue. In the words of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, while the colonial rulers "assisted .. the champions of that (old rural) system, they destroyed the material basis on which that system stands" (1975, p.15). The system of hierarchy based on one's ritual status was allowed to continue. In order to assist administration in the cities, a deliberate effort was made to create a class of people who, according to Macaulay, "would be Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinions, values and intellect" (Quoted in Sharp, 1920, p.16).

In time this distinct class of people occupied the vantage posts in both the rural and urban administrative systems. When the basic institutions of development in rural India were formed in the 19th century, it was this rural elite who took control of these institutions of rural development. As Mishra points out about rural administration in Bengal:

Out of the 790 members in the District Boards of Bengal in 1891-92, 31.5 per cent were government servants, 28.9 zamindars and talukdars, and 26.6 legal practitioners. In the Local Boards, 47.7 per cent were zamindars, talukdars or their servants, 23.8 legal practitioners and 12.5 government servants (1983, p.211).

He goes on to add that in an occupational analysis of the District Boards "Zamindars and the legal practitioners together constituted the majority in all districts. They could have carried out plans of rural development, especially in the field of land reform and rural financing, but instead obstructed progress in both." Similarly, the administrative services like the Indian Civil Service had a disproportionate representation of the higher castes.

4. The Zamindars had traditionally been tax-collectors under the Moghuls. With the Permanent Settlement, they, in effect, became the only legitimate proprietors of land. The Talukdars were just below the Zamindars in terms of economic status. With the large-scale dispossession of Zamindars after Independence, the Talukdars, who had a strong core-group of Congress supporters, benefited from the abolishment of the Zamindari system.

Beteille notes that the I.C.S. in the early and late 19th century had far more than its fair share of Brahmins.

The Indian component of the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.), of which the I.A.S. is the successor, was in its early phase made up almost entirely of members of two or three top castes. In Madras between 1892 and 1904 out of sixteen successful candidates for the I.C.S., fifteen were Brahmins. In Bengal during this period all or almost all Indian members of the I.C.S. were either Brahmins or Kayasths. The position in Bombay appears to have been the same" (1967, p.233).

During the post-independence period, this imbalance was allowed to persist, with the result that a distinct ideological schism has developed between the rulers and the ruled. Its persistence can be partly explained by the fact that the core-membership of the Congress party itself belonged to the rural and urban upper classes. It is true that the caste system has been legally outlawed and the Zamindari system abolished, but caste still remains the dominant form of social consciousness, and the exit of the Zamindars has only led to the dominance of the Talukdars, who were one of the major sources of support for the Congress during the days of the freedom struggle. As Blair notes, these "new masters of the land have continued as the major bulwark of the Congress in the rural areas, dominating the village economy through their control of the semi-feudal patron-client systems."

They (have) mobilised their clients for the Congress in elections and they (have) maintained order in the countryside through their "goondas" or toughs and money-lending activities. In return the Congress pursued land reforms beyond Zamindari abolition only on a rhetorical level, ignored the possibilities of raising any serious government revenue from agriculture...and set up any number of programmes in community development, rural credit and education that funnelled benefits into the hands of the locally dominant groups, thereby enhancing their position (1980, p.247).

Similarly, the Brahminic cultural ideology still has a powerful influence in India⁽⁵⁾. Although their ritual claims to

5. I will, in a later chapter, make the connection between Brahminic culture and its role in the legitimation of the status-quo. At various times in the history of India, there have been many strong movements that have tried to counter Brahminic cultural hegemony, like the Non-Brahmin Movement in Maharashtra and the Anti-Brahmin Movement in Tamil Nadu. The latter movement used the media of the film and theatre to counter Brahminic culture. In fact its leaders shaped the present political situation in Tamil Nadu. But they have, over the years, become inducted into the culture of the Brahmin.

superiority are no longer taken seriously, they have, through their domination of administrative services, and of cultural institutions like the All India Radio and the Doordarshan, managed to enforce on people the culture of the dominant castes.

Another legacy which has persisted in the post-Independence era is the centralisation of the major public institutions of society. During the post-Independence period, centralisation has become all-pervasive; most of the key sectors, including the institutions of television and broadcasting, are centralised. Part of the reason for this is the government's unwillingness to give up control of the key sectors in the Indian mixed-economy. But part of the reason is political expediency; the control of the institutions of television and broadcasting, for example, has enabled the government to continually legitimise itself.

Opposition parties are rarely given the opportunity to air their views, and matters of national importance, like "Operation Bluestar", the turmoil following Mrs Gandhi's assassination and the dismissal of opposition chief ministers in the states of Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh, have either been downplayed, or distorted in such a way as to protect the interests of the government. Masani (1976) notes that political expediency may be one of the reasons for the continued running of AIR on colonial lines. It can be explained in one of three ways only:

The first would credit our former rulers with extraordinary foresight and understanding of broadcasting; the second would reveal our lack of initiative and our incapacity to create appropriate organisations to our needs; and the third would expose the Government's decision to retain, for reasons of expediency, vestiges of our colonial heritage which was neither democratic nor 'progressive' (Op. cit., pp.1-2).

Centralisation means that the institutions of development and of communication are subject to the determining influence of politics. It has brought with it a number of problems - patronage, self-censorship, a constant referral "upwards", an unwieldy staff force, hostility between various institutional levels and within institutions, and a ponderous bureaucratic network that has been one of the main hindrances to progress. As Kaviraj puts it:

For each decision there was (is) the internal distance in this large and ill-regulated machine, as it journeys from adumbration as policy, through its transmission, decimation and eventual 'ironical'

implementation, often in unrecognisable forms (1984, p.232).

This background of "domination" and "centralisation" needs to be kept in mind, because it has seriously affected the process of development communication in India. It has also lent itself, by its very nature, to influences from outside.

The following section deals with the expansion in the use of the media for development that occurred during this time. It will be followed by a study of the exogenous influences on the growth and direction of development communication and a contextual study of the media of development communications.

A Period of Expansion

In terms of statistics, the growth of the infrastructure of both communication and development communication is quite impressive⁽⁶⁾. The policy of expansion evolved from and reflected the imperatives of planning. Growth was registered in terms of infrastructure, hardware, software, financial outlays, and in the harnessing of both traditional and modern forms of the media to development. The growth of broadcasting during this period illustrates this expansion.

In 1947, there were only 6 broadcasting centres in the country. There was steady growth during the following years so much so that in 1983 there were 86 centres, and it was hoped that by 1985 there would be 98 centres involved in production and broadcasting. Similarly, coverage in terms of audience reached has also shown dramatic increases during this era. During the First Five Year Plan (1952-56), broadcasting covered just 20 per cent of the population; by the end of the Second Five Year Plan (1957-61), it covered 56 per cent. It was hoped that by 1985, 95 per cent of the population would be covered.

Similarly, the infrastructure of development communication, related to broadcasting in particular, also showed a steady growth. Misra notes that during this period "efforts were made to create

6. It must be remembered that this growth occurred over a period of more than twenty-five years. It has occurred in fits and starts, not according to any clear policy of communication, but according to the whims of politicians. Compared to this period, the expansion during the post-Site period has been much faster, but again it was the result of political considerations, and not based on a commitment to development.

Farm and Home Units at 64 stations of All India Radio. Besides 36 stations have special cells for Family Welfare Programmes. Educational broadcasts are put out by 44 stations, language lessons by 59 stations, 24 stations broadcast for the tribal people and 28 stations put out programmes for industrial workers" (1983, p.21).

There was also a dramatic increase in the number of community sets installed. While in 1951 there were only 5000 community sets, by 1969 there were 210,000 sets. In the mid-fifties, the Government of India, in collaboration with UNESCO, started an experimental programme which involved the creation of radio rural forums. While in 1956 the total number of villages which benefited from these forums were just 145 in Maharashtra State, by 1966, there were 15,000 radio rural forums spread all over India. By 1975, there was an increase to about 27,000 rural forums.

Similarly there was an increase in development-related programming during this time. A number of programmes evolved during this period, including the National Programme of Talks, the Rural-Urban Programme, Farm and Home Broadcasts, Farmers' Training and Functional Literacy Programme and the Farm School of the Air. While community discussion and feedback were vital ingredients of the radio rural forums, the typical broadcast consisted of a mixture of talks, dialogues, forecasts and expert comments.

Although television was introduced during this period, its growth during the initial years, both in terms of infrastructure and programming, was limited. Television was started on an experimental basis in Delhi in 1959, with the help of UNESCO and the Ford Foundation and was specifically meant to further the pursuit of development and education. In October 1961, an experimental educational telecast for schools was started from Delhi, and by 1965 the ETV programme extended to all Higher Secondary Schools in the Delhi area. In 1967, the "Krishi Darshan" rural television experiment was started. This project is important, not in terms of its impact but because of the valuable experience it provided towards the SITE programme that was started in the mid-seventies.

The spread of community television sets has been extremely slow. It is interesting to note that a medium that was expressly intended to promote rural development has in the eighties become a largely urban phenomenon. At the end of the year 1980, out of a total of 920,000 television sets in the country, only 3500 were community-based sets. An important occurrence during this period was

the agreement reached between - the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Agency, USA (NASA) and the Department of Atomic Energy on the provision for a satellite-based experiment called the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE).

It was also during this period that the Song and Drama Division was introduced. While traditional folk formats like the Swang, for example, were adapted to the needs of rural broadcasting in pre-Independence times, the systematic use of the traditional media for development began only during the late fifties. A variety of folk-forms were used, including dance-drama, folk-drama, epic forms, puppet theatre, and ballads. The use of the traditional media for development reached its heyday in the late sixties and early seventies, when they were used in a concerted attempt to spread the message of family planning. While in 1965-66, Rs1.37 million was earmarked for the Song and Drama Division, its budget in 1973/74 was Rs8.08 million. By 1981, the Song and Drama Division had 41 troupes of its own, and it also hired the services of nearly 500 private troupes.

Apart from a general growth in the infrastructure of communication, there was also a massive growth in the government's rural extension services. With the adoption of the idea of community development, the National Extension Scheme came into being during the First Five Year Plan. It led to the formation of a system of cadres at village level, who helped spread the message of health, family planning and agricultural innovations and ideas. In effect they were mediators who linked the centrally organised programmes of development to the masses. They acted as conduits of advice and information.

As distinct from the communication efforts of the National Extension Scheme, Farm Information Units were formed during this period. They were related to the Central and State Ministries of Agriculture and Irrigation, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the various agricultural universities and health and family planning units. Some of these information units were involved in joint development communication programmes with All India Radio. For example, the Farmers' Training and Functional Literacy Programme was a joint venture by the Ministries of Agriculture, Education, and Information and Broadcasting. Its predominant aim was to spread the message of agricultural innovation, and information related to

veterinary science, health, horticulture, climatic and soil conditions, etc. They used a variety of media to spread these, including audio-visual aids, extension literature, films, agricultural exhibitions and demonstration efforts carried out at village level. It was during this time, that mass and interpersonal forms of communication came to be used both singly and together in the context of development.

The Five Year Plans

It must be remembered that this policy of expansion obtained under the aegis of the four national Five Year Plans (1952-1974). The Plan documents are indicative of the gradual shift towards a development and development communication orthodoxy, both in policy and practice, and of the exogenous and indigenous influences that have contributed to the shaping of this orthodoxy.

The very first indication of the government's attitude towards the role of the mass media in development is to be found in the First Five Year Plan document:

A widespread understanding of the Plan is an essential stage in its fulfillment... An understanding of the priorities which govern the Plan will enable each person to relate his or her role to the larger purposes of the nation as a whole. The Plan has therefore to be carried into every home in the language and symbols of the people and expressed in terms of their common needs and problems. The part which the press can play in co-operation with the planning and executive authorities should be a matter of constant attention... All available methods of communication have to be developed and the people approached through the written word and the spoken word no less than through radio, film, song and drama (p.145).

During the first three Five Year Plans, "Plan Publicity" was a central feature on the agenda of communication for development. This is understandable, given the need to publicise the cause of national integration, especially after the traumas of the Partition in 1947, and the need to create a national awareness of the government's efforts to evolve a decentralised system of local government, including institutions like the Panchayati Raj⁽⁷⁾ and

7. "Panchayat" literally means a body of five persons. It is the name given to the age-old administrative body of the Indian village. Panchayati Raj is government by panchayats, a decentralised system of administration in which the village, the basic social and economic unit, becomes self-governing.

the community development projects with their emphasis on voluntary labour and self-help projects.

The concern for plan publicity appears again in the Second Five Year Plan document. It talks of the need to set up "... a chain of information centres throughout the country, provision of literature on different aspects of the Plan, films, audio-visual aids, organisation for mobile vans for field publicity, exhibitions community receiving sets, and books and journals" (p.146).

A recurring theme in these early Plan documents relates to the provision of community sets. There was already a vague and undefined belief in the principle of community listening. That community listening was a part of the general framework of community development was acknowledged, but there were no attempts, prior to the provision of sets, to ensure effective conditions for viewing. It was assumed that it would be accessible to all and that it would be shared by all people in the caste spectrum on the basis of the commonality of interests. Directive 21 of the Second Five Year Plan has this to say on the provision of community receiving sets:

Facilities for rural listening will be considerably extended so as to enable the rural population to benefit from the broadcast coverage which has been provided in the first Plan and which will be further extended under the second Plan. It is proposed to provide for the supply of community receivers to all villages having a population of 1000 or more. In all about 72,000 sets are proposed to be installed during the period of this plan (p.498).⁽⁸⁾

In actual practice the content of rural broadcasts was for quite some time dominated by Indian classical music. In fact, this policy, in the early days of broadcasting in the post-Independence period, led to the rejection of AIR by vast numbers of people, who shifted their allegiance to Radio Ceylon which had more interesting fare to offer.

But even by the end of the Second Five Year Plan, there was an indication of a gradual shift in the development policy of the government. Because of the growing power of the rural elite, and through increasing dependency on American aid, the Gandhian vision of a decentralised Indian democracy came under pressure. The shift in emphasis meant that the policy of development should involve the

8. It is interesting to note that the provision of the community set has never been made on the basis of sustained planning. In fact the principle of community listening seems to have been much better understood by the colonial rulers than by their successors.

concentration of resources and aid to select areas with facilities for intensive cultivation. In effect, it meant that bigger farmers received preferential treatment. It was based on the premise of "Modernisation", that concentration of resources would lead to growth and an eventual trickle-down.

The Mid-Term Appraisal of the Third Five Year Plan, (November 1963) is an indication of this shift in priorities:

Under the intensive agricultural district programme, seven districts in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madras, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh were taken up in 1960-61. These have received assistance from Ford Foundation... the idea of concentrating greater efforts where conditions of climate and irrigation are on the whole favourable is now being built into the general approach of community development and implementation through Panchayat Raj institutions (p.79).

The original idea of extensive development through the provision of decentralised institutions had been shelved. This had an important consequence for the orientation of both development and development communication in India. Firstly, it led to the institutionalisation of a situation where resources like improved agricultural equipment, credit facilities and information were consciously channelled towards bigger farmers. It meant that the logic behind selective attempts at development got disseminated and gradually internalised. It also led to a situation where the institutional complex of development, including various agricultural research institutions, consciously channelled their findings and their resources to a distinct set of big farmers, thus creating a dominant agronomic culture and sensibility. Secondly, it had consequences for the subsequent orientation of development communication. Information, whether through the radio or through interpersonal contact, was also directed towards this set of farmers, as for example in the Functional Literacy Programme and the cultivation of the "contact" farmer.⁽⁹⁾

9. Mumtaz Ali Khan, in her study "Seven Years of Change", CISRS/CLS, Madras, 1979, notes the communication situation in a village in Karnataka which leans towards the elites: "The fact that many of the schemes formulated for the betterment of the Scheduled castes are not known to them would indicate that the current type of communication does not suit the people for whom it is meant... Meetings are conducted by village level workers in the caste Hindu area. This prevents the Scheduled castes from getting to know the schemes" (pp.229-30).

External Influences

The role of external agencies in this development cannot be underestimated. Their role led to two important consequences. The direct consequence of aid affected the very orientation of development. For example, both the 1959 Ford Foundation Report on "India's Food Crisis and Steps to Meet it" and the 1965 Bell Report of the World Bank laid down clear conditions for the provision of aid. The Bell Report objected to attempts at institutional change and the policy of cooperativisation, and insisted that aid would be given on condition that the policy of development shifts its attention to the concentration and intensive cultivation of districts and peoples. The subsequent shift in policies has had tremendous consequences. Ilchman comments on the political ramifications of aid in the Indian context:

The Indian Government was restricted in its choices, among many other ways, by loans tied to purchases in the aid-giving countries. In 1961-62, about 80% of the aid was so tied to specific projects and programmes... There are turnkey arrangements that keep the administration of the project, and hence part of its political relevance, in the hands of the aid-giver, often denying flexibility to the Indian régime (1967, pp.678-79).

As far as development communication was concerned, the indirect consequences were equally important. The gradual influence of American concepts and methods of development communication in shaping the policy and the orientation of research seeped in during the years of the First three plans. It came about in two ways. Firstly, during the periods of the First and Second Five Year Plans, a large part of American aid, through for example the Technical Cooperation Mission (TCM now USAID) and the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, and the World Bank, was directed towards financing the growth of a number of technical and agricultural institutions in India. This included the setting up of agricultural universities in Hyderabad, Gauhati, Jorhat, Coimbatore, Hebbal, UP, Bhubhaneswar, Kanpur, etc., and of Agricultural Extension and Information Projects at Vijaywada, Delhi, Poona, Bangalore, Pali, and other centres. It was through these institutions that the prevailing concepts of development communication, with their definitions of the parametres and methods of research, filtered through and began to influence both the policy and practice of development communication and development communication research in India. Chandrasekhar, although

a supporter of US aid to India, almost inadvertently points out a major cause for the present development communication orthodoxy:

TCM aid... went to a project in Agricultural Information and Production and Training designed mainly to provide equipment for the All India Agricultural Information Programme, which employs about 15,000 extension workers in community projects. These workers need reference material and audio-visual production and teaching aids to relay information on the latest information findings. TCM support was also extended to the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, which is the centre for coordinating and supervising the agricultural-information programmes (1965, p.95).

Aid created more than technological dependency. As Chandrasekhar goes on to say, there was frequent exchange of personnel between the two countries and an active dissemination of a body of knowledge on the strategy and methods of development communication through the American experts who worked as advisers, trainers and demonstrators -- in a government office, a manufacturing plant, a training or education institution, a research institution a professional or trade society, or on a demonstration project in a rural area" (p.74).

Thus the dependency of Indian development communication policy and research on the technology, practices and methods of an exogenous nature, evolved during this period, i.e., 1952-74. In 1969, with the agreement on SITE, a further situation of dependency was created.

One of the major features of this era is the evolution of a vague policy of development communication, based not on an understanding of the needs of the majority of people, nor on an understanding of the need to adapt the technology and programmes to specific conditions. It was a policy that acknowledged the adequacy of information and information technology as sufficient cause for change. In other words, it was an "evasive" policy, much like the policies that were drawn up on development in general. It was not based on long-term objectives, nor on a consideration of the conditions that needed to be created before the implementation of a development communication policy. The dissemination of information was the only major component of this policy. Whether it was broadcasting, film, folk media, interpersonal communication or television, this unilinear and non-purposive aim became the only

major consideration. Sarabhai, the catalyst behind India's tryst with satellite technology, typifies this attitude:

In any developing country, one of the prime ingredients of development is the dissemination of information; information about new fertilisers, seeds, insecticides, cropping patterns, and so on. The process of education is basically related to an information dissemination/transfer process. For the rapid and sustained growth of developing countries, the urgent need to disseminate information to the masses is obvious. Mass media are clearly the main component in this system of information transfer... Television is ideal as a medium to convey information and news to the masses of population, on whom such an audio-visual medium would have profound impact (1969, p.5).

This emphasis on the quantity of information rather than on its quality stresses a top-down model of development communication, with the knowledgeable remaining above and the masses below in the role of patient and passive consumers. Dialogue as a basis for development communication did not figure at all in this policy. In fact the Audience Research Units which briefly appeared in the pre-Independence period, and could have carried on this dialogue were dismantled by 1952 because the critical feedback was not appreciated by the Congress government. It was only in the mid-sixties that the Audience Research Unit was revived. But dialogue as a basis for the production of programmes has not been on the agenda of the Audience Research Units. Thus without ascertaining the various needs of the audience, programmes were mechanically churned out. In other words, there was the distinct emergence of an singularly non-participatory production ethos in the field of development communication. Part of the problem was administrative. It evolved from a deep misunderstanding by communication planners of the basic needs and hopes of post-colonial society, and of the role of communication.

One of the major features of the administrative bodies responsible for communication in India is the disproportionate number of people from the higher castes. For example, in Doordarshan, Madras, one-third of the producers and a number of the staff in the various sections are Brahmins. All India Radio, Madras, has an even more disproportionate number of Brahmins. The Brahmins were uniquely placed to take over the administrative system of communication, not only because of their traditional hold on the administrative services but also because of their great influence in

the cultural institutions of society. Even today, their influence is paramount in the areas of film production, drama, classical music and dance. Thus it is not surprising that their culture and their belief systems have been propagated through the media. For example, in 1965, out of the total composition of programmes put out by radio, classical music alone took up more than 95,000 hours out of a total of 1,81,657 hours and 10 minutes; the time spent on rural broadcasts was 13,040 hours and 26 minutes. It must be remembered that the vast majority of people in India are from the lower castes and do not share in or sympathise with the culture of the upper classes.

Another drawback was that the production staff was hardly knowledgeable about the rural situation, or the basics of medicine, or family planning or agriculture. A situation was created where broadcasting staff who had little understanding of rural realities was given charge of producing specifically rural programmes.

Centralisation also had its effects on production. The Information and Broadcasting ministry was a deterrent to innovative and imaginative programme-making. Formats were given. A typical rural programme consisted of talks or interviews, or discussions with either ministers or well-placed experts from fertiliser and pesticide companies or from research institutions. The language as a result was too technical and the ideas too complex for common people. Frequently, time was spent on covering a minister's visit to a village or a fertiliser factory.

It is interesting to note that the only worthwhile innovations during this era in the field of development communication happened under the aegis of the UNESCO. The Radio Rural Forums, under the guidance of Neurath and his team, showed great potential. It was based on the Canadian experience with radio rural forums in which listening and discussion were the basis for community action. The underlying premise was that a coordinated system of development communication working in conjunction with the institutions of development and with the community as its central point of references was an effective way to initiate community development. For the first time in the history of development communication in post-Independence era, there was a systematic attempt to coordinate the process/activity of development communication. Neurath, reporting on the planning that went into the Poona Radio Rural Forum, and the coordination of agricultural and

adult education interests, says that "the forum became a voice that could articulate and convey to the staff of the Development Blocks the felt needs of the villages and their reactions to both success and failure of the work of the Block" (1961-62, p.282). But with the exit of Neurath and his team, the experiment lost much of its character. It may be noted that even in the Neurath report there is evidence that democratisation had not become a feature of the listening situation: "'Only about half the forums contained one or two Harijans" (p.277). The Vidyalkar Committee Report on Five-Year Plan Publicity says about the general composition of membership of the Forums in the mid-sixties that there was a fairly large number of people from the more advanced sections of the village community, "with the small farmers, landless cultivators, artisans, craftsmen and women having only a token inactive membership" (1965, p.152).

The Farmers' Training and Functional Literacy Programme which was started during the Third Five Year Plan was perhaps the only other innovative programme during the sixties. It was a massive attempt to make functional literacy a major dimension of agricultural production. Its basic premises are stated in the Fourth Five Year Plan, 1972 directive 7.33:

A special scheme for farmer training was introduced on a pilot basis in 1966-67 in two districts. The three components of this scheme were (1) functional literacy, (2) farm broadcast, and (3) farmer training. The intention was to try out arrangement for intensive training and information in selected districts having potential for optimum use (p.127).

It included four streams, the Charcha Mandals or discussion groups and Demonstration training camps, Functional Literacy Scheme, Farm Schools in the Air, National Demonstrations by agricultural scientists and staff from agricultural universities. But as Sondhi (1983, pp.114-16) notes, the results were not too spectacular although the statistics looked impressive. It was hampered by bad planning, lack of coordination, poor follow-up and non-suitability of educational material. Perhaps most unfortunately, this programme was also appropriated by well-off farmers. "Farmer's training courses and farmer's discussion groups as well as production-cum-demonstration camps attract better-off farmers mainly" (p.115).

To summarise, the development communication policy was based on the belief that information was sufficient cause for change and that it would lead to changes in attitudes, behaviour and

adoption of innovations and ideas. There was no attempt to involve people in the activity of development communication. There was no attempt to ascertain whether people had the resources, both financial and material, to make use of the information. And there was no attempt to coordinate the message with the larger activities of development. As a result the vast majority of people were alienated from the mainstream of the government's efforts at development. They were not given a chance to work for their own development.

The SITE and post-SITE period (1975 to the present day)

The most significant event that happened during this decade in relation to development communication in India was the Satellite Instructional Television Programme which was a massive experiment on the feasibility of large-scale ETV. Within the SITE programme, the most important contribution to development and development communication came from the Kheda Project, which was basically an attempt at decentralised, participatory television. But let me begin with an overview of the political context.

The Political Context: The single most important political event during this decade was undoubtedly the Emergency, which lasted from June 1975 to March 1977. It was a watershed in the history of the Press in India. The proclamation of a state of emergency in India was the response to a gathering crisis. The previous decade was characterised by mounting poverty, and there was now a crisis of institutions and values. The Congress-I party had lost its credibility. Indira Gandhi's return to power in the 1971 elections was challenged in court on the ground that electoral malpractices had taken place.

But the national crisis was the result of the mounting concern over institutionalised inequalities, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, the excesses committed by the institutions of law and order, rising unemployment, the non-availability of essential goods, student riots, and the general erosion of the democratic processes. In response to this situation, there were attempts to create alternative bases of power, and the growing popularity of the Bihar-based Jayaprakash Narayan and his call for Sampurna Kranti (Total Revolution) presented an immediate threat to Mrs Gandhi. Kuldip Nayar, in an article in the Calcutta-based paper, The Statesman (24 April 1974), comments that the credibility of the

ruling government was at its lowest ever and that dissent had become a way of life.

People openly talk in terms of military dictatorship or Communist revolution. Mismanagement at every step has led even the most conservative to talk about revolution because the whole system is held to be rotten to the core.

The proclamation of Emergency was accompanied by the promulgation of various repressive laws. The silencing of dissent was quick and at times bloody. The press, especially dissenting newspapers like The Indian Express and The Statesman, bore the brunt of the government's fury.

With the lifting of the Emergency in 1977 and the victory of the Janatha Party at the polls, there was a sense of optimism and a commitment to a new society. And the press recovered its freedom. There appeared a number of new periodicals like India Today and Sunday, and journalists like Arun Shourie, who were committed to the practice of investigative journalism, brought a fresh dimension to reporting. There was now a reconceptualisation of development journalism, and the development journalist was no longer merely a reporter of developmental news, but also a crusader who would use investigative methods, give primacy to the opinions of common people, and intervene in reality in order to promote justice and equality. In that new role, he/she would, in the words of Aggarwala "critically examine, evaluate and report the relevance of the development project to national and local needs, the difference between a planned scheme and its actual implementation, and the difference between its impact on people as claimed by government officials and as it actually is" (1979, p.181). In other words, commitment, intervention and advocacy were accepted as important features of development journalism. Though this initial enthusiasm did disappear in the early eighties, it created the possibility of an alternative press and a new style of reporting.

In the late seventies the seemingly intractable structure of the Indian cinema also suffered its first major jolts. The traditional blockbuster had become too hackneyed, and there was a poverty of plots and situations. Evident now was a real need for alternatives, and these came in the form of Mrinal Sen's "Ek Din Pratidin", Govind Nihalani's "Aakrosh" and a number of other films by producers like Shyam Benegal, Om Puri and Girish Karnad. The story-line underwent a dramatic change; instead of dishing out a

mindless fare with a melange of contradictory values and status-quo orientations, the new film-makers took up themes that were socially relevant. As Raina (1981) notes:

What really distinguishes the New Indian cinema is a definite set of liberal-humanitarian values, embracing progressive solutions to urgent problems, a sensitivity to the plight of the poor and oppressed, a faith in the ultimate movement of man towards change" (quoted in Gill, 1983, p.15).

SITE: The world's biggest attempt at ETV, SITE, was conducted from August 1975 to July 1976 in 2330 villages in six states. While the satellite by itself was on loan from NASA, the entire complex of ground-level infrastructure was created and maintained through Indian effort. The software was produced in coordination with Doordarshan, and at a number of other centres in India.

Its impact in terms of development communication has had both negative and positive aspects. The original purpose, to effect behavioural change through television, has not been realised, nor has there been an appreciable rise in knowledge among those exposed to SITE. There was belated recognition that the "conditions" had muted potential development. In many ways, as will be explained later, it merely led to the reinforcement of the dominant understanding of development and development communication.

On the positive side, it provided valuable experience for Indian scientists and technicians, to programmers and administrators. From the point of view of development communication there have been two major spin-offs. The most significant aspect of SITE was undoubtedly the Kheda Project which was an attempt at adapting new communication technology to meet the needs of small village communities in Kheda District, Gujarat. It involved the setting up of India's first terrestrial television transmitter which was used specifically for the transmission of localmade programmes. The accent was on participatory production; themes reflected local realities, and there were follow-up programmes on most themes. This project was set up by the Space Applications Centre. The Kheda Project, however, was pursued in isolation, and not allowed to spread its influence, organisationally and programmatically, to mainstream television. Despite the state's role in limiting its influence, it remains the country's most innovative experiment in using communication for participatory rural development.

The experiences of the Kheda project have been tremendously useful, demonstrating as they did the possibility of a decentralised system, with low-cost technology, within the context of community production and participation. It has also demonstrated the vast potential such an alternative system has to bring about authentic change. And it has affirmed the human being as the prime mover of change.

Secondly, from the point of view of development communication research, SITE has had a direct influence. By using a more eclectic methodology, the combination, for example, of both social anthropological and survey methods, it has been able to account for the dynamics of the village community and the influence of communication on them.

But the long-term effects of SITE have been unfortunate as far as development communication is concerned. It has led to the creation of new dependencies. It has created a craze for imported software and for production patterns that are distinctly Western in concept and style. And this in turn has led to a situation where television has become one more means of communication for the middle-classes. Its original role as a medium for development has been almost totally given up.

Both the Verghese Commission (1978) and the Joshi Commission on Software Planning (1982) stressed the need for a decentralised communication system. But the recommendations fell on deaf ears. In fact the centralisation of the public media system became more pronounced during this decade, especially the latter half of the decade. The Joshi Commission made quite a stir among academics and committed people in the media, although the government ignored its findings. In fact the government seemed to be moving away from the concept of using communication for development. The Sixth Five Year Plan, for example, has given more importance for the government's policies of communication expansion than for the improvement of rural communication facilities and for more rural-based programmes. The very concept of community listening is now at stake, because the government has decided to stop financing community sets.

Also, the government's obsession with television expansion has meant that radio broadcasting has become stagnant. This has resulted in the provision of a second channel, and transmitters all over India, but the original objective - that TV would be a rural

rather than an urban medium of communication - has been shelved. There is definite evidence that this trend will lead to an even more pronounced gap between the information- and resource-rich and the poor.

The Salient Features of Development Communication in India Today

I have tried to suggest in the first part of this chapter that one of the major reasons for the failure of both development and development communication in post-independence India is due to the government's unwillingness to deal with the basic contradictions in society. Archaic institutions and practices have been allowed to persist, and external influences have been allowed to shape the policy of development and development communication. An indig¹nous elite have cornered the benefits of development, and have become well entrenched in the dominant "public" institutions of society, including the media. This has led to a situation where a vast number of people, including landless labourers and small farmers, have been marginalised, and a gap has developed between the resource- and information-rich and the poor.

There was a failure to conceptualise the role of communication in development and to evolve a communication policy that reflected the reality of the "objective" Indian situation of general poverty. Kurien put this "objective" situation in perspective in the following statement:

Even according to official estimates, the percentage of Indian population below the poverty line - that is, those who are unable to meet the minimum requirements of food, clothing and medical care - increased from 52 percent in 1960-61 to 70 percent in 1967-68. According to the latest National Sample Survey (1967-68), the per capita consumption in rural areas was Rs 261.2 per annum; it varied between Rs 20 and Rs 25 per month. Nearly two-thirds of the rural population lives below this average. More than 60 percent of the rural population lives on less than 67 paise per day (1975, p.91).

The role of communication, as I have already noted, is seen merely in terms of its ability to disseminate information. There has been no attempt to ascertain the limitations of information and information technology. In other words, there has been no attempt to evolve a policy of development communication that is based on its "location" within the larger institutions and practices of

development. The spurious importance given to the role of communication in development is typified by the following statement by Jain, with its behaviouristic assumptions and its consumerist bias:

The great communication problem of development in India is to maintain contact among the villagers, to help them to adopt more productive farming and more effective health measures and thus gradually to lead them towards better economic and social patterns (1969, p.1).

Here the role of communication is seen as that of changing the attitudes of the peasants, and it is hoped that by a mere change in attitude, adoption of innovations would take place. Kuppuswamy is even more specific when he writes:

The social system with traditional norms is characterised by an inability to empathise... The Harijan agricultural labourers, the village sweepers or the barbers... can never imagine themselves to be the Patels or the Shanubogs, much less as the legislator or the cabinet minister (1976, p.89).

The implication is clear. An ability to empathise is a step towards development. How exactly a change in attitude will result in development is not even remotely suggested. There is also the assumption that one of the main reasons for poverty is the traditional psyche of the peasant. The structural constraints that are the major obstruction to innovation-adoption do not even get a passing reference. In a perceptive study of some of the producers of SITE, Srinivas refers to their recognition of one of the basic reasons for the failure of SITE to live up to its objectives - their failure to grasp the prior need for ensuring the availability of a certain set of conditions in order to translate the message into meaningful practice:

In the agricultural programmes it was pointless to discuss about methods of farming, pumps, insecticides and fertilisers, as a large chunk of the farmers were subsistence farmers... They did not have the financial resources to utilise sophisticated farm inputs, let alone experiment with them. Therefore bombarding of new ideas... to the viewer without taking into account the environment in which he lives, and the limitations under which he functions will not lead to any change (1976-77, p.52).

This larger environment and its role in conditioning and even determining the success or failure of development communication have not been given the attention it deserves, either in the context

of research or in policy directives. Structural factors thus remain the main impediment to development and to development communication. As Kidd observes:

The key constraint to progressive social change is not lack of skills and information about farming, nutrition, family planning, health, etc. It is structural inequality: inequality of wealth, of government services, of educational and employment opportunities, of wages, of power, and of basic human rights. This inequality undermines the capacity and the confidence of the poor to control their lives, it conditions them to accommodate themselves to the norms of the dominant groups rather than to struggle against them (1979, p.5).

These, then, are the external conditions that have impeded meaningful development. But there are also internal factors that have contributed to this present state of affairs. The most important among these is the centralised system of administration; it has meant that the programmes and policies of development communication have been determined by the exigencies of politics. Even functional autonomy is denied, so much so that a "fear psychosis" and a "culture of silence" have developed within the public institutions of communications. Because they are constantly subject to political interference, programme-makers are always conscious of the need to toe the line. Centralisation has led to the creation of a strict pecking order and a deferential system of accountability. This has in turn contributed to a lack of creativity and innovation in programme-making, and to the ossification of production formats and styles.

There is also a lack of in-depth sociological understanding of the developmental themes. The problem of alcoholism, for example, is seen as originating from individual lapses, not from societal conditions. Most of the programmes are distinctly patronising, with a top-heavy style that legitimises the officially established causes for poverty and underdevelopment. There is a strong urban bias in the programming of communication in general, and entertainment continues to be the main fare. Rural programmes are mostly for the larger farmers. It is not surprising, given the conditions, that the programmes have avoided explaining to people even the laws and legislation that have been passed by the government to bring about social justice and equality. Adiseshiah, in an address to

Doordarshan, described what could be done through development communication programmes:

The sixth Plan states that the principal productive asset in rural areas is land, and Doordarshan can start by telecasting the first phase of the land reform programme... The later phases of tenancy reforms, protection of share-croppers, the fixing of fair rents to be paid by the tenant to the owner, on to the present day programming of freeing and rehabilitating bonded labourers, should also be broadcast in order to spread information on their rights among tenants, share-croppers and bonded labourers (1984, p.80).

Centralisation has also led to a situation where, because of the lack of functional autonomy, policies and programmes have been instituted without discussion with the staff. Vital decisions are taken without consultation with experts, out of political considerations rather than from a developmental point of view. Masani (1975, p.14) comments on the political reason for the location of transmitters in Kerala State. The transmitters were located not on the basis of feasibility studies or from the point of view of optimum use, but with a desire to please various communal groups. While the recent expansion in television broadcasting has been justified by the government on the basis of its potential for development⁽¹⁰⁾, its conjunction with the 1984 General Elections cannot be seen as an "unmotivated" coincidence. An editorial in The Economic and Political Weekly (22 September 1984, p.1642) comments on the patchy planning and the political expediency behind this expansion drive.⁽¹¹⁾

The government has taken in hand a crash programme to raise the number of transmission centres from 50 to 180, all between June and October this year. The crash programme, on which Rs.68 crore (6.8 million) are expected to be spent in these four months, is obviously being done with the elections in mind....The rush to

10. The government's extension of the blessings of television has instead yielded a crop of soap-operas, yet another format for the domestication of the masses. It is interesting to note that the popular Indian soap opera Hum Log has been portrayed in the western press as "the first long-running Indian serial to portray the travails of everyday life for a working class family" (Quoted in the New York Herald Tribune, 25 August 1985). In actual fact, it is a sentimental Hindi film without the song and dance sequences.

11. See the set of appendices included in Appendix 1 to get an idea of the expansion of Doordarshan.

meet deadlines has meant that several transmitters have already, days or weeks after their installations, started malfunctioning or otherwise proved unsuccessful. For instance, the Hissar Centre's range has been reduced from 25 to 5 km and its transmission tower actually collapsed, killing one person, while the Kulu transmitter cannot relay beyond one km as it has been sited in a valley.

While there has been an expansion in terms of the infrastructure of development communication, there is no attempt to bring about a sustained coordination of the various media. The media function in isolation from each other. Similarly, the interpersonal framework of development communication, including the village level workers and the "Training and Visit" (T&V) staff do not reinforce "ideas" through the use of audio-visual aids, nor are their activities coordinated with those of the mass media, as we shall see later. There is, in short, no integrated concept of development communication.

There has been, as I have noted earlier, an uncritical acceptance of the modern means of communication. And these have not been adapted to the specific conditions of Indian society. Transactions with the traditional media are no better. They are uncritically accepted. There is little attempt to study their sociological basis, examine their ideological underpinnings or their historical role in the legitimising of the status quo and in the celebration of cultural "consensus". Traditionally, the folk-media have propounded the "Great Tradition" while their audience belonged to the "Little Tradition".⁽¹²⁾ As Mies points out:

If the emphasis is towards Sanskritic Hinduism, Vedic Culture, Vedanta Philosophy, Mahabharata and Ramayana stories, this implies a bias that is socially in favour of the upper castes and towards indirect support of the caste system" (1976, p.172).

Review of Literature - Trends in the Development Communication Research in India

A review of the literature on development communication research in India is not only a good indicator of the "state of the

12. Much has been written on the Great and Little Traditions. For the purpose of this study they are taken to mean the "higher" Brahminic and the "lower" people's traditions, and their relationship is assumed to be conflictual rather dialectic.

art", as it were; it also reveals the extent to which research on development communication has been influenced by the theoretical and methodological concerns of the dominant understanding of development and related research.

The most substantial body of research conducted has been in the tradition of "impact" studies. The audience has been the chief focus, and the studies concentrate on the diffusion of innovations and ideas and the behavioural characteristics of adopters/non-adopters. Conspicuous by its absence are studies on the production of development communication and on its content, located within the larger context of development and underdevelopment in India.

The biggest influence on development communication research in India is undoubtedly of American origin. As I have already pointed out, massive US aid for development projects has had a major influence on the orientation of both development and development communication policy. Through the US involvement in the setting up of agricultural universities and in extension programmes, the "inclinations" of American communications research - both ideologically and methodologically - were disseminated widely, and have contributed to the present "orthodoxy" in development communication research in India.

Among the components of such orthodoxy are the notions of the "neutrality" of research, of its a-political nature, the emphasis on the primacy of socio-psychological factors as determinants of change. The stress on the individual as the prime focus of research and his/her societal context as of secondary importance, and the investigation of distinct variables with no relationship to larger variables.

Part of the reason for the stagnancy of development communication research in India is that it has generally been conducted under the auspices of governmental or quasi-governmental agencies. Agricultural universities, agricultural extension departments, family planning departments and institutions like the Indian Institute of Mass Communications have been the chief agencies involved in such research. This has meant that the objectives of research were limited. They have typically investigated the impact of "information" through the various campaigns carried out by the government.

Another major reason for this situation of lopsidedness is this very emphasis given to "information" and "information

technology". This has meant that research concentrated on investigating the spread of information, with little reference to its sociological location in society. Socio-psychological characteristics have been investigated, and this has led to pre-occupation with concepts like "fatalism", "traditional conservatism" and "psychological deficiencies", which are alleged to be the major cause for underdevelopment in rural areas. Structural factors that have been responsible for poverty and underdevelopment and conditioned the impact and effectiveness of information, have not been subjected to serious critical scrutiny.

The following review of literature is in four parts: (i) agricultural extension/diffusion studies, (ii) family planning studies, (iii) SITE studies, and (iv) miscellaneous studies.

Agricultural Extension/Diffusion

The major body of development communication research in India evolved in the context of agricultural extension. It has concentrated on investigating the flow of information, the channels of information, the characteristics of individual farmers, opinion leaders and change agents and factors like source-utilisation patterns. The dominant accent is on the diffusion of innovations and ideas. Its major thesis is that the dissemination of information and ideas about innovations in agriculture, family planning, etc., will lead to a cumulative process of change. The following from Rogers and Shoemaker captures its essence:

Development is a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capita income and levels of living through more modern production methods and improved social organisation (1971, p.11).

The centrality of information and its causal relationship with development are the major emphases in most of these studies. It is typified in the following statements made by Indian researchers on communication and agricultural extension. According to Patel(1967, p.3), one of the main causes for poverty and underdevelopment is the lack of communication - "The food crisis that confronts India is mainly due to lack of effective communications." Sharma (1967, p.3) takes a similar line of thought: "...skillful handling of the communication process.... can make life wholesome and fruitful for millions of downtrodden human beings living sub-standard lives in underdeveloped parts of the world."

The major thrust of diffusion research is on economic growth, and it is seen in terms of the adoption of new varieties of seeds, fertiliser, pesticides, technology, etc. Persuasion is one of the key objectives of diffusion research. Both its theoretical and methodological base is in the "dominant paradigm" of development. Its methodology is primarily quantitative. It uses a wide variety of statistical methods, including regression analyses, sociometric methods and correlational methods.

With its accent on the individual, the investigation of mental states is one of its major pre-occupations. Given this socio-psychological bias in methodology, the situational context of both development and development communication is quite often under-emphasised.

Literally hundreds of diffusion-related studies have been made in India and the United States. In fact Michigan State University alone has more than a hundred such studies of diffusion in India. Such studies in India include studies on the sources of information - Sharma (1967), Dasgupta (1972), Singh (1973), Sawhney (1967), Sandhu (1967), Kapoor (1966), Singh and Pareek (1965). They generally look at the sources of information during the various stages of adoption and they agree on the whole that interpersonal contacts - like opinion leaders, change agents, etc. - are more important sources of information at the "knowledge stage" than impersonal sources.

Similarly there are a number of studies specifically on the behavioural characteristics of farmers, village level workers and opinion leaders. These include Bose (1960), Patel (1967), Danda (1972), Sandhu (1970), Sengupta (1963, 1966). The list is by no means exhaustive.

In order to show the salient characteristics of diffusion research, I analyse two such studies: Sinha and Mehta's (1972) study on "Farmers' need for achievement and change-proneness in the acquisition of information" and Chamala's (1981) study on "Differential source utilisation".

1. "Farmers' need for achievement and change-proneness in acquisition of information from a farm telecast" - Sinha, B.P. and Mehta Prayag, pp.417-427, Rural Sociology, Vol.37, No.3, September 1972.

This study was conducted in three villages, Bijwasan, Pochanpur and Samalka, in the Nazafagarh Community Development

Block, Delhi. Its main objectives were to trace the flow of information after a specific Krishi Darshan (view of agriculture) telecast on irrigation, and to ascertain the relationships between change-proneness and amount of information gained and achievement-motivation and degree of innovation.

The study is based on two basic premises: (i) that a right mix of attitudes is sufficient to bring about change, and (ii) that such attitudes are measurable and that they are valid indicators of change.

Their primary respondents, totalling 42, are a "given". They had been chosen, according to the authors, on the strength of their similarities in education, socio-economic status, etc. On pp.419-20, the authors provide the major reason for choosing their primary respondents: "All the selected farmers had assured irrigation facilities for at least part of their holding ... and so the telecast message was relevant to them" (emphasis mine). A number of studies on the political economy of agriculture in India, including Djurfeldt and Lindberg (1975) and Menscher (1978), have pointed out that an "assured" supply of irrigation is usually the prerogative of a few wealthy farmers. There is an implicit bias in the sampling - those chosen are people who have the resources. On page 419, the authors admit that on the day before the telecast, they did encourage people to attend the telecast, which, in their own words could have led to the "producing of some kind of Hawthorne effect in the study".

The authors used two methods to ascertain the flow of information and to assess motives. In order to find out about the flow of information, the primary respondents were asked whether they had passed on information to secondary respondents. There are problems with this method because it depends on the respondent's recall behaviour. And this can be influenced by his/her wanting to please the researchers. Although on the basis of their answers 52 secondary respondents were chosen, there is no attempt to study what information they had passed on and whether it was factual. On p.421, it is pointed out that secondary respondents had only acquired 14.14 per cent of the information, that these secondary respondents did not pass on any information, and that this conclusively proved that there was only a two-step flow and not a multi-step flow. It is interesting to note that the researchers do not study the reasons for such low information-acquisition. The predominant emphasis is on

the success of the method that was investigated, i.e., two-step flow, not on whether the level of information gained was sufficient to lead to its use.

There are also problems with the second method which was administered, the TAT test. Both primary and secondary respondents were shown a series of pictures of a man talking and another listening, and their "n-Ach" was assessed according to their ability to guess what the man in the picture was saying. This is based on an extremely subjective analysis. The researchers decide what sort of answer indicates "change-proneness". There could be many answers that indicated change-proneness, which are not included in the researcher's framework.

The results too are confusing. While on p.422, the authors state: "The educational levels of PRs showed a significant relationship to the amount of information acquired from the telecast message," on p.425 they say: "The farmer's lack of formal education beyond primary classes, therefore, does not seem to retard consumption and utilisation of a televised instructional message provided that the farmer possesses a strong urge to change." It comes down to attitudes in the end. While they do state that there is an information gain among the primary respondents, they do not indicate its use. They show no proof of the utilisation of the message. Nor do they establish a causal relationship.

There are a number of problems with this sort of research, including the fact that the variables such as change-proneness and achievement-motivation are conceptually too closely related. Situational variables which are much more important in establishing the utilisation of the message are not explored. In the end, as is typical of diffusion research, it is the human "urge" and not structural factors that matter.

2. "Differential source-utilisation patterns at awareness stage in progressive and non-progressive villages in India", Chamala, S., pp.281-291, in Extension Education and Rural Development, Vol. I, eds Crouch, B.R. and Chamala, S., John Wiley and Sons Ltd, NY, 1981.

This study is set in two villages, Jounti (progressive) and Bazidpur (non-progressive), in Kanijhawala Block, Delhi. The two villages were divided into progressive and non-progressive on the basis of their relative use of fertilisers and high-yielding varieties (HYV) of seed. The researcher's main intention is to find out source-utilisation patterns in the two villages in coming to an

awareness of HYV and fertilisers. The two villages have more or less the same material conditions, but differ in their attitudes to adoption. Farmers in the non-progressive village are more fatalistic and parochial and do not show risk-preference.

A total of 227 villagers from both the villages figure in the sample. The researcher has a basic premise: that source-utilisation is indicative of modernity. That is to say, the use of radio and institutionalised sources such as the extension agency is indicative of modernity, while the use of traditional inter-personal channels is not. Using a sociometric technique, the researcher comes to the conclusion that 36 people in the progressive village and 18 people in the non-progressive village used institutionalised sources for their information, and that this was a valid indicator of the modernity of the progressive village.

This was because the farmers in the progressive village had more rational value-systems consisting of scientism, liberalism and cosmopolitanness (sic) than the non-progressive village. They also showed greater social participation than the non-progressive farmers" (p.287).

Apart from the methodological weaknesses inherent in techniques used to measure personality characteristics, the study, which is a typical example of a diffusion study, is also quite badly executed. In the very beginning of the study, the researcher classifies the 56 villages in three categories - progressive, non-progressive and developing. There are no indicators of the material or mental levels of people in the developing village compared with those in the progressive and non-progressive villages. In fact, before too long, the category as a whole disappears and no explanation is given for its disappearance.

In the study, radio use is an indication of the progressiveness of villagers. But since there are so few radio sets in the villages (27 in the progressive village and 24 in the non-progressive village) the difference does not necessarily indicate that those in the non-progressive village are non-progressive in terms of their innovative behaviour. If the researcher had shown differences in adoption levels between the two villages, based on source-utilisation, he could have made a case. Awareness does not necessarily lead to adoption, and adoption is a better indication of progressiveness than mere awareness. The researcher also makes a preferential distinction between institutionalised and non-institutionalised sources of information

and assumes that source-utilisation of institutionalized sources is a valid indicator of progressiveness. This is a tenuous assumption. In my experience interpersonal sources of communication have more credibility at the village level than impersonal sources such as the radio.

While the researcher includes source-utilisation at the level of extension agency as an indicator of progressiveness, he comes to a contradictory conclusion on (p.287): "'More farmers (13.33 per cent) from the non-progressive village had heard first from the Block level extension agency about the high-yielding wheat varieties than those from the progressive village (6.66 per cent). This finding clearly indicates the non-progressiveness of those in the progressive village, a fact which the researcher does not acknowledge anywhere in the study.

Apart from the shoddy interpretation of findings, the researcher also makes generalisations which cannot be substantiated solely on the basis of evidence from the study. After interviews with the farmers, he finds that two farmers in the non-progressive village are not aware of HYV wheat, on which he concludes: "This indicates to some extent the restricted nature of interpersonal interaction going on in the non-progressive village" (p.289).

The study indicates one of the shortcomings of diffusion research -- an over-emphasis on the process of message diffusion rather than on awareness leading to use.

There is of course another major problem with these studies, what Elliot calls their "static-abstraction":

The mass communication process is treated in isolation from any other social process. Social variables may be introduced at a late stage in the analysis, but these too are abstracted from the social context, posing once again the problem of meaning. The sampling and analysis techniques used ensure that respondents are wrenched from their social situation, from ongoing social processes, from the groups and subcultures that provide a framework of meaning for their activities (1974, p.243).

The main characteristics of such research are its socio-psychological behaviourist emphasis, its abstraction of people from their social environment, a predominantly quantitative methodology and an overemphasis on communication as the determining factor in social change. A great many of this sort of studies have

been made; and there is a vein of similarity, in terms of the conclusions reached and the methods used, that runs through most of them. They have not, for the most part, contributed in any significant way to knowledge about the larger process of development communication. By and large they have been content to juggle around variables, looking at discrete relationships, and they have failed to place their studies within the larger dimensions of society.

Such repliation is because the variables investigated have been the same and the theoretical basis has remained stagnant. There has been no attempt to look at the development communication process from within a more substantial theoretical base. Such replication is found in other areas as well of development communication research in India. For example, Neurath (1959, 1961-62) found that group listening and group discussion are the best way to bring about community action, in the context of the radio rural forums; Jain (1969) has merely replicated these findings. He found that group discussion followed by group decision was the optimal way to community action.

Apart from the SITE studies, especially the Kheda experiment which looked at the communication process in a different perspective and from within a different theoretical base, studies on development communication in India have contibrueted very little to the advancement of the knowledge of communication as a process.

Communication Research in Family Planning

Since 1952, when a national population policy of fertility control was adopted, a large amount of money and resources have been channelled towards the propagation of the small family norm. Both impersonal and interpersonal channels have been used to spread the message of family planning. The rationale behind this programme was based on the neo-Malthusian belief that underdevelopment is caused by a growth in population that outstripped any increases in production.

Communication research in family planning has been concerned with assessing behavioural changes in the audience, the characteristics of sources, and the effectiveness of interpersonal and media messages. The major part of the studies in family planning communication research - more than 500 - comes under the category known as KAP studies, i.e., studies that describe the increases in knowledge, awareness and practice, in relation to both personal and

impersonal family planning communication programmes. As Bardhan, Dubey and Mulik (1984, p.4) note:

The major contribution of this group of studies was in the form of delineating audience willingness to know, learn and be communicated on the problems and methods of population and family size control. In other words, these established and created faith among the communications network (regarding the) existence of audience for family planning information, education and communication.

It is important to recognise that the rationale for using communication for family planning is closely allied to the ethos of the dominant paradigm of communication. As Everett and Rekha define it,

Family Planning is the idea, activity by a programme or behaviour of an individual or a couple, concerned with limiting or controlling the number of births. Communication is the process of transmitting information from a source to a receiver with the intention of effecting a behaviour change. So family planning communication consists of a variety of information and persuasion activities directed towards influencing a target audience to limit their fertility. This goal of family planning communications programmes is one measure of programme effectiveness in evaluation studies, along with the more immediate effect of change in KAP on practice of family planning variables (1976, p.113).

The aim of family planning communication is, according to Rogers, "(i) to create knowledge of the idea of family planning, of specific planning methods, and/or of the small family norm, (ii) to form or change individuals' attitudes towards these ideas so that they are more favourable, and (iii) to secure the adoption of family planning methods, so as to prevent births" (1976, p.115).

In operation family planning, communication research follows methods and practices similar to those used in agricultural extension communication research. Most of the KAP studies, for example, are survey-based and usually employ a before-after interview module. A number of them have investigated increases in the knowledge of contraception, sterilisation, small family norm and awareness of other family planning methods. Bhende's (1968) study, for example, investigated knowledge increase among a sample of Bombay housewives after a radio programme on the IUCD (Intra-uterine Contraceptive Device). She found that there were general increases

in knowledge and that there were decreases in misunderstandings of IUCD. 52 per cent said that they would share information and 33 per cent that they would go in for IUCD. Chandrasekhar (1955) had noted in his survey-based study, that 55 per cent of the husbands and 58.11 per cent of the wives in his sample favoured family planning. But as Kar (1975) points out, KAP studies might show knowledge gain, but this does not necessarily lead to practice.

There have been a number of source-based studies too. For example, a University of Kerala/Department of Statistics (1965) study revealed the limited impact of mass media such as newspapers and radio in the propagation of family planning. It also found that there was widespread illiteracy, very few radios and that women could not use the radio facilities provided at the Panchayat because of social constraints. Renu's (1969) study came to similar conclusions. In her study of message-awareness in three villages in Delhi, she found that only the literate normally benefited from the message. Similarly the 1970 Evaluation of Family Planning Programmes in India reported that the role of newspapers and films was quite negligible in spreading the message of family planning. A number of studies have looked at the role of the opinion leader in the family planning message dissemination process. For example Raina (1967) stressed the need to cultivate the Pradhans or village chiefs in order to promote the dissemination of family planning information. Kar stressed the importance of cultivating opinion leaders:

Studies on the impact of mass communications show that a minority are usually reached directly and this minority are the more innovative persons of influence, more prone towards change, better educated, and more exposed to mass communications. Thus, often an effective change in a few "gatekeepers" or opinion leaders (qualitative change) rather than quantitative change in many could be a valid and realistic expectation of communication efforts in the critical phase of a programme (1975, pp.41f.).

Very few studies bring out the extraneous reasons that often lead to the adoption of family planning. Barnabas is one of the few who have dealt with these:

The major motivation for volunteers seems to be the financial incentive. A study indicated that only 2 per cent were motivated to undergo the operation because of the desire to limit their family size, whereas 62 per cent were motivated by incentives (1976, p.375).

A major factor for the relative failure of family planning during the last decade was the Emergency and the programme of forced sterilisations that was carried on under the New National Population Policy. As Francine (1977, p.565) notes, "the family planning programme degenerated in many areas into a terrifying campaign of forced sterilisations". The fear of sterilisation directly induced by the excesses of the Emergency has not been entirely dispelled.

KAP studies do not as a rule reveal any sociological understanding of the reasons for the rural demographic situation and its roots in the overwhelming reality of poverty, indebtedness and unemployment. These are the structural factors that militate against the adoption of the small family norm. Security in old age is imperative, and given the rate of infant mortality in India, which is in some areas as high as 30 per cent, a couple must have six or seven children to count on at least two survivors to look after them in their old age.

It must also be remembered, that because of the prevalence of the dowry system, male progeny are more "valuable". The part played by the prevailing religious ethos and the fears and suspicions generated in a milieu of communal conflicts has not been adequately investigated. Unless communication efforts recognize this larger dimension, they are bound to be ineffective. As Djurfeldt and Lindberg said:

As long as the Government cannot create an economic and social structure which stimulates a reduction in birth rates, where other social institutions can take over the functions now fulfilled by the children, it cannot expect the people to abstain from producing the children which, in the present social situation, are their only security (1975, p.207).

The SITE Studies

Both theoretically and in terms of the methodology used, the substantial research related to the evaluation of the SITE programme remains the most advanced body of communication research in India. More than 50 studies on SITE have been undertaken, and they include evaluatory studies on the impact of SITE programme on children, teacher training, agricultural innovation, adult education, etc. The studies include Agarwal and Sinha (1981), Agarwal (1978), Agarwal, et al, (1977), Sinha (1985), Sondhi (1983), Shukla (1979), and UNESCO (1983). There is also a considerable body

of literature which has been written on SITE in the Journal of Communication, Vidura, Media Asia, and in various other magazines.

The most distinctive feature of the SITE studies, especially from the perspective of development communication research in India, is their multi-disciplinary underpinnings. Sociology, social anthropology and social psychology (including their theory and practice) have been applied in these studies. For the first time in India, development communication research was carried out on the basis of continuous evaluation, which included pre-, current and post-evaluatory studies, or as Agarwal calls it, context, input, process and summative evaluations.

The SITE programmes took place during the months August 1975 to July 1976. The programmes were beamed to 2, 329 villages in six states (or clusters) - including AP (Andhra Pradesh), Karnataka, MP (Madhya Pradesh), Orissa, Bihar and Rajasthan. A further 490 villages were serviced in Kheda District, Gujarat, but Kheda had its own facilities for community production and is in many ways different, both in its objectives and the way it organised itself to achieve these objectives, from the major "macro" goals of SITE.

The objectives of SITE were both general and specific. The general objective was to gain experience in large-scale communications programming, hardware and software manufacture, and the management, operation and maintenance of a satellite-ETV programme. The specific objective was to contribute to attitude change in family planning, agricultural innovation, etc. But as Mody puts it, the main objective of SITE was to improve the technological horizons of indigenous manufacture of both hardware and software:

The project was designed primarily as an opportunity for Indians to gain and share expertise in handling daily operational problems related to satellite TV hardware, programming, costs, and management on a small scale prior to launching their own national satellite for television, telephony and meteorology in 1981 (1979, p.91)

Or, as Chandra and Karnik (1976) have said, it was a "gigantic case study to find answers to technical and programmatic problems in the planning, designing, organising and creating of a viable system of educational broadcasting satellite". As I have indicated, the main secondary purpose was to effect behavioural changes in the audience and the major emphasis of research was to

evaluate the extent of such change. The Agarwal study lists there objectives:

(i) to survey ... extent to which a climate for development has been created through a measurement of awareness, knowledge, adoption, etc., (ii) to survey whether SITE had widened horizons, raised the educational aspirations, developed empathy, etc, (iii) to explore the possibilities of attitudinal and behavioural changes from traditional to non-traditional way of life (quoted in UNESCO, 1983, p.31)."

Apart from the Kheda studies, which have a different conceptual framework, most SITE studies have emphasised this behaviouristic approach to the evaluation of attitude change. Thus it is not wrong to say that for all their methodological eclecticism, these evaluatory studies show a distinct affinity to the research priorities in the dominant paradigm of development communication research.

The SITE studies bring out the technological success of SITE; on its effectiveness there is only "cautious enthusiasm". "There is much potential for the use of such technology, but the conditions need to be changed" - that is a frequent line of thought that comes up in these studies. It is ironic that the elaborate pre-SITE research did not take note of the existence of such conditions, and plan a programme that would help change these conditions. In other words, SITE did not prepare the village for change and create the conditions that would make effective the message of development.

One of the major findings of SITE studies was that although there were frequent increases in information gain between experimental and control groups, this did not necessarily lead to innovation. As Sondhi (1983, p.145) puts it, "...the agricultural programmes failed by and large either to increase knowledge of new ways of increasing agricultural production or to promote adoption of innovative practices". The Planning Commission study (quoted in Agrawal, 1983, p.67) also came to similar conclusions: "SITE accomplished very little in the way of change in the levels of awareness, knowledge and adoption of new methods in the three areas of agriculture, health and family planning." When methods of analysis and the criteria and priorities of analysis derive from the dominant paradigm, the results are bound to reflect its epistemological limitations.

The problem related to structural conditions is illustrated in the finding from the Agrawal and Sinha study. The programmes telecast on the 20-Point Programme were those on the Minimum Wages Act and the abolishment of bonded labour. But as the researchers note, there was no follow-up by the government to implement these messages.

These programmes initially created high hopes among the poor viewers... As a result, labourers demanded wages at the rate of Rs 5 per day against the prevailing rate of Rs 2 and Rs 3 per day. But in fact nothing happened and nobody turned up to help them, no increase in wages. It generated a sense of indifference and apathy among them (1981, p.126).

The fallacy of the notion that communications technology alone will lead to occupation and development is amply illustrated by the SITE programmes. There were a number of other problems that cropped up - among them the need for local-specificity in programming, the use of local language and the telecasting of relevant material. Sondhi (1983) notes the wrong timing of agricultural programmes in Rajasthan, problems in evaluation including the mismatching of experimental and control groups, contradictory findings, and lack of prompt feedback.

In contrast, the Kheda experiment learned from the start that the prior provision of conditions was imperative for the success of the programmes. It was based on a larger concept of development and the role of development communication within it. It gave primacy to the human being. And it proved that development communication with the poor and by them had so much more potential for bringing about real change than programmes that were imposed from above.

Among the Kheda studies are Chitnis (1983), and a whole issue of SEMINAR, (December 1978). Kheda was an offshoot of SITE. It was an experiment that started under SITE, but it gathered a momentum of its own and showed the possibilities of using a community-based and local-specific, decentralised communication system to bring about authentic changes in society.

There are large differences between the organisation and outlook of SITE and the Kheda project. The Kheda credo, for example, conceptualises development, and the role of development communication within it, in terms of an interactive process that leads to the liberation of the human being from the bondages of

unjust structures and belief systems. There is the recognition that a system exists, that it is inherently unjust, and that the role of communication should be to help change this system. Chitnis commends Kheda's approach to development:

Development...implies a break from the status-quo, from inertia: it implies movement, change...Economic development cannot take place in isolation, it requires change in the social system and..it implies breaking away from bondages and oppression: it necessitates awakening of the individual and his self-emphasis (1983, pp.151f).

As Yashpal notes, they were also aware that communication could be used for domesticating the masses or as a tool in their liberation. They were aware of the conditions that were required for the success of their programmes. Yashpal agrees that communication can be used for the benefit of the poor but it is also "... a technology that can be used for homogenisation, indoctrination, and for the control of the minds of the many by the few. We believe that precisely this sort of situation is the one which demands early attention in terms of developing subsidiary technologies, organisational structures, and a culture to ensure that the future works in a direction which is desirable (1978, p.14).

The major emphasis in the Kheda project is on the non-neutrality of communication and the operation of communication. Involvement in communication for development implies a taking of sides. It means involvement with the people, on their terms, based on participation and access.

The most important spin-off of Kheda is that it demonstrated the use of low-cost communication technology, like the port-a-pack video and of programme styles and formats that could together be used in a community development situation. The technology was both cheap and versatile, and it was adaptable to the conditions of rural society.

Vishwanath (1978, pp.28-32) talks of making programmes with the people and at times leaving them to chart the direction of the production, in their own languages and in formats that are uniquely their own. In order to bring home to the oppressed the various injustices they suffer from, and in order to conscientise them and mobilise them, programmes were made with them:

The whole rehearsal was allowed to develop with no holds barred as to the techniques of acting,

technology of shooting or equipment constraints. It started dawning on many of us that the problem was theirs and the performance was theirs and finally whatever was captured on the video tape was going to be theirs. One got the feeling that "social relevance", "credibility", "identification", and "comprehensibility" all existed - almost waiting for the camera to capture them and the video tape to record them.

Atypical Studies in Development Communications

I have shown that the main accent in the study of development communication in India derives from the ethos of the dominant concept of development. Typically the studies have stressed the primacy of a quantitative methodology and tried to measure effects and attitudinal and behavioural changes. The accent has been on the individual, and the larger context within which development communication takes place has often been downplayed.

One of the exceptions to the rule is Rao's (1966) study of development communication in two villages in India. Although this study falls within the parameters of the dominant paradigm, and the author's ultimate concern is with communication as "bringer" of change, it is a qualitative study set within the larger process of village life in the two communities. He has therefore been able to capture the "...flow of information, the circulation of knowledge and ideas" (p.6) within the social, political and economic frameworks of these two villages. He also brings out some of the dilemmas facing Indian society. For example, in the context of the non-progressive village, Pathuru, the limitations of education in alleviating poverty are intensely felt by the women: "Will education feed our children? They are more useful at home or the farm" (p.70).

But Rao sees non-adoption as a sign of traditionalism and the refusal to educate children as a sign of conservatism. And he sees qualities such as cosmopolitanism as the reason for the modernity of the people in Kothuru. This study has major limitations, but it is an important study. At a time when qualitative studies were frowned upon, Rao was able to locate the process of communication within the larger dimensions of society.

Vilanilam's (1976) study of the developmental content in four newspapers in India is another offbeat study. His main purpose is to find out whether there are differences in the quantity of development news between conglomerate and independent newspapers. The papers analysed are Aj, The Hindu, Malayala Manorama and The

Times of India. There are problems with the study in terms of categories chosen and assumptions made. For example, one of his assumptions is that a "...quantitative measurement of the three major categories (developmental, governmental, political)... of news in the sample newspapers is sufficient test of (people's) interest in those types of news" (p.10). But the categories themselves reflect the researcher's notions of what development is and is not. For example, the category on developmental news includes a wide range of sub-categories including news about telecommunications, tourism and transport development, economic activity, etc. Some of these sub-categories do overlap - for example economic activity and agricultural development.

More problematic is the "pigeon-holing". For example, labour management interaction and strikes are not included in development news but in the political news category. The problem is that categorisation is itself an extremely subjective process. Of course a more important problem is that development cannot be divorced from politics. It needs to be recognised that the mere reporting of news, say, on education or health, does not make a particular paper more inclined towards developmental news than another. It depends on the nature of the report, on the way it reports facts, on how bold it is to expose indifference, mismanagement and corruption. In his conclusion the researcher does find that all papers analysed devote more space to political news and governmental news than to developmental news, irrespective of whether they are independent or conglomerate papers.

The study by Hartmann, et al (1983) on "Mass Media and Village Life in India" is an important one because it looks at the process of communication within the larger processes of development and underdevelopment. It is also methodologically much more rigorous than most of the other studies on development communication in India. It employs both social-anthropological and survey methods. One of the major findings of the study is that the social structure of society determines in many ways one's access to communication and use of it. Within the village community, one's social and economic status still determines one's access to and use of communications. The study also brings out the limitations of the institutions of development with their alliances of interests.

Very few of communication theorists have paused to ask questions like the following: What is communication for and in whose

interests? Who are the poor and what can communication do for them? What can it do with them? How can the poor respond to communication and what conditions should be provided in order for this response to take place? What are the larger contexts of development and underdevelopment? Does communication contribute to the reinforcing of inequalities?

Such questions have not been answered by theorists of development communication. Narula (1984), Desai (1977), Raghavan (1983), Verghese (UNESCO, Document No. 44), Sondhi (1983), and a host of others have theorised on the role of development communication in India. But none of them, as far as I know, with the exception of Vittal (1984), has shown an inclination to answer questions about the larger role of communication in the prevailing Indian conditions.

In a later chapter I shall study the phenomenon of "action groups" or people's movements which work with an alternative strategy of development communication. I shall look at their theoretical basis, history, and contributions to development and development communication. Before that, however, it is necessary to take a look at the cultural situation within which they set their priorities in combating underdevelopment.

CHAPTER IV

CULTURE AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

In the preceding three chapters, my primary objective was to locate the study of development communication in India within the larger context of development and underdevelopment. The focus has been on the economic and political dimensions of that situation and the role of external and internal factors that have contributed to underdevelopment or development, and to development communication in India.

In this chapter, I intend to study the role of the dominant culture in India, and that of traditional media in the dissemination of the Great Tradition of Hinduism. I shall also look at the part played by the "populist" film culture in Tamil Nadu.⁽¹⁾ It is my contention that one of the major reasons for the continuing underdevelopment of the vast majority of the Indian people is related to their mental subservience to the myths disseminated through the traditional culture on the one hand and through the medium of the regional film on the other. For example, belief in the divine origins of the caste system or in cultural nationalism as a sufficient expression of "development" has had anti-developmental consequences. Such myths have played an important role in legitimising both traditional authority and the authority of the state.

The reason for including this chapter is three-fold. First, it points to the deficiencies in contemporary "critical" theories of development and development communication that have constantly de-emphasised the role of internal or indigenous factors in the underdevelopment of people. Second, both sociologists and cultural anthropologists, in their studies of the "social reality of India", have rather uncritically accepted the autonomy of the

1. "Populist", as different from "popular", culture is forced on people; it is not a culture that has evolved from the people and formed by them. By extension, the popular theatre denotes a theatre made by the people and leads to the shaping of popular culture.

cultural components of the Indian social system, as for instance the caste system, and have often under-estimated their role in the legitimation of the existing forces and relations of production. The Great Tradition is portrayed as working for harmony and consensus; its role in de-legitimising conflict and dissent and in stifling the revolutionary potential of the masses is underplayed. I would like to underline the "ideological" role of the Great Tradition and how it encourages passiveness and acquiescence.

Third, this chapter provides the background for my study of social action groups and their role in development in India. The demythification of the dominant culture is an important aspect of their strategy of development. I want to argue against depending on the "primacy" of cultural struggle; the non-Brahminic cultural offensives against the Great Tradition in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu stand in marked contrast to the cultural struggles waged by action groups which use such struggles not as an end in themselves but as part of a larger strategy of development.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section is a study of the Great Tradition of Hinduism and its dissemination through the traditional media of communications, especially the traditional theatre. The focus here is on the ideological role of the traditional theatre in promoting and legitimising the myths of the Great Tradition. The second section is a study of two cultural offensives against the Great Tradition, by two non-Brahmin movements, one in Maharashtra and the other in Tamil Nadu. I concentrate on the example from Tamil Nadu, primarily because the non-Brahmin movement here grew into a viable political party through the use of traditional and mass media, but also because it is an enduring example of the way in which the media can be used to spread the message of the legitimacy of the existing political order. Even more importantly, it reveals the power of the media to win consent, promote passiveness, and deepen people's dependence on an existing order.

I begin with a brief analysis of the term "culture" and an examination of the dominant focus of research on culture in India.

A Note on Culture

The term "culture" is multi-discursive; it is difficult to endow it with one single meaning because it is used within the context of a variety of discourses. In other words, its meaning

varies according to its use from within a particular mode of discourse. Without getting into the polemics of what culture is and is not, it is sufficient to note that traditionally, the investigation into culture has been the prerogative of either cultural anthropologists or the theorists of mass society. Of late, "cultural studies" have helped pioneer new methods of investigation into culture and have used concepts such as "ideology", "hegemony" and "class struggle", and interpreted these concepts through making use of a variety of discourses including semiotics, psychoanalysis and literary studies in order to investigate the processes of legitimation that help order the social divisions of society.

Culture, as it has traditionally been studied, has on the one hand been seen in terms of the investigations into the "way of life" of a people. It has included the study of meanings and values and their permeation in societal institutions, in the community and in individual members of the community; of their transfer from generation to generation and of their religious sources. Culture has also been studied in terms of the primacy of certain ideas and artifacts, of the cultivation of individual sensibility, and of aesthetics or the learning of the art of "appreciation". Mass society theorists have made distinctions between cultures - between the culture of the elite which stood for everything that was good and priceless on the one hand, and the culture of the folk that was rustic but nevertheless functionally adequate for the ordered running of society on the other. Mass society theorists such as Nietzsche, Elliot, Arnold and Gasset, living as they did in times which saw the emergence of both democratic forms of institutions and popular forms of self-expression, were horrified at the effects the emergent mass culture had on the hitherto ordered way of life. The dissolution of societal values and the disintegration of settled ways of life were seen in terms of the breakdown of culture. Bennett comments on the typical reaction of a mass society theorist (in this case Matthew Arnold) to the social problems of nineteenth century England:

Arnold responded to the political problem of social disorder by redefining it as a cultural problem. If anarchy threatens, he argued, it is because the mechanisms of "culture", that is, of an integrated system of values, the best that has been thought and known in the world, have broken down, with the result that different classes pursue their own interests, rather than subordinate them to a consensually agreed-upon centre of authority (1982, p.35).

Cultural anthropologists, on the other hand, including people like Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, tended to see culture in terms of a discrete entity. Steeped in the paradigm of structural-functionalism, they conceptualised culture in terms of kinship systems, patterns of leadership and the permeation of religion in all aspects of the life of the community. Culture was given prime importance, and in fact economics and politics were made subservient to culture which was conceived as the determining influence in primitive societies.

They tended to study the culture of the colonies in terms of Western concepts and distinctions. Harmony, consensus and integration were the major points of emphasis. The primacy given to culture in structural functionalism meant that the theorists of modernisation too were inclined to see the problem of underdevelopment as a purely cultural problem. Lerner, Hagen, Mclelland and others viewed changes in values, attitudes and beliefs as a major component of development. They stressed the importance of consensus and harmony, and downplayed conflict and dissension and their sociological reasons. Ideational change was for them the crux of the problem of modernisation. There was a distinct determinism in their analysis of modernisation - a determinism which stressed value-change as sufficient cause for development.

In terms of this study, culture is to be seen not in terms of the autonomy of discrete entities such as the traditional media, the caste system or popular film culture, but in terms of their indissoluble relationships with the economic and political aspects of life. Culture is the way of life of a community and of the individuals that make up that community. It is that factor which orders society, prescribes its roles, and legitimises its values, structures and beliefs.

There are thus two components to culture - culture as behaviour based on a value system and culture as a material entity like, for example, the form, practices or production and the product of both traditional and mass media. The media of communications therefore play an important role in the reinforcement of culture. They aid the reproduction of culture, i.e., "the institutionally or informally organised social production and reproduction of sense, meaning and consciousness" (O'Sullivan, 1983, p.53).

In this study, such reproduction of sense, meaning and consciousness is seen in terms of its role in legitimising the forces and relations of production. The centrality of language as a

vital vehicle for the dissemination of the dominant culture will be emphasised throughout the study. Hall stressed this vital connection between culture and language. According to him, culture is "materialised in production, embodied in social organisation, advanced through the development of practical as well as theoretical technique, above all, preserved and transmitted through language" (1977, p.318).

The Study of culture in India

The analyses of culture in India have been influenced to a large extent by Western studies in cultural anthropology. Whether looked at in terms of the caste system, the "Great" and "Little" traditions of Hinduism, the social role of the tradition of Hindu festivals, cultural performances and pilgrimages, culture was most often understood in relation to distinctions, contrasts and continuities and its integrative and consensus-forming role in society. The continuities and the consensual nature of relationships between the Great and Little traditions of Hinduism, for example, have been emphasised by a number of Indian and Western cultural anthropologists and sociologists. Among them are Singer (1972), Panchanardikar (1970), Greenwood (1981), Nicholas (1981), Marriott (1955), Srinivas (1962,1965), Barnouw (1954), Moffat (1979) and Cohn (1955). Similarly, a number of sociologists and cultural anthropologists, including a few of those mentioned above and others like Nicholas (1981), Gough (1955, 1956, 1973), and Schechner and Hess (1977) have emphasised the consensus-forming role of pilgrimages and festivals, primarily through the sharing of a mythological tradition. Singer notes the continuities in culture between the Great and Little traditions through the sharing of a common symbolic universe.

The most striking aspect of the continuity in culture between village and city is the common stock of mythological and legendary themes shared by both village and city man. The same stories from the Ramayana, the Bhagavatapurana, and the Mahabaratha⁽²⁾ are recited, sung and played in both

2. The Ramayana and The Mahabaratha, are the two great Hindu epics which received their final form between 200 B.C. and 300 A.D. Deeply didactic in character, both have left their mark on the cultural and religious life of India. The Puranas or religious poems were of a later origin. The Bhagavata Purana tells the childhood stories of Krishna and has continued to be a uniquely influential religious text.

village and city. Even among a colony of untouchables, who were otherwise culturally impoverished, I found a teacher who knew these plays, teaching boys to act them out. It is because they perform and know the same stories that we can say that the villager and urbanite belong to the same culture and civilisation (1972, p.75).

Similarly, Moffat, in a study of an Untouchable community⁽³⁾ in Tamil Nadu, focuses on the notion of consensus as expressed through the cognitive evaluations for status of its members in society.

In their definition of their own identity and their lowness in ToRil (duty) (sic)⁽⁴⁾ and myth... the Harijans of Endavur are in fundamental consensus with the higher castes. They define themselves as low for the same reasons as the higher castes do, and they agree with the evaluation that persons with their characteristics should be low (1979, p.129).

Culture, in other words, has been predominantly looked at in terms of its ideational aspects and, as the above quotations reveal, the material basis of culture has been consistently evaded as a topic worthy of study. The caste system, for example, has been looked at in terms of a system of ideas and the central ideas have been endowed with a uniqueness and determinancy without reference to its "material" base. It is looked at consistently from the "top-down" perspective. That it legitimises material and mental inequalities on the basis of one's location in the caste hierarchy has been de-emphasised, and instead its functional role and its ideology have been given priority of analysis. As Meillassoux says,

Many of these studies, steeped in an idealist conservative ideology, and anxious to discover in the Indian system the expression of a universal social harmony, do no more than raise the apologetics of the Brahmin ideologists to an apparently scientific level (1973, p.90).

Both Beteille (1969, p.18) and Gupta (1981) note that this emphasis on the ideational aspects of the caste system has resulted in the playing down of its material basis. Gupta has this to say on

3. The Untouchables, so called because even their touch was believed to pollute, are the lowest in the social hierarchy. The term is no longer used, but untouchability is still practised in many parts of India. Gandhi renamed them Harijans, meaning people of God, but many of them have taken the name Dalits, a word which originally meant humble and now signifies the oppressed and downtrodden sections of people.

4. ToRil or Thozhil means profession or work, and not duty.

the consequences of this lopsided emphasis: "The fecundity of the Hindu mind, is... placed in the forefront, relegating the role of economic exploitation, classes and power in Indian society, to at best, a secondary position (p.2094). A number of other sociologists, including Menscher (1974), Alavi (1973-74) and Kothari (1970), have stressed the importance of investigating the caste system in terms of its role in legitimising the forces and relations of production. Menscher has this to say about the different reality:

Looked at from the bottom-up, the system has two striking aspects. First, from the point of view of people at the lowest end of the scale, caste has functioned (and continues to function) as a very effective system of economic exploitation. Second, one of the functions of the system has been to prevent the formation of social classes with any commonality of interest or unity of purpose (p.469).

The Great and Little Traditions

Investigations into the Great and Little traditions of Hinduism have similarly emphasised this functional role. Apart from the elitism that is so evident in the studies on the Great Tradition, there has also been a marked tendency for its apologists to downplay its ideological role and its realisation through the organisation and production of the traditional media of communication.

Before elaborating on the main thesis of this chapter, it may be helpful to add a brief explanation on the Great and Little traditions. Marriott is of the opinion that the Great Tradition in societies evolved from the interplay of indigenous folk civilisations, but that it acquired, in time, a logic of its own and an all-encompassing spread in its ideology:

A primary or indigenous civilisation is one which grows out of its own folk culture by an orthogenetic process - by a straight line of indigenous development. The "great tradition" which is characteristically developed by such a primary civilisation is a carrying forward of cultural materials, norms, and values that were already contained in local little traditions. If the great tradition absorbs foreign materials, it subjects them to syncretisation. An indigenous great tradition remains in constant communication with its own little tradition through a sacred literature, a class of literati, a sacred geography, and the rites and ceremonies associated with each of these. One effect of the development of an indigenous great tradition is to universalise the cultural consciousness of persons

within it as they become aware of a greater sphere of common culture (1955, p.181).

This definition of the Great Tradition is important for the purposes of this study, both from the point of view of what it emphasises and what it de-emphasises. It emphasises the historical evolution of the Great Tradition from indigenous little traditions, the absorbtive capacity of the Great Tradition, the various channels of absorbtion and the constant communications between the two traditions.

A significant characteristic of Hinduism is its ability to absorb and syncretise diverse traditions and modes of religious worship, particularly tribal forms of worship and the worship and religious practices of the lower castes. In fact, this heterogeneity of Hinduism is one of the major reasons for both its national spread and its survival in spite of organised onslaughts by missionary religions like Islam and Christianaity. Both Sharma (1970) and Srinivas (1965) underline this heterogeneity that characterises Hinduism. But it is interesting to note that Srinivas, while emphasising the heterogenous character of Hinduism, prefers to hold up the continuities between the two cultures, not the "depedencies", both material and mental, that have resulted from the continuities.

The presence, within Sanskritic Hinduism, of a vast and ever-growing mythology, the worship of trees, rivers and mountains, and the association of deities and epic heroes with local spots everywhere in India, makes easy the absorbtion of non-Sanskritic cults and deities... The Pantheistic bias in Hinduism also contributes to the Sanskritisation of the deities and beliefs of low castes and outlying communities. The doctrine that everything in the universe is animated by God, and that all the various deities are only forms assumed by the same Brahma makes the process of absorbtion easier... The Gods of the lower castes are not denied, but affirmed, and affirmed in such a way that their subsequent Sanskritisation is rendered easier (p.227).

Srinivas's observations highlight one of the major reasons as to why reform movements like the Brahmo Samaj⁽⁵⁾ have been

5. A Hindu reform movement of the 19th century, founded by Ram Mohan Roy who fought for the abolition of sati, the practice of widows immolating themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands. The Arya Samaj was another reform movement, but more orthodox in character.

unable to make any real changes within the system. Sanskritic Hinduism has in effect been Brahminic Hinduism, the monopoly of the higher castes. What is available to all castes is a common body of myth that has its origins in the Sanskritic scriptures. It is mediated and appropriated through participation in festivals and the traditional media of communications. This common body of myth helped legitimise the existing order of society, and such legitimation worked through processes like Sanskritisation and the "acculturation"⁽⁶⁾ of the tribal peoples. The Great Tradition in fact played a distinctly ideological role in the legitimation of caste-based inequalities.

It was precisely through the spread of the mythology of Sanskritic Hinduism and the process of cultural conditioning that the lower castes internalised their status in the caste-based social order. In fact, as Moffat points out, the impure castes, who are also placed on the basis of their position in the "pollution" hierarchy, replicate the principle of the caste system amongst themselves:

The Untouchables of Endavur replicate among themselves, to the best of their materially limited abilities, almost every relationship from which they have been excluded by the Uur castes. And this replicatory order is constructed in the same cultural code that marks highness and lowness, purity and impurity, superordination and subordination, among the higher castes. It thus implies among the lowest castes of Endavur a deep cultural consensus on the cognitive and evaluative assumptions of the system as a whole (1979, p.98).

While the Great Tradition is based on Sanskritic Hinduism, the Little Traditions are primarily non-Brahminic in origin. As distinct from the worship of "pure" deities, the major accent in the Little Traditions is on the worship of local gods and goddesses such as Mariamma (the goddess of smallpox) and such variants as Gangammal and Parvathamma. The major points of difference between the Great and Little traditions are in terms of (a) a literate vs. an oral tradition; (b) classical vs. folk culture, (like the difference

6. Sanskritisation, a term coined by Srinivas (1973), denotes the attempts of people at the lower caste levels to raise their hierarchical position by adopting the customs of the higher castes, like the wearing of the sacred thread and getting Brahmin priests to officiate at religious ceremonies - a mobility that is possible only if one has economic power or political influence.

between "Bharatanatyam", the classical dance-drama, which is an elitist tradition and the "Terrukoothu", which has non-Sanskritic origins and is a form of traditional folk theatre and does not follow the rules of the Natyashastra or the science of dance).

(c) As distinct from the Great Tradition, the worship of the female principle is dominant in the Little Traditions. These goddesses are usually symbols of fertility or of security. The worship of spirits is also an important aspect of the Little traditions. But, as has already been noted, these lesser deities are connected through myth and tradition to the larger framework of Sanskritic Hinduism. Sharma stresses this continuity between the two traditions:

The worship of impure deities does not constitute a lower or separate level...of Hinduism which has yet to be assimilated to some more universalistic or Sanskritic mainstream, but rather an indispensable adjunct to the worship of the pure deities - an inseparable part of the same system of activity (1970, p.7).

Although local village goddesses are worshipped primarily by lower castes, the fact that these goddesses are also connected through "myth" to the larger Sanskritic framework of Hinduism has facilitated the worship of these goddesses by higher castes and even Brahmins. Thus there is often a blurring of distinctions between those who worship "pure" and "impure" deities at village level.

As will be shown later on in this chapter, this blurring of distinctions has led to high-caste patronage of low-caste festivals and dramatic performances, and reinforced the ideological hold over the masses.

Thus the studies on the culture of India have for the most part concentrated on themes such as the "functional interdependence" between the Great and Little traditions, the integrative aspects and the consensual role of culture in India. The study of conflict has not received sufficient attention, nor has the study of the role of the dominant Brahminic ideology in the legitimation of the existing social order.

The role of language in facilitating systems of domination and dependence has also been consistently underplayed. While the phonetic and linguistic origins of "ritual" language have been investigated, the ideological role of language has scarcely been acknowledged. The language of ritual is transmitted through both the universalised (community and individual participation in festivals, cultural performances and pilgrimages) and personalised

(rites of passage, access to bards, genealogists) forms of cultural activities. What is common to both these forms of cultural activities is their adherence to a common body of myth, which is both familiar to and shared by people and expresses itself through the language of ritual. Ritual language, as distinct from the language of everyday life, has its sources in religion, and its role is expressly related to the task of the legitimation of religion, the connections between secular and metaphysical reality, and the institutions, practices and authority of its temporal manifestations.

There is of course a basic difference between ritual and everyday language. Ritual language, based as it is on the religious scriptures, is typically a "closed" language. It does not lend itself easily to rational scrutiny, and it cannot be studied by using comparisons and cross-references from the world of every-day secular language. On the other hand, it can only be explained through recourse to thoughts and concepts from scriptures and myths. In other words, both its "syntactical" and "propositional" universes are "closed" and, as a result, there is very little room for expressing contradictions and alternatives. Bloch notes some of the features of ritual language and its moorings in religion:

The effect of removing the possibility of alternatives from the mode of communication, as is done by formalisation, makes what is being said beyond logic: its force is traditional authority... Religion is the last place to find anything explained because... religious communication rules out the very tools of explanation which when reintroduced are considered sacriligious or irreverant (1974, pp.66).

Ritual language as an expression of power can be seen from the point of view of (a) its exclusive spread among and accessibility to a privileged minority, and (b) its ideological role through its spill-over into the language of every-day life. Traditionally, the ritual language of the Great Tradition was the exclusive prerogative of Brahmins; only they could study it, have access to its inner meanings, and disseminate it. Given the close connections between ritual and material reality within the caste system in India, the transposing of the ethos expressed in ritual language into the ordinary language of everyday life is a significant aspect of the ideological dominance of the Brahminic conception of secular and metaphysical order. Ideals pertaining to behaviour based on one's position in the caste hierarchy, legitimations of the scriptural basis for showing deference to higher castes, respect for order and authority - all these are among

the traditional ideas that have, through ritual, become accepted as central elements in the apprehension of the caste system. Berger and Luckmann comment on this ability of symbolic language to become a part of the language of every-day life:

Language is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of bringing back these symbols and representing them as objectively real elements in everyday life. In this manner symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents of the reality of every-day life and of the commonsense apprehension of this reality (1967, p.55).

One of the major cultural achievements of the non-Brahminic movement in Tamil Nadu, as I hope to show later on in this chapter, has been the de-Sanskritisation of the Tamil language. This has been one of the major successes in the cultural struggle against Brahminic hegemony in the south.

The Role of Traditional Communication

Rooted as they were in the religious culture of the Great Tradition, traditional forms of communication, especially the folk theatre, served to reinforce its values. The folk theatre⁽⁷⁾ was

7. Although the origin of the folk theatre in India has its roots in the dances and rituals of the indigenous aboriginals, it is nevertheless true that over the last six to seven centuries and after the decline of Sanskritic drama, it has taken on much of the characteristics of the Great Tradition. The following quotation taken from Benegal (1967, pp.1f.), although a description of the "divine" origins of the *Natyashastra*, the classical treatise of dramaturgy in India, is nevertheless an indicator of the influence of religion on folk theatre: "In India, all things descend from the Gods. No less the theatre. ...the gods led by Indira went to the Creator himself, Brahma, and begged him to produce something which all may enjoy - a fifth Veda as it were, which was not the exclusive preserve of the few. Accepting the eminent justice of such a prayer, Brahma distilled from the *Rigveda*, the element of recitation: from the *Samaveda*, music: from the *Yajurveda*, representation and mime: and from the *Atharvaveda*, sentiment. And so was born the *Natyashastra* - the voluminous work which embodies all the physical, theoretical and conceptual ideas of traditional Indian drama. Through further divine intervention, Vishvakarma, the architect, built a playhouse, Shiva contributed the tandava dance expressing violent emotion and his goddess Parvathi the lasya expressing the tender and the voluptuous. Vishnu invented the four dramatic styles. These are the Verbal, the Grand, the Energetic, and the Graceful. Thus the entire trinity of Hindu religion - Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer - all had a hand in the origin of drama."

of course far removed from the classical forms of Sanskritic theatre which was rigid in format and highly sophisticated in its "aesthetics". But it borrowed from the Sanskritic theatre certain characters such as the Sutradhara (stage manager) and the clown, and for its content it went to the same sources as the classical theatre.

But the ideological role of traditional forms of communication has been much more significant than that of the classical media. This can be attributed to the fact that the audiences of the classical forms of media, for example Bharatanatyam and to an extent Kathakali performances, used to be drawn from a literate, elite minority. In fact, until the beginnings of this century, only high caste people could witness such performances. Thus its "spread" was limited. The audience of the traditional form of communications was much more varied, and included even the lower castes. More significantly, caste-based distinctions prescribed one's position in the organisation of production, and frequently lower castes played important roles both in the actual performance and its organisation. Furthermore, for a predominantly illiterate audience, traditional forms of communication like dance dramas and the folk theatre were the only means of access to the teachings of Hinduism. Loveland notes the important role played by the traditional (or, as she calls it, the "cultural" media) of communications.

For much of the population, it was the cultural media which, to some extent, compensated for their exclusion from the written texts of Hinduism, particularly the Vedas. Since only the twice-born varna⁽⁸⁾ could

8. Varna literally colour, means caste, a closed social group based on heredity. There are four castes, with a great many sub-castes, and millions outside the caste structure. The following description of their duties is taken from Religious Hinduism (Jesuit scholars, 1968, p.119):

The Brahman (white colour) was assigned the following duties: Studying, teaching, sacrificing, assisting others to sacrifice, giving alms and receiving gifts.

The Ksatriya (red colour) was assigned the following duties: studying, sacrificing, giving alms, using weapons, protecting treasure and life.

The Vaisya (yellow colour) was assigned the following duties: studying, sacrificing, giving alms, cultivating, trading and tending cattle.

The Sudra (black colour) was given the duty of serving the three other varnas.

The first three varnas were the dvijas (twice-born); their members alone were entitled to the rite of initiation (upanayana) and to the wearing of the sacred thread.

hear or read the Vedas, the lower varna had to depend on the epics and Puranas, which were transmitted through the cultural media (1975, p.22).

The reinforcement of dominant culture through the folk media of communication, especially the folk theatre, occurred in two important ways, through its relationship with the audience, and through its organisational relationship both within itself and to society at large.

With regard to the audience of the folk theatre there are a number of salient features that need to be emphasised.

(a) It is a "prepared" audience, in the sense that people are familiar with the mythological tradition of the folk theatre and its major characters like Rama, Sita, Hanuman and Ravana. In other words, the folk theatre represents what is already familiar to the audience. Although there may be minor alterations in the "representations", the essence of this shared mythology is what is presented on stage, leading thereby to the reinforcement of the dominant, religiously-prescribed value system.

(b) Given the close "fit" between metaphysical and material reality in the life of the village community, the audience feels a "moral" obligation to attend cultural performances because it is related to their religious duty. It is also integral to individual and community fulfilment of the rituals associated with the seasonal fertility cycles. Thus cultural performances, like those related to the folk theatre, are not in any way alien to the community. In fact they are a part of the social fabric of the community and play a large part in ensuring its continuity. Community belief in a shared system of religious values - through recourse to a mutual and shared body of myth - ensured that what was mediated through the folk theatre merely reinforced, and did not question, this shared value system.

(c) The audience is familiar with the actors and the roles they portray. In this sense, the audience identifies with the actors and their portrayal of religious characters. The actors themselves are to a certain extent, representatives of the caste-community, and so identification with them is rendered all the more easy. Their use of language, gesture and their dramatisation in general, reflect the idiom, mannerisms and styles of acting that are close to the community. Also, the whole organisation of the folk theatre in terms of its relationships within and towards

society at large, constantly replicate the material basis of the caste system.

Such replication occurred in a number of ways: i) through the demarcation of roles in the production of the play, based on the purity-pollution positional placement of the castes in the hierarchy; (ii) the rites and rituals that preceded the performance of a play and that usually involved the consecration of the players, the invocation of the Gods - normally by the Brahmins; (iii) the systems of patronage that ensured the continuation of structures of dominance and dependence; (iv) the content of these plays that were culled from the epics and constantly dealt with a moral order rather than a social order.

The following section will illustrate this process of the reinforcement of the Great Tradition through the traditional media of communication, especially the folk theatre. It will also include a reinterpretation of a typically "functionalist" analysis of traditional theatre in India, seen in terms of its ideological rather than its consensual role in society.

One of the major devices by which the system of caste-based inequalities was maintained was the allotment of roles to a particular caste in the context of cultural production, as in the traditional theatre. This system has been prevalent for centuries, and as Perumal (1981, p.31) notes, in the history of Tamil drama, even during the Sangam period (5th century B.C. to 4th century A.D.) there were separate "groups" of people who were specifically involved in cultural production like the Panan, Porunan, Kuttan and Virali. Today there are still castes such as the Gavara in Andhra Pradesh and the Vanniyars in Tamil Nadu who perform such roles.

But it is interesting to note that unlike the "specialised" castes of old who were solely involved in cultural production, castes like the Vanniyars have also other roles to perform, which are looked down upon. It may be surmised that precisely through this allotment of roles to lower castes, to people who are normally beyond the pale of Sanskritic Hinduism, the moral and material legitimation of the caste system is secured. By involving lower castes in the rites and rituals of the Great Tradition, the functional interdependence of an inherently unequal system is maintained.

This takes place in a number of ways:

(a) Lower case people are given roles of gods and goddesses to whom they are normally denied access. Thus a people who are outside the purview of the Great Tradition are actively involved in propagating it. The themes of the folk theatre such as Therukoothu in Tamil Nadu are, as Gargi observes, almost entirely drawn from the Mahabharata.

Themes are drawn mostly from the epics, the Puranas, the folktales. The most popular plays are based on the Mahabharata. A Therakoothu repertoire is inconceivable without the haughty Duryodhana, the vicious Dushasana, the noble Dharma, the proud Keechaka, the mighty Bhima (1966, p.136).

(b) The immutability of the caste system is thus maintained. This allocation of roles in the cultural sphere legitimises the ascriptive basis of roles in the economic sphere of life. A sense of functional interdependence is maintained, and the allocation of roles, vital to the continuance of the system, is legitimised. Moffat (op. cit. pp.112 f.) notes this immutability of roles and stresses its consensual purpose, in the context of the cultural roles of Harijans in a village in Tamil Nadu. Thus, during a higher-caste funeral, the role of the "paraya" drummers was fixed and immutable. These drummers stood at the edges of the cremation ground and had the specific task of scaring away evil spirits, while closer to the actual cremation were the "Ambattans" or barbers, a slightly higher caste, playing the more auspicious "taval-nadeswaram". They thus replicated the immutability of their respective "low" and "high", roles within their low caste state.

(c) Another important way consensus was secured was that of frequent role reversals. Marriott (1966, p.206), Ashley (1979, p.112), and Lannoy (1971, p.197) note the cathartic effect of such role reversals; through such inversions, like for example, the beating of Brahmins by lower castes during the festival of Holi, or by investing the Kolakarran (a low caste in Kerala) with the "teyyam" (certain divine qualities), the repressed resentment of the lower castes was given an outlet and this ensured the continuance of the system.

Thus the allocation of roles during traditional cultural production helped maintain the existing order of society. It is not surprising that in the investigations into Indian culture, "functional" immutability of roles is stressed. Characteristically,

both Srinivas and Moffat do not notice the cultural and economic consequences that result from the phenomenon of role-allocation. Instead its consensual consequences are highlighted. Srinivas notes how the Poleyas replicate their low status during the festival of Ketrappa in Coorg:

During the festival of Ketrappa at Bengur, the Poleyas may not be seen by any high caste villager till the eighteenth day of the festival, but on the eighteenth evening they march in procession with pipe and drum to the Ketrappa temple and watch the ritual from a nearby knoll (1965, p.62).

This replication by exclusion is seen by Srinivas as an important prelude to system integration. Moffat too defends the allocation of ritual roles and stresses its importance in the continuance of the larger system of caste:

Just as it is fitting that the Brahmin purohit mediates with higher deities, and that the Vettaikaran pujari mediate with intermediate to low goddesses, so it is appropriate that the Harijans, who are among the lowest of human beings, mediate between higher humans (and gods) and the lowest of divine beings, the peey⁽⁹⁾ (1979, p.113).

Interestingly enough, this allocation of roles could only be legitimised by their consecration by Brahmin priests. With his exclusive access to the scriptures and to its interpretation, the Brahmin priest frequently presided over traditional cultural performances, and through rites and rituals both before and after such performances, invested the whole with divine significance. Sharma notes the importance of the role of a Brahmin priest during a Katha ceremony (religious festival of story-telling).

The services of a Brahmin priest are essential to the villager for this kind of ritual, not merely because only the priest has the requisite training to understand the directions for worship contained in the text, but also because a Brahmin is considered to be fit by virtue of his special ritual status, to utter and expound the holy verses in question (1970, p.14).

Ashley (1979, pp.100f.) notes the power of the Brahmin priests to invest the entire performance of the Teyyamkettu with meaning - their ability to bring the gods down to earth and reveal themselves through chosen people to the community:

The Brahmin community plays a significant role in the event. Although they rarely take part in, or are

9. Purohit is priest. Lower in the scale is the pujari who performs routine functions in a temple.

present at the festival of the other communities, their position is evident. According to one informant in Kottakkat, no Teyyam shrine is considered sacredly operative until a tantri Brahmin consecrates it, thus bringing it into existence... The tantri is the sole possessor of highly charged mantras and rituals which transfer Sakti (force or power) to the idol of the shrine, endowing it with its power. Without such a ceremony the idol is impotent, and in the eye of the community the shrine does not exist (1979, pp.100f.).

Through this exercise of power, priests, both Brahmin and non-Brahmin, play a decisive role in the legitimation of the existing forces and relations of production. As Berger and Luckmann point out

All roles represent...institutional order... Some roles, however symbolilcally, represent that order in its totality more than others. Such roles are of great strategic importance in a society, since they represent not only this or that institution, but the integration of all institutions in a meaningful world (1967, p.93).

This allocation of roles and their legitimation are one aspect of the domination that is exercised through the traditional media of communication. Their content also plays an important part in spreading the values of the Great Tradition and in upholding the legitimacy of the ritual and material basis of the caste system. The following reinterpretation of Tapper's (1981) interpretation of the traditional morality play called Satyaharischandra (True Harischandra), is meant to illustrate both the weakness of typical pluralistic interpretations of cultural performance in India and to show how the traditional theatre, through its content, portrays and invites identification with a system of values that delegitimises conflict and dissent and instead promotes consensus and harmony amongst the village community. Before critically examining Tapper's interpretation, a brief summary of the story may be of help.

Satyaharischandra was written by Lakshmikantan (1881-1953). The story is taken directly from the ancient-scriptures deals with the theme of truthfulness and altruism. As Tapper sees it, the play has a clear didactic purpose. It shows that the generosity of the rich is vital for the harmonious functioning of the village system. The plot revolves around the outcome of a wager between two celestial sages, Vashista and Vishvamitra on the importance of "truth" as an enduring factor of merit. Vishvamitra is convinced of the fallibility of man and

his proclivity to utter untruth, and wants to prove that even Harischandra, the wise and "truthful" king of Ayodhapuram, is not beyond speaking "un-truth". In the story Vishvamitra comes down to earth in disguise and tests the integrity of Harishchandra and his wife Chandrika.

There are a number of features that deserve close attention. The first major denotation of the ideological role of its content occurs (pp.243-44) when Harishchandra, confronted by two Untouchable dancing girls (the daughters of Visvamitra) refuses to accede to this request that he should marry his daughters. Vishvamitra "...requests Harischandra to marry his two daughters, the Untouchable dancing girls. Harischandra holds his ears not to hear more of such a sin (papam)". From a gestural avowal of the purity-pollution principle, Harishchandra on the very next page, when again requested by Vishvamitra, says that he "...will ignore Vishvamitra's advice and will obey his caste laws (kula prarthana dharmamu). He would even be ready to abdicate his kingdom, which gives him wealth and enjoyment, rather than marry those untouchable girls." The principle of the immutability of caste-laws is stressed very clearly in Harishchandra's answer to Vishvamitra.

The divine ordination of the immutability of the caste laws is stressed. The individual's cognitive process is clearly subordinate to this overwhelming caste principle. There is also a conscious attempt by Harishchandra to legitimise the "eternal" principle of pollution as embodied in the two Untouchable girls. Sin, defilement-uncleanness in general - is associated with the Untouchable girls, and Harishchandra clearly states that the defilement of caste laws is an explicit sin. Harishchandra's reasoning can lead to the reinforcement of the caste principle amongst the audience. Based on the Hindu epic, mythological enactments such as Satyaharishchandriyamu can, through the shared language of myth, sustain the legitimacy and the divinely-ordained nature of the caste system. Such enactments can therefore lead to the domestication of the mind - especially the minds of the lower castes who internalise these myths and constantly replicate their lowness vis-à-vis other castes. In other words, consent is mobilised through such enactments. It is through this sharing of a common symbolic universe that the lower castes are integrated into the Great Tradition.

In the play, Chandrika plays the role of a faithful and devoted wife. When Harishchandra is trying to put out a forest fire, she says that "she plans to throw herself into the fire" if her husband perished (p.245). It is part of a wife's duty to die with her husband; Chandrika legitimises the practice of Sati. Later when Harishchandra is in debt to Vishvamitra, Chandrika asks him to sell her and pay off his debts with the money (p.245). When it appears Harishchandra may have to execute his wife, she urges him to do so, but makes one request of the gods - that she "...be married to Harishchandra in as many future births as they will grant" (p.246). The reference here is to the concept of reincarnation - the belief that through an infinite cycle of births and deaths, following the Karmic law, a person is progressively purified and ultimately merges with the divine or Parabrahma. Kumar comments on the ideological function of the concepts of "Karma" and "dharma":

The quality of social differentiation between the rulers and the ruled, the exploiter and the exploited, found the most ingenious rationalisation in the theory of karma, and the most effective safety-valve in the concept of dharma. There can, for instance, be little doubt about the quietist effect of the theory of karma upon individuals caught in the morass of economic deprivation. Karma reconciled the lowly individual to his condition: and it reconciled him to his condition through a highly moral argument which fixed responsibility for his misery squarely upon the individual himself, instead of attributing it to the social system. Similarly, the concept of dharma contained social frustrations and tamed social rebelliousness by tying each member of society, high or low, rich or poor, Kshatriya or Brahmin, Shudra or Vaishya, to a round of spiritual or secular duties which were also the means of his salvation (1975, pp.125f.).

Tapper's analysis of the drama is in terms of its consensual functions. It does not ask the question as to what such plays can do to the community. He views the play as inculcating in the higher castes a certain "duty" towards the village community at large. He notes that this leads to the reinforcement of mutual ties of dependence between the landlords and the peasants, but he sees it as a positive development, leading to an overall consensus in the village community. He says that patronage has directly religious significance and that it leads to the gift of personal well-being (p.247). Patronage leads to the fulfilment of the norms of system integration. It helps to bring together an otherwise conflict-torn

community and, according to Tapper, that works for the greatest good of the community. "In such an atmosphere an ideology which stresses moral benefits for accepting social positions is a particularly relevant one" (Pp.254f.).

What Tapper fails to consider is that through the sharing of a common body of myth and through the language of myth, the potential for alternative interpretations becomes inoperative. The sharing of myth reinforces the unequal structures of the caste system. Through the blurring of distinctions between the language of myth and the language of commonsense, and the sharing of a common mythological tradition, roles and institutions are legitimised. Lukes asks, on the subject of the exercise of power through consensus and its ability to devalue conflict:

Is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances, by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferably in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things either because they see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural or unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial? (1974, p.24).

Tapper fails to appreciate that it is exactly through systems of "patronage" and "generosity" that systems of dominance and dependence are maintained. Gough (1955, p.48), Arden (1971), Corwin (1979, p.38), Schechner and Hess (1977, p.73) and Ashley (1979, p.111), amongst others, have drawn attention to the ideological role of the system of patronage. Arden views it as closely allied to the economic domination of the masses. In the context of research among the Chhau dancers of Puralia, he has this to say on the prevalent system of patronage:

The village troupes have been subsidised by local landlords. These landlords are caste-Hindus and desirous of preserving traditional religious forms (such as the Chhau) in order to preserve the Kurmis in their traditional social place - i.e., down at the bottom, where they own no land and are, as like as not, paid for their work on the landlord's field in rice of which they have to eat a proportion and then have to sell the rest in order to get that money which they need in order to buy the other non-edible necessities of life (p.75).

The use of Traditional Forms of Communication for Development

The government's use of traditional forms of communication for development through its Song and Drama Division (SDD) has been

an attempt to further developmental goals through the use of media with which people are familiar. Forms such as Burrakatha, Jatra, Tamasha and the Puppet theatre have been used extensively, to propagate a variety of themes, including the small family norm, the importance of hygiene, the importance of crop protection, use of fertilisers and a host of similar themes related to the government's policies of modernisation. While the forms have remained much the same, the content has changed, but interestingly enough, the role of this content is very similar to that of the traditional mythological content. The content reinforces the situation of poverty and the immutability of existing structures of society. It cannot do otherwise, given its moorings in a highly centralised system of government-controlled communication. It can provide information; it can tell people the availability - in theory - of free government benefits open to all castes, or of government loans through co-operative societies. But the crucial problems remain, like the problem related to a powerful landlord who controls the land, of a development bureaucracy that most often allies itself with the powerful. Themes such as exploitation and Harijan victimisation are typically bypassed, and people are blamed for their adherence to traditional ways of thinking and doing things. Thus attitudinal change is the main objective, a goal similar to those of the other media that are used for development by the government.

The Song and Drama Division has organisational problems that are very similar to the problems that the other departments of development communication face: a rigid hierarchy, constant "vetting" of content, lack of creativity and lack of commitment on the part of the organisers and the performers to the goals of development, and lack of economic security. Kidd is severely critical of the Song and Drama Division's performance within a centralised system.

The commodification and commercialisation of folk theatre is the main problem: development becomes a business of disbursing contracts, of hiring a certain number of troupes for a certain number of performances, rather than a complex process of bringing about social change. The performers become mercenaries - graded, hired, given a script or a message, and sent off to propagate something they hardly believe in. This "mobile-mercenary" approach has been one of the major sources of criticism of the Song and Drama Division...(1980, pp.472f.).

Cultural Offensives against the Great Tradition

There have been movements in India - both reform movements and movements that have tried to restructure relationships in society - that have specifically used the media of communication to provide a coherent alternative to the ritualism, intellectualism and caste-based culture of the Great Tradition. These have ranged from the Bhakti devotion movements in the earlier centuries (13th century to 17th century A.D.) and the more recent Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj which sought to reform Hinduism from within. There have also been movements such as the anti-Brahminic movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, that tried to provide an alternative Hindu culture and were specifically directed towards the lower castes in society. As distinct from earlier movements which were clearly religious, these were at times anti-religious and did try (at least initially) to link their cultural offensive with political and economic struggles.

Here I take a look at these two cultural offensives against the Great Tradition, the anti-Brahmin movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. They employed the media of the Great Tradition to counter its dominant ideology, and their successes and failures are instructive in themselves. Their study will also enable us to see in perspective the work of the social action groups and their use of the traditional media for development, which I take up in a later chapter.

The Movement in Maharashtra

The anti-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra took on a character of its own after the establishment of the Satyashodak Samaj (Truth-Seeking Society) in Poona in 1873. Until then, the movement had remained scattered and unorganised. Under the leadership of Jotirao Phule, the movement tried to weld the Marathas and a few other castes such as the Kunbis and Malis into a common front against the economic, political and cultural domination of the Brahmins.

There were a number of factors that sparked off this movement. The economic and political domination exercised by the Brahmins in Maharashtra and their dominance over the social and cultural spheres of life were resented by the Marathas and the other non-Brahmin castes. Johnson has described the ideological domination exercised by the Chitpavan Brahmins through their control of the media and their disproportionate influence in the

field of education. Comprising just 4.5 per cent of the population, they nevertheless exercised enormous influence in the area of communication as in a number of other fields.

English literacy gave Chitpavan Brahmins a strong position in the administration and professions, but literacy in the vernacular gave them a virtual monopoly of the new methods of communication in Maharashtra... Out of 128 nineteenth century Marathi authors listed by G.C. Bhate in his History of Modern Marathi Literature, 114 were Brahmins and 10 were Prabhus... Of the Brahmins some seventy-five were Chitpavans. The Bombay government's caste-analysis of newspaper editors reveals a similar picture. Brahmins accounted for about two-thirds of all editors listed between 1901 and 1921, and throughout these years Chitpavan Brahmins never accounted for less than a quarter of vernacular editors and they usually made up a third or more (1970, pp.105f.).

A second factor is directly related to the colonial government's cultivation of the Brahmins. After the large-scale land settlements of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the power of traditional Maratha leadership was curtailed, and the village accountant (Kulkarni) who was usually a Brahmin took over village leadership. The Marathas were also disaffected with the Brahmins, because they would not accept the Maratha claim to Kshatriya status.

A third factor was the resurgence of interest in symbols from the Maratha past. The elevation of the seventeenth century Maratha warrior, Chatrapathi Shivaji,⁽¹⁰⁾ as the symbol of both Indian nationalism and of the aspirations of Maharashtra's lower castes, played an important part. This was complemented by recreating the mythology of a common and glorious past, like the pre-Aryan Kingdom of Bali, which was free from the excesses of the caste system and other Aryan systems of exploitation.

The cultural offensives of both the Satyashodak Samaj and the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra in general was carried on

10. Shivaji was one of the greatest of warrior heroes in India. His victories over the Mughals in the 17th century became legends in later years. But Shivaji is more than a warrior. He is seen as the Sudra (low caste) saviour, the bringer of unity among the different castes, and the defender of Hindu India against the Mughals. His image is shrouded in a veil of facts and fables so much so that Shivaji's life and times can be interpreted from different angles, depending on one's position in the caste hierarchy.

In Jyotirale Phule's pavada, Shivaji is represented as an ordinary Sudra soldier and his victories are attributed to his "Sudra" armies rather than to his Brahmin advisers.

through the use of mass and traditional media of communications, and the organisation of agitations, Satyagrahas and mass demonstrations. We are concerned here, however, only with the use of media in this cultural offensive.

The cultural offensive by the movement in Maharashtra involved the use of both the mass media, i.e., newspapers, journals and pamphlets, and the traditional media like the Pavada (a form of ballad) and the Tamasha (the Maharashtrian variant of the folk theatre in India). The use of the mass media was in evidence from the early stages of the movement. Zelliot (1970, p.413) notes that just four years after the establishment of the Satyashoda Samaj, the cultural offensive was channelled through the pages of their weekly, Din Bandhu (Brother of the Poor). Phule and other Samaj activists like Mukundrao Patel were well recognised for their skill in literary expression. Divekar (1978, p.476) refers to Phule's skill as a polemist. In 1867 Phule wrote a pamphlet entitled the Trickery of Brahmins, and this was followed in 1873 by one of his most important pamphlets, Slavery in the British Government under the Cloak of Brahminism. This was an invective against Brahmin supremacy and British acquiescence in it, and a call to Shudras to struggle against it. He followed this up in 1883 with a pamphlet entitled the Peasants Whip in which he again hit out against Brahmin dominance.

An important contribution was made by Mukundrao Patel, the editor of another anti-Brahmin weekly Din Mitra (Friend of the Poor), who was closely associated with the movement. Omvedt writes on his literary contribution to the cause:

He poured forth in his writings continuous arguments against religious superstition, attacking not only the representations (sic.) of upper-class revivalism (from the Hindu Mahasabha to Anni Besant) but also urging the abolition of the old, harmful peasant customs such as child-marriage, giving alms to beggars, holding of pujas (prayers) related to agriculture, the custom of Shraddh or dinners for deceased fathers, the caste idea that people should stick to their professions (1973, p.1972).

But given the wide-scale prevalence of illiteracy among the lower castes, it is debatable whether these writings contributed to the formation of low-caste awareness. That came about through the use of traditional media of communications.

The use of traditional media in the cultural struggle against Brahminic supremacy is an interesting example of how

conservative and pro-Sanskritic media of communications were transformed through changes in their content and conventions. In the use of the pavada as a weapon against the Brahminic world-view, Phule's role was again paramount.

Traditionally, it was a form of ballad which celebrated the heroic feats of Maratha warriors, especially those by the Maratha hero, Shivaji. Sustained as it was by the emphasis on Shivaji's closeness to the land and the cultivating castes, the pavada appealed to both the cultivators and their protectors, the landlords. The traditional role of the pavada, like that of most folk-forms of communication in India, was to integrate the village community and to ensure the continuity of the existing relations and forces of production. In Phule's hands, it underwent a dramatic change in content; the story of Shavaji was radically changed, and shorn of its Brahminic influences. Shivaji was re-represented as the leader of Maharashtra's lower castes. As O'Hanlon puts it, this new version of the pavada "presented Shivaji as the leader of Maharashtra's Sudras and ascribed his achievements to the strength and skill of his Sudra armies, rather than to his Brahmin ministers. The lower castes of Maharashtra, the tillers of the land and its protectors in times of war, were presented as the architects of the Maratha state (1983, p.3).

In fact Phule blamed the Great Tradition of Sanskritic Hinduism and its champions, the Brahmins, for perverting the original society of the Marathas, characterised by a casteless and egalitarian society, into a society in which inequalities both in the religious and material spheres of life were introduced and perpetuated by prescriptions based on the Hindu scriptures. Through this new version of the pavada, Phule contemporised and legitimised the ideal of the "original" Maratha society, and sought to unite the non-Brahmin castes in their common struggle against upper caste domination in the economic, religious and political spheres of life.

Phule's re-interpretation represented an attempt to promote a common and shared culture that was shorn of Brahminic influence and ideology. This was achieved through (a) changing the traditional content of the pavada⁽¹¹⁾ into one that identified the

11. Phule's version of the pavada had its problems too. For instance, his assertion of the original Kshatriya status of the lower castes can be seen as an attempt to promote the legitimacy of Sanskritisation, which as I have shown earlier, entails only positional change, not structural change.

Maratha hero Shivaji and his exploits with a non-Brahminic past; (b) questioning the sanctity of Brahminic gods like Brahma, Parsshuram and Vishnu, thus de-legitimising the commonly shared mythology of the Great Tradition and replacing it with the mythology of pre-Vedic, non-Brahminic Maratha past, i.e., the Kingdom of Bali, and thus providing the Sudras with a history they could identify with; (c) highlighting the need to worship a "Divine Being" who was not concerned with all the rituals and rites that meshed the individual and the community into the framework of the Great Tradition, but insisted instead of justice and equality for all peoples as a condition for salvation; (d) providing the lower castes with a culture that they could identify with and call their own. The pavada provided the rationale for a culture that was radically different from the culture of the Great Tradition in which the lower castes were submerged for centuries.

The tamasha, as distinct from the pavada, was the Maharashtrian version of the all-India tradition of the folk theatre. It drew its themes from the Hindu epics, it included characters like the Sutradhara (stage manager) and the clown, and the ritual invocation to the god Ganesha. One of its most important characteristics was its flexibility both in form and content. But as Malik points out, "Themes are sometimes drawn from mythology, but they eventually end up as Tamasha's characteristic blend of satire, farce and ribaldry, as do the secular themes" (1982, p.10). This flexibility of the medium was exploited by the artists and the playwrights within the Maharashtrian anti-Brahmin movement. Playwrights such as Phalke and Ghadge turned around the content of the traditional tamasha and, like Phule, used an indigenous form of communication to express anti-Brahminic sentiments and the need for a common, casteless front.

Kulkarnilila, was one of the more famous of such tamashas. Written by Phalke and Bhosle, it is about a village weaver falsely implicated in a case by the Brahmin village accountant, but saved through an alliance of untouchable castes. The need for low caste unity was stressed in this version of the tamasha. Traditional conventions were changed; there was a radical change in the content and the purpose of the gan (invocation) and in characterisation. Omvedt comments on the significance of such changes:

The traditional tamasha opened with an invocation to Ganapathi with an implication of support for this traditional Brahmin deity; however, Satyashodak leaders,... counteracted this by explaining that the

actual meaning was from gan, or "people" and "pati" or "leader", and that it therefore represented an invocation of the people as the sources of rule. The second part, a dialogue involving Krishna's encounter with milkmaids, was transformed into an encounter of the hero Satyajit with village Brahmin women, with traditional dalliance being replaced by insulting and challenging language often leading to a dialogue on Brahmin tyranny. The traditional drama section seems most often to have featured a play concerning the effort of Brahmins and sometimes money-lenders to cheat innocent but generous peasants, while songs were added involving opposition to caste and religious superstition and the oppression of the peasants (1973, p.1973).

Apart from the use of the pavada and the tamasha in the cultural offensive against Brahminic culture and political and economic status, there were other forms of cultural revolt, like the co-option of the Ganapathi festival in Poona, from its role in spreading the Great Tradition, to one of supporting an anti-Brahminic ideology. A further use of the traditional media for such purposes was the inversion of the content of the melas or festival street songs. In the new versions of the melas, anti-Brahminic themes played a central role. Omvedt observes:

In one of their most famous songs (which was censored), Natyakarcha Bazar, Brahmins were attacked for the economic exploitation they practised in concentrating road and electricity development in Brahmin sections of the city and in spending Rs 15,000 for a statue of Tilak to the neglect of social welfare... They were described as an elite that held social and political power within the colonial structure rather than as leaders of a nationalist revolt against that structure (1974, p.207).

The anti-Brahminic cultural offensive in Maharashtra could not sustain itself for too long, mainly because it was not complemented with an economic offensive. The cultural offensive was given a determining role in the struggle against Brahminic domination. A further factor that led to the deterioration of the movement, was its refusal to take into consideration the larger dimensions of economic exploitation, like the role both of the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin landlords, often in alliance with each other, in the exploitation of the poor peasant. This refusal to take into account the role of the non-Brahmin rich in the exploitation of the masses came to a head during the Satara rebellion in the 1920s. At that time the leaders of the cultural offensive refused to condemn the non-Brahmin landlords because of

their dependence on them for financial help. In fact the movement was gradually co-opted by the dominant non-Brahmin caste, the Marathas. In effect this meant that the fruits of the movement accrued to the Marathas rather than to the non-Brahmin castes as a whole. Upadhyaya comments on some of the central contradictions of the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra, including its failure to involve the lowest of castes, the dalits:

The general thrust was ideological, in the measure that the problem of oppression was viewed culturally with the "Satyashodaks" attacking at one time or another aspects of Brahmin supremacy and high caste prejudice, with the main motif of the movement centred on the necessity of doing away with Brahmin priests and doing rituals oneself. One of the principal weaknesses of the movement, that eventually delineated its composite impact was the most glaring omission of the "dalits"... The failure to distinguish the specificity of the oppression faced by the dalits as "outcastes" reduced the base of the movement and limited the ideological appeal to the subaltern non-dominant castes alone. The result was the predominance of the chief subaltern caste, i.e., the Maratha (1979-80, pp.224f).

Thus, although the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra, especially under the Satyashodak Samaj, did attempt to provide an alternative culture to the non-Brahmin castes, it failed to take into account the economic basis of exploitation, and the movement collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. Although their use of traditional media did provide the basis for an alternative non-Brahminic cultural ethos, this ethos could not be "realised" because its material basis was not challenged. In fact the example of the Satyashodak Samaj's cultural offensive is a testimony to the futility of using cultural struggle without intergrating it into a larger economic and political struggle.

The Movement in Tamil Nadu

There are major differences between the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra and that in Tamil Nadu. First, the movement in Tamil Nadu transformed itself into a viable political entity. In fact its power and presence are still in evidence in the politics of contemporary Tamil Nadu. Second, the movement in Tamil Nadu, was part of a larger movement of Dravidian cultural nationalism, based on the ethnological and linguistic foundations of the "Dravidian Theory", which stressed the uniqueness and the singularity of the

South Indian Dravidian, as compared to the North Indian Aryan races. The legitimacy for this cultural nationalism derived from the scholarly investigations into the Dravidian language and culture, like Bishop Cadwell's work entitled Comparative Philology of the Dravidian or South Indian Languages (1856) which contributed to the formation of a Dravidian identity, both linguistically and racially. The purity of Tamil language and culture vis-à-vis Brahminic language and culture has been a major emphasis in the cultural offensive of the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu. Forrester notes the importance of the renaissance of Dravidian language and culture in the context of the politics of cultural nationalism in Tamil Nadu:

The Dravidian languages of the South, particularly Tamil, are highly developed languages with a classical literature comparable with that in Sanskrit. This century has seen a major revival of Tamil culture which has manifested itself in an intensive effort to purify the Tamil language of all Sanskritic influence. Cultural renaissance has led to a growing self-confidence, a new awareness of a distinct Tamilian identity and a deepening suspicion of all things northern. Anti-Brahminism and a rejection of traditional Hinduism as an import from the North have found ardent exponents (1966, p.22).

This aspect of cultural nationalism, i.e., the interest in the purity of the Tamil language, was accompanied by the rediscovery of ancient Tamil classics, like the Silappatikaram, Tirukkural Tolkappiyam and the Sangam anthologies (written between 5th century B.C. and 4th century A.D.) and their interpretations both by poets such as Subramania Bharitiyar (Ludden, 1973) and perhaps more important from the point of view of this study, by politicians in the Dravidian movement. Singer observes on the strategic use of these Tamil classics in the context of Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu:

The significance of the Dravidian movement lies... in its use of such studies and of the modern technique of propaganda and political organisation to propagate a cultural ideology and a model of a Dravidian Great Tradition and to make it the cultural basis for the successful political party, the DMK (1971, p.181).

Third, the anti-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu, under the aegis of the Dravidian movement, used the media of communication, both traditional and mass media, in a sustained and more systematic manner than the movement in Maharashtra. The cinema was used extensively by the Dravidian movement in the South to propagate both an anti-Brahminic ideology and the ideology of the movement itself.

The background of the anti-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu was similar to that in Maharashtra. The movement represented a protest against the political, economic and ritual superiority of the Brahmins. Arnold underlines the disproportionate influence exerted by the Brahmins in Tamil Nadu in the economic sphere of life:

The Brahmins in Tamil Nadu wielded economic and social power that was quite disproportionate to their numbers... Ritual supremacy in Hindu society was only one of the bases of Brahmin power in Tamil Nadu. As the literate of the society they had long been clerks, administrators and officials whether the rulers were Tamil kings, Vijayanagar viceroys, or the East India Company. In the villages Brahmins almost invariably held the office of Karnam or village accountant and in appreciation of their religious and secular services they had been awarded land rights as mirasdars and inamdars. In the rice-growing eastern zones generally, and the Cauvery delta in particular, Brahmins were powerful not only by virtue of their priestly authority, but also for their prominence among the landholding classes. In western Tamil Nadu, where Brahmins held little land, they were frequently present as small-town moneylenders and bankers. The position of the Brahmin was exceptional in another respect; they were divorced from the process of agricultural production... Tamil Brahmins considered ploughing a virtually polluting task (1977, p.15).

Beteille (1970, p.268) notes that this refusal to do manual work was one of the major rallying points of the anti-Brahmin movement in the south. And Menon (1979, p.403) points out how this confluence of ideological and material domination meant that the Brahmins were able to continually legitimise their ritual and economic dominance and the immutability of the caste system.

Apart from such ritual and economic domination, the Brahmins enjoyed political dominance as well. This was one of the main reasons for the formation of the very first South Indian non-Brahminic organisations, the Justice Party, formed in 1916. Fearing a Brahminic take-over of political power in India after Independence, because of their dominant role in the Indian National Congress, the Justice Party launched a political and cultural offensive against the Brahmins. As Perinbanayagam (1971, p.207) has shown, the Justice Party was not content to fight the Brahmins on a purely political level; "they launched a massive ideological assault in which history, imagination and traditional myth played equal parts". Through the proclamation of the Non-Brahmin Manifesto (20 December 1916) and through their periodicals like the Non-Brahmin,

Justice (1917), Dravidian (1917) and New India, the Justice Party launched an agitation for communal representation for the non-Brahmin castes, favoured a reformed version of Hinduism - the Saiva Siddhanta movement (a Hindu popular movement which developed outside Brahminic circles, analogous to the Methodist revival in England vis-à-vis the established church), and in general spread the message of anti-Brahminism. But as in the case of the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra, the Justice Party, after its victory in the 1920 Madras presidency elections, distanced itself from the untouchables. As Irshick points out, "Once in power, it became almost entirely a caste Hindu party with little interest in social reform" (1969, p.188).

Its abdication of the cause of untouchables became evident at the May 1921 textile strike in Madras city, when it blamed them for encouraging anti-caste riots. Beteille (1970, p.277-78) is of the view that the Justice Party was never a party of the poor.

Although the Justice Party opposed the Brahmins and claimed to speak for the 40 million non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency, it would be a mistake to identify it with the interests of the non-Brahmins as a whole. Those who led and organisationally controlled the non-Brahmin movement in its first phase were drawn from a very narrow social base. The Justice Party was actually an elite party dominated by urban, western-educated, landowners and professional people. It contained a formidable array of Rajas, Zemindars and industrialists, lawyers and doctors. It was by no means a mass party and it is doubtful whether any serious effort was made to draw peasants and workers into its organisation (1970, pp.277f).

By 1927, the Justice Party was faced with serious internal problems and, with the gathering momentum of the Congress civil disobedience campaigns, many of its members deserted it to join the Congress. By 1936, Justice Party had almost completely lost its hold over the electorate in Madras Presidency, and in 1944 it joined hands with E.V. Ramaswami Naicker's Self-Respect Movement to become the Dravida Kazhagam (D.K.).

The role of E.V. Ramaswami Naicker (1879-1972) in championing the cause of the Dravidian movement and in giving it its basic ideology and its rationalistic orientation was crucial. It was in fact EVR who systematised the essential elements of Dravidian cultural nationalism into a coherent ideology. The Barnetts point out the salient features of this ideology: "The Dravidian movement ideology had three major focal points: reform of Hindu rituals and

social customs, socialism, and, after 1938, separation and formation of a separate Dravida Nadu that would be casteless and classless" (1974, p.389).

EVR had formerly been a member of both the Justice Party and the Congress, but he resigned from both parties - from the Justice Party because of its betrayal of the untouchables and from the Congress because of its refusal to tackle the issue of communal representation and its Brahminic dominance. In 1925, he formed the Self-Respect Movement. It was open to all non-brahmin castes.

EVR was openly atheistic and his brand of atheism was propagated throughboth the mass and traditional media of communication. Through plays, speeches, newspapers such as Kudi Arasu, Revolt, Vidutalai and Pakutrivu, through organising temple satyagrahas and public burnings of the Manusmriti (a Hindu law-book which provided the basic rationale for the caste system), EVR sought to purify Tamil culture and to wean the masses away from Brahminic captivity towards a more rationalistic outlook.

Irschick describes EVR's use of periodicals for spreading his anti-Brahminic message:

The organ of the Self-Respect Movement was the Tamil language weekly newspaper Kudi Arasu (People's Government) which Ramaswami Naicker began in May 1924. It was specifically directed at certain non-Brahmin groups that had not been reached by the Justice Party's Dravidian... Many of the editorials were considered to be treasonable and inflammatory, and once he was imprisoned for attacking the government. He directed his main assault at the Brahmins... at the Puranas, the Mahabaratha, and the Ramayana... Puranic literature Naicker contended, was the product of Brahminical scheming and unworthy of belief because it did not admit the equality of all men (1969, pp.334f).

One of EVR's most trenchant attacks on Sanskritic Hinduism is contained in a pamphlet entitled visittira tevarkal korttu (Wonderful Court of Deities); in it the whole pantheon of Hindu gods is subjected to cross-interrogatin for sexual offences that they had committed.

Hardgrave says about the Dravida Kazhagam's use of the theatre for propagating the ideology of anti-Brahminism and rationalism:

Naicker's own versions of the Ramayana and other plays were staged by the DK dramatic troupes throughout Tamil Nadu in order to attract popular support to the movement for Dravidasthan... Through plays presented

even in the most isolated villages, through its voluminous literature and its inflammatory speeches, the movement was able to inculcate a self-conscious awareness of the nature of the group as a community (1964, pp.399f).

But again, like the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra, the DK could not develop into a large political party. In fact, EVR, by keeping away from the mainstream of political involvement, failed to realise the potential of the DK to become a party of the masses. Its concentration on the primacy of the cultural offensive, and its refusal to attack non-brahminic exploitation of the poor in other areas of life led to a decline in its popularity. As The Economic and Political Weekly (12 January 1974, p.13) commented, the DK's narrow focus of interest and its confinement to the fighting of purely religious issues led to its failure to tackle the issues pertaining to the economic basis of society. This contradiction in DK ideology was exposed in its involvement with peasant struggles in Tanjore during the fifties and the sixties, when it refused to attack the caste Hindus and their role in perpetuating social and economic underdevelopment through the exploitation of the masses. It was a combination of such contradictions and personal rivalries that led to the formation of a breakaway party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), under the leadership of C.N. Annadurai, in 1949.

The DMK was qualitatively different from both the Justice Party and the Dravida Kazhagam. Unlike the other two parties, it systematically severed its connections from a narrow electoral base and concentrated on transforming itself into a mass-based political party. It moved away from being a social-reformist party primarily concerned with the welfare of the "Adi Dravidas" (original Dravidians), and became a party concerned with the welfare of all "Backward castes" (see Satyamurthy, 1977, p.433). In fact it was to this "middle area" of the hitherto neglected Backward caste community as a whole, that the DMK turned its attention. In order to become a mass-based political party, it was imperative for the DMK to woo and mobilise this vast potential electorate. C.N. Annadurai, the leader of the DMK, was the chief architect of this plan. However, as the Barnetts have shown, this change in strategy meant that social reform was relegated to a secondary position, and primacy was given to the raising of the "middle man".

Annadurai... formulated the idea of the DMK as the party of the common man, the "middle man", thereby

redefining the problem from altering society as a whole in accord with radical social reform ideas to raising the position of this neglected common man within the given social order (1973, p.401).

This change in political strategy meant a toning down of the rationalistic-atheistic philosophy of the DK. As a political party the DMK had to respect the religious feelings of the Backward communities. Thus there was a conscious move away from any explicit criticism of the caste system and of Hinduism. The Brahmin, of course, bore the brunt of the DMK cultural attack; it was a safe target because Brahminic dominance was deeply resented by the Backward castes as a whole.

The DMK used the media not merely to propagate an anti-brahminic ideology but also to further its legitimacy as a party of the masses. Thus the theatre, and more importantly the cinema, were used consciously to further the political ambitions of the party.

The DMK also evolved a coherent organisational structure, forming DMK units at district, taluk and village levels, which were linked to one another and to the larger party structure. Their role in spreading the DMK message played an important part in mobilising mass support. The formation of DMK film star fan-clubs, often as a part of the larger DMK unit, played an important part in legitimising the "fit" between the "fictional" roles of certain film actors and their role in the real world of politics. The DMK, unlike the Justice Party and the Dravida Kazhagam, concentrated on specific economic issues such as price rises and landlessness as well as on emotional issues like North Indian imperialism and Brahminic dominance. Hardgrave comments on the populist nature of the DMK's 1961 election manifesto:

The DMK Election Manifesto, drafted by Annadurai, declared its long-range goal as the creation of a Dravidian "Socialist" Federation... In the 50-page document, the DMK called for the creation of a socialistic economy... In undertaking all types of industries, the government would progressively minimise the role of the private sector for the ultimate objective of the social ownership of all means of production and distribution. If elected the DMK would distribute 3 acres of wet land or 5 acres of dry to each Harijan family without land of its own. It would constitute Wage Boards to fix fair wages for industrial labour and minimum wages for agricultural labour... it would give 25 per cent of membership of

all cooperative societies to backward communities (1979, pp.738).

The populist nature of the manifesto is evident in its "accommodation of interests" - both of the Harijans and of the Backward community. While it is true that Backward castes such as the Gounders did progress through their association with the DMK, the Harijans have not substantially benefited from it.

The cultural offensive launched by the DMK, unlike the cultural offensives of the Justice Party and the DK, was also a means to political power. In effect this meant that both traditional and mass forms of communication were used not merely to spread the message of anti-Brahminism but also - and far more - to spread the ideology of the DMK. The mass media of communication, especially the film, were used for clear propagandistic purposes and were commercially exploited for political ends. Although the medium of the film played a dominant role in the DMK's cultural offensive, it was complemented by the use of a number of different media, both traditional and mass. A number of authors, including Perinbanayagam (1971, p.210) and Satyamurthy (1977), have written on the DMK's use of the media of communication for putting across the political message of the party. As Satyamurthy says:

DMK deployed a variety of resources and techniques to gain the support of large sections of the electorate. Through its tabloid newspapers, lively political magazines carrying devastating attacks against the ruling party, drama troupes, film actors, popular pamphleteers, poets and mass orators, DMK established a cultural and emotional affinity with the Tamil people (p.434).

The success of the DMK's cultural offensive was due to its ability to cultivate and accommodate a whole host of extremely versatile "communicators". In fact, many of them, including Annadurai, Karunanidhi and the present Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu - M.G.Ramachandran (of the breakaway All-India Anna DMK) - achieved political success through their popularity as communicators. Annadurai who was a script-writer and an orator was chief minister of Tamil Nadu from 1967-69. On his death in 1969, Karunanidhi, who is a script-writer, orator, actor and dramatists, took over and was chief minister till 1976. He was followed by M.G.Ramachandran, who was a famous actor; in spite of long absences because of serious illnesses and impaired speech he is still the chief minister of Tamil Nadu.

Let us look at the DMK's use of the theatre before we study its influential involvement in the films.

Until the early forties, the theatre in Tamil Nadu was often used for spreading anti-colonial sentiments among the masses. But with the growing popularity of the DK and later the DMK, the theatre was used to spread anti-Brahminic and pro-Dravidian messages rather than anti-colonial sentiments. They discovered that the theatre was a powerful medium to put across their ideologies. The people did not have to be prepared beforehand, nor did they have to experiment with the "right" form of theatre. The audience in Tamil Nadu, like the audience in most parts of rural India, had been used to a tradition of "didactic" theatre. The traditional theatre had played an integral role in the life of the community; it had played a major part in "socialising" the village community and in legitimising traditional norms and practices. The DMK used the very same medium, but changed its forms and content to suit its own purposes. Perinbanayagam deals with the situation which helped in the dissemination of the DMK message through the theatre:

Rhetorical skills and artfulness of theatre and cinema certainly played an important role in converting and sustaining a mass of illiterate supporters. The agents of Brahminic Hinduism had used various dramatic, semi-dramatic, and musical forms to sustain the faith of the masses. Representations in various dramatic forms of religious themes from the rich Sanskritic tradition, always containing denouements affirming Sanskritic and Brahminic supremacy and values, formed an inescapable part of village life in India. These morality plays made the average villager a relatively sophisticated viewer of didactic theatre. The DMK then used the same medium to convert the villagers to a more secular and rational philosophy (1971, p.211).

During the early years of the DMK's cultural offensive, the theatre played an important role in propagating the Dravidian ideal and anti-Brahminism. In plays like Annadurai's Kathal Jothi (Flame of Love) and Karunanidhi's Thooku Medai (the Gallows), Brahminic ritual and economic dominance were exposed, and through the portrayal of commonly shared Dravidian symbols an identification with the audience was achieved. The role of traditional dramatic characters was frequently changed, as for example in Kathal Jothi, where the buffoon is used to debunk Puranic ideals and the myths of Brahminic Hinduism.

In Thooku Medai, identification with the audience was achieved through the name of the protagonist, Pandyan (the name of an early Tamil dynasty), and through continuously extolling the greatness of Tamil culture and the glories of its past. Primordial sentiments were evoked through references to the golden past. Unity was forged out of shared nostalgia, common grievances and goals articulated in terms of these.

Important as the theatre was, the film medium was even more, and far more widely, effective. It was the use of the medium of film that lay behind the rise of DMK popularity.

The DMK put to film use many of the conventions that were generic to the traditional theatre, including the use of mythological content, song and dance and styles of acting and characterisation. In fact as Hardgrave and Niedhart have shown, this correspondence between the tradition of the theatre and the film made it difficult to distinguish between these two different media of communication. They note that "...film dialogues are highly literary (especially in the DMK films) and the form so uncinematic as to be often no more than a filmed play" (1972, p.31). The audience was already familiar with some of the conventions used in the DMK film, and this facilitated the process of identification. There was also a correspondence between the script writers and actors in the theatre and the film. People like Annadurai wrote scripts for both the theatre and the film, and the same actors played roles in both.

Second, the film, unlike the theatre, catered to a much larger audience and could be shown simultaneously in a number of different places. This ensured a common "representation of reality" and its reception by a much bigger audience than was achieved through the theatre. It meant that a selective representation of reality was disseminated to a large audience through the whole of Tamil Nadu. The DMK's political legitimacy was ensured through this sharing of a common and "legitimate" version of reality.

Third, given the large percentage of illiterates among the audience, the DMK film provided the masses access to an uncomplicated identification with cultural heroes who were also their political representatives. It was difficult to distinguish between the DMK ideology disseminated through the film and that presented in the party manifesto. The "stars" and their "message"

and the correspondences between their fictional and real-life roles made it easy for the masses to identify with them.

Fourth, the DMK film provided the audience with heightened images of the party and their leaders. DMK actors like MGR invariably played "positive", if stereotyped roles, and embodied values like courage and kindness. In his roles MGR was always a champion of the downtrodden. He was constantly portrayed as a charismatic hero fighting for causes. This positive image has been a major factor in his rise to political popularity in Tamil Nadu.

Fifth, with the commercial viability of the DMK film, the "stars" were marketed and this provided yet another means of identification. Badges, posters, calendars figuring DMK film stars, were all marketed through both normal commercial channels and through the fan-clubs at village level. Hardgrave writes about the "identification of the film star and party":

The relics and accoutrements of fandom are omnipresent in Tamil Nadu and are often infused with political symbolism. Multicoloured lithographs present dream images of the stars; MGR against the embattled banner of the DMK; MGR in spacesuit with DMK armpatch as the first man on the moon... (1973, p.303).

The popularity of the DMK film and its stars was maintained through the elaborate "openings" and "100th day celebrations" of DMK films which were sponsored by the party, with mammoth rallies and meetings where the "star-politicians" addressed the people.

Sixth, the themes of these films dealt with issues that were close to the life of the people - like exploitation, poverty and prohibition. Prohibition of drinking, a moral issue at one time, is a political one now. It is a vote-catcher with women, and when the election season approaches, prohibition is introduced. But revenue from liquor is considerable, and it is lifted soon after the party is voted back to power.

Robert L. Hardgrave has written extensively on film and politics in Tamil Nadu (1964, 1972, 1973, 1975, and 1979). He has provided descriptive accounts of the relationship between the Dravidian parties (especially the DMK) and the cinema and tried to show the correspondence between the DMK's use of the cinema and its rise to power. But Hardgrave's analysis treats this phenomenon almost entirely from the point of view of the party in power, and he relies on information gleaned from official political sources rather than from a cross-section of society. In the only study that he has

made on the audience of the DMK film, he relies on an opinion poll which, in the characteristic style of American statistical exercises, hides more than it reveals. Hardgrave explores a number of facets of the film-audience in Tamil Nadu, including film attendance in rural and urban areas, age and frequency of seeing films and other correlations such as literacy and frequency of film-viewing. But while his analysis provides a fair amount of statistical information, it does not add a great deal to our knowledge of the audience of the DMK film. He comes up with some typically fanciful correlations, in the tradition of the dominant paradigm; for instance he finds that frequency of film attendance is "...related to happiness, with those who attend films being almost twice as likely to be happy as those who never go: of those attending either frequently or occasionally in rural areas, 53 per cent are satisfied: of those who never go, only 30 per cent expressed satisfaction" (1970, p.32).

But he does not explain what he means by "happiness", nor does he ask the question as to why poor people go to see such films. According to writers like Hardgrave, films serve either as a means of catharsis or provide a means of escape. But DMK films were a medium of propaganda. They give a representation of reality and advocate a particular political alternative. And therefore their study needs to be situated within the economic and social situation in Tamil Nadu.

The DMK film is a medium which has systematically been used to dominate the masses and legitimise the DMK and the AIADMK governments. It was through its use of propagandistic devices that it achieved effective political mobilisation of the masses.

Furhammar and Issakson, in their study of politics and film, single out the propaganda film and its influence in the political mobilisation of peoples in post-revolutionary Russia and Nazi Germany. They refer to manifestly propagandistic films such as Eisenstein's "Battleship Potemkin" and the anti-Semitic Nazi film "Der Erwige Jude" among other films, and they point out that one of the major ways by which propaganda films work is through the denial of manifold interpretations: "Propaganda guards against any ambivalent reactions by seeking out the most fundamental human responses, the most basic value judgements, the most elementary emotions" (1971, p.154). Their observations are valid in a consideration of the DMK film; it was exactly through the

manipulation of shared symbols, such as the exploitative Brahmin, that primordial emotions were activated. It is important to note that although the earlier DMK films, like Velaikari (1949) and Parasakthi (1952), did play an important (and quite justified role) in creating an awareness of Brahminic domination, the continued emphasis on much the same themes reflected the unwillingness of the DMK, especially after it came to power, to confront other important issues like class alliances and peasant struggles.

Thus the DMK films have continuously reinforced and legitimised the importance of certain themes vis-à-vis others; through the selective representation of issues, they have blocked out the chances for alternative representations of issues. There were a number of ways in which the DMK film spread its ideology - the use of a pure Tamil language and of shared symbols, the use of "montage", the identification of "stars" with "norms", through images of "ideal" rulers, through "typecasting" characters, through the portrayal of half-truths, through identification with commonly shared issues and grievances, etc.

The following examples are meant to illustrate the use of propagandistic methods in DMK films. I shall follow them with a brief examination of the actual and "real" state of affairs in Tamil Nadu, which will reveal the gaps between the DMK's policy mediated through films and its policy in real life.

There is a major difference between the thematic content of the early DMK films (1945-1955) and later DMK films (1956 onwards). From its earlier emphasis on atheistic and rationalist themes, the DMK in its later films moved, through depicting controversial themes, towards more populist ones. The change in the thematic content reflected a change in the political strategy of the DMK, its move towards the formation of a larger electoral base. In Annadurai's first film Nalla Thambi (Good Brother, 1948), he attacked the political degeneration of the Congress and the irrelevance of a "Constitution" that in actuality meant nothing to the mass of people in their situation of abject poverty. In the film Annadurai also used a traditional medium of communication, the Villupattu or "Bow-Song", as a device to expound the story. The film touched on a number of socialistic themes like cooperative farming and Zamindari abolition, and more populist themes like prohibition.

In his next film Velaikari (Servant Girl, 1949), he attacked the contradictions and hypocrisies in Hinduism and advocated rationalism as an intelligent alternative to religion. The film was openly atheistic and iconoclastic. Hardgrave notes some of its more controversial aspects:

The film, no doubt, had shocking aspects. After a scene in which the landlord offers puja before Kali showing the hypocrisy of religion, Ramaswamy, who had spent all his father's money in offerings after his father's suicide - upturns the offerings before the goddess. He shakes his fist at the deity and in a long monologue says, "Just as the rich man lives off the sweat of the poor, you do likewise" (1973, p.292).

In Parasakthi (1952), religious hypocrisy was once again the target. It attacked the hollowness of government policies which upheld such hypocrisies, and stood for the protection of cows rather than human beings. It was also an attack on corrupt Brahmin priests and their false piety

These early films played a useful role in creating an awareness among the masses of both Brahminic and official exploitation. The films advocated an alternative ideology to that propounded by the agents of Brahminic Hinduism, a humanistic ideology which suggested that life on earth could be made more fulfilling and meaningful by following a rational course of action rather than the precepts of religion. They helped the public towards a greater awareness of the facts of economic, political and religious domination by Brahmins and the agents of the state. But as Erik Barnouw and Krishnaswamy point out, even in these early films an element of propaganda was clearly evident:

In the early 1950s, they began the casual introduction into films of symbols of their movement. References to the colours black and red, adopted as party colours, became frequent. The word anna, big brother - popular name for Annadurai, the party leader - was often used. Later the motif of a rising sun, adopted as party emblem began to appear. Any such symbol would evoke wild applause in the theatre (1963, pp.179f).

They go on to provide two examples of the symbols that were inserted in the film dialogues as instances of the means by which party ideology was spread and party identification achieved:

Man 1: The night is dark

Man 2: Don't worry! The rising sun will soon bring light and good fortune.

Or again, Two people lost in the forest:

Man 1: Should we turn north?

Man 2: No never! South is much better.

Apart from such covert use of symbolism, in the later films such as Engavittu Pillai (The Son from our Home, 1965), M.G. Ramachandran, the hero, openly advocated DMK ideology and, more importantly, projected his own image in an ideal light, as the saviour of the masses. In the course of the construction of the image of the ideal leader, MGR says thus to the audience in the film and by extension to those in the theatre: "If you follow me, the poor will never suffer. First Christ came and preached: Then Gandhi came and preached: but the people have forgotten. Now I will set things right."

In Nadodi Manan (The Vagabond King, 1958), which was basically a remake of The Prisoner of Zenda, the ruler, played by MGR, issues a decree that, as David (1983, p.71) notes, is a replica of the 1957 DMK election manifesto. Frequently, as in the film Nam Nadu (Our Land, 1963), MGR appeared in party colours - red shirt and black pants - and party colours were inserted in almost all scenes. Apart from the use of symbols in these films, there was a conscious effort to typecast the hero. MGR, for example, would only appear in films where he played a positive role and he almost always played a "flat" character, in the sense that he was identified with certain selected "traits" rather than with a multiplicity of traits. In all DMK films MGR personified virtues like goodness and kindness. For example, in Nam Nadu, in a series of episodes MGR projected himself as the conscience of the nation, a vigilant and dedicated social reformer. Hardgrave comments on this introductory progression of episodes in which MGR plays a typecast role:

The hero is introduced in a series of short episodes: he helps an old woman walk across the street; captures a pick-pocket; protects a young girl from Eve-teasers; and saves small children from eating unclean sweets. As the film progresses, there is a long queue waiting before a ration shop. A rich man arrives by car and is immediately supplied with his quota. MGR intervenes and asks the man to stand in the line. Someone in the queue is heard to say, "If there is one like this man, then the country will be all right". Later, when our hero agrees to help some slum dwellers, one of them says, "Really you are a God" (1979, p.105).

Typecasting meant a consistency in roles which encouraged an easier identification with the hero. There was also a frequent

use of the technique of montage whereby, through a juxtaposition of shots - such as shots of Gandhi or Anna with those of MGR, an enhanced image of the man was projected. Visual techniques, such as close-ups, were commonly used to portray heroes like MGR in a larger-than-life light.⁽¹²⁾

The impact of the DMK film on the people of Tamil Nadu cannot be assessed in terms of any mechanistic stimulus-response model. On the other hand, there obtained clear-cut economic, political and social conditions that made the message of the DMK film credible to the masses. Poverty was a reality of existence. Exploitation was a fact of every-day life. The championing of people's causes and the glorification of their cultural past enabled the masses to identify with the new symbols. At a time when the Central Government appeared committed to the imposition of Hindi as national language, the DMK's total commitment to the Tamil language predictably proved a rallying point.

The DMK films democratised symbols and revitalised the people's culture, and in the process also provided images of the ideal political party and the ideal political leader. But by providing an "idealised resolution of conflict" and by projecting idealised individuals capable of tackling the task, the role of the community in effecting change got de-emphasised.

Dyer notes the importance given to the individual and his capacity to overcome problem as a characteristic emphasis in the dominant version of films

The peculiarities of the bourgeois conception of the individual/character are, first, that the stress on the particular and uniqueness tends to bar, or render inferior, representations of either the collectivity or the masses... and second, that the concern with interior motivation reinforces a model of history and social process in which explanation is rooted in the individual conscience and capacity rather than in collective and/or structural aspects of social life (1981, p.242).

12. MGR's film image as a "do-gooder" has made such an impression on the minds of ordinary folk in Tamil Nadu, that he is literally worshipped by people. During his recent illness and his subsequent much-publicised miraculous recovery, more than 20 suicides were reported by his fans. As Surya (March 3, 1985, p.1) notes, MGR's illness led 22 people to commit suicide "in the hope that their deaths would somehow satisfy Yama (the god of the underworld) and induce him to let their leader off the hook". Such extreme cases of devotion to a leader show the extent to which film build-up of the image of a charismatic leader has impressed itself on the mind of the masses.

The DMK films have also played a large role in highlighting the importance of love and sex as the great reconciler of structural conflict. In quite a few DMK films, the resolution of structural conflict is averted at the last moment by the poor hero marrying the rich landlord's daughter. Shivaraman has this to say on the impact of the thematic denouement of DMK films.

All labour management problems are solved in a DMK movie purely subjectively by the poor worker marrying the capitalist's daughter and himself becoming an enlightened capitalist. The fiercely anti-factory owner-landlord speeches (rarely do you find an intelligent attack on the capitalist system itself) act as a catharsis to the worker boiling with impotent rage - he comes out of the movie house elated, for MGR had beaten his boss real good! The revolutionary urges of the masses find a vicarious fulfilment in the movies while in reality they are denied a real-life forum for articulation. The close identification between the movies and the party (our Chief Minister is a very popular script-writer) creates the happy illusion among the people that the government is on their side (1969, p.29).

After the 1967 election victory of the DMK, the promises of reform and change were forgotten. The few changes that did take place were in the fields of culture, and they were superficial changes that would have at best gladdened the hearts of a few hard-core cultural nationalists. For example the language riots of 1965 served to bring about a certain degree of autonomy for the Tamil language, but the language riots since then have played a major role in channelling the frustrations of the masses in politically pointless directions; they helped shift attention away from real problems such as poverty and structural oppression.

There have been other changes, for example in the name of the state - from Madras to Tamil Nadu - and change in the name of the high-yielding variety of seed from ADT27 to Anna. The party and their media have wasted a fair amount of time discussing such changes. The real problems of the people have scarcely been tackled either by the DMK or the AIADMK under the chief-ministership of MGR who took over the reins of government in 1977. Satyamurthy notes the enthusiasm of the DMK to deal with cultural rather than economic issues:

The enthusiasm with which the new ministry embarked upon its tasks in the field of linguistics and cultural self-assertion was only matched by its reluctance to develop a consistent initiative in responding to demands involving structural changes

implicit in the emergence of vigorous forces of economic and social change (1977, pp.437f).

As Kurien (1977), Kurien and James (1979), Menscher (1978), Djurfeldt and Lindberg (1975a and 1975b) and Guha (1984) have shown, poverty in Tamil Nadu has steadily increased over the last two decades. Although the dominance of the Brahmin in the economic spheres of life has to a certain extent been curtailed, rich castes from the Backward communities have taken over that role and become in their turn exploiters of the poor. The government legislation regarding land ceiling and minimum wages has rarely been effectively implemented. The early DMK promise to redistribute land has not been fulfilled, and in fact what Kurien pointed out a decade ago, that it is the lack of such basic resources as land that has contributed to the overwhelming poverty of the masses in Tamil Nadu, remains valid even today:

In a predominantly agrarian rural economy the main resource is obviously land. Even a casual examination of the ownership patterns of land in rural Tamil Nadu will reveal the basis of mass poverty. According to the latest available information... 17 per cent of rural households in Tamil Nadu are without any land at all - the highest proportion among all the states in India. Some 60 per cent of the households own less than one acre of land and account for less than 5 per cent of the land. This pattern has remained more or less the same during the past two decades... The heavy concentration of land ownership remains practically unaltered in spite of the many radical legislative measures adopted (1977, p.133f).

The anti-people stance of both the DMK and the AIADMK has surfaced time and again in the repressive policies they have adopted against people's struggles. Their support of the landed classes in both the 1968 Kilvenmani and 1980 Tiruppattur⁽¹³⁾ incidents where

13. The Kilvenmani massacre took place on December 25, 1968 in the district of Tanjore, Tamil Nadu, after a labour problem, more than 200 landlords, in alliance with the forces of law and order, killed a number of Harijans by herding them into a hut and burning them alive. Frankel (1971, p.116) says that "the confrontation represented a direct attack on the legitimacy of the traditional village system under which harmony was preserved by the mutual acceptance of ascriptive inequalities sanctified by the religious myths of caste".

The Tirupathur struggles (see The Economic and Political Weekly, 15, 1980, No.33, August 16), was yet another instance where the government took side with the landlords to break up legitimate peasant movements. As usual, this confrontation was played down by the press in general, which branded the peasants as "Naxalites".

large numbers of landless labourers were killed, exposed their unwillingness to stand by the people they had supported in their films. Dutt commented on the role of such films in the mystification of the masses in India. His observations are particularly relevant to Tamil Nadu:

All that insistence on songs, dances and the cuckoo-land fantasies where the hero beats the hell out of the villain is a ruse, a trick to deceive the people, to cloud issues which threaten their lives, to lead them to a fairyland where all injustices are set right by the hero's fists, or the big, fat, bad man... suffers a change of heart and begins to help the poor and weak, and all is well with the world, as long as class struggle is forgotten and revolution is forgotten (1979, p.9).

I have tried to show the internal aspects of underdevelopment - especially in the realm of culture: the domination of the masses through their involvement in the Great Tradition, and their dependence on a populist film culture which has contributed to their passiveness. In the following chapter I shall take up the phenomenon of "Action Groups" and will include a study of their objectives, theoretical foundations and their influence in India. It will be shown in the next chapter and more clearly in later chapters, that one of the main objectives of these groups is to provide an authentic culture for and with the masses.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL ACTION GROUPS AND DEVELOPMENT

In the preceding chapters, I have tried to delineate the salient characteristics of the theory and practice of communication and development in India. The study was located in the economic, political, social and cultural context of development and underdevelopment in India, but it also took into account the "international" dimension, including the impact of aid policies. A critique of the prevailing development orthodoxy, especially as it is manifested in the theory and practice of communication and development in India, has been the focus of the study so far.

In this chapter the accent is on the alternative theory and practice of rural development that is followed primarily by "social action groups" and "grass-roots movements" in India. From the study of the dominant development scenario we move to a study of the alternative development scenario. I shall take a look at the social, economic and political background of these movements, their theoretical bases, their practice of communication for liberation, their contributions towards development in the country, and their inherent limitations.

The Genesis of Social Action Groups (SAGs)

While there have always been grass-roots movements in India, in one form or another (see Desai, 1979), social action groups are a more recent phenomenon. One of the differences between a social action group and a rural movement is that while most often SAGs are initiated and maintained with outside help, for example with the help of middle-class animateurs and facilitators, grass-roots movement, like the Bhoomi Sena (the Land Army) in Maharashtra were formed through the initiative of the oppressed themselves, the Adivasis (tribals) in the case of the Bhoomi Sena. Another difference is that while SAGs rely in many instances on Western donor agencies, grass-roots peasant movements rely on funds provided by their own members. There is yet another difference;

while grass-roots movements have in many cases aligned themselves with and gained support from the Communist movement in India, SAGs try to function outside the party political process.

Both of them, however, have as their ultimate goal the liberation of the oppressed and the transformation of existing structures. For the purposes of this study, the main emphases will be on the theory and practice of SAGs.

Sethi defines SAGs as follows:

These groups are organisations composed mainly of sensitised/radicalised middle-class youth, working for and with the oppressed and exploited strata with a view to transform society. They are involved in a range of activities from development with a political perspective to militant organisation of the masses. These activities take place outside the control of the government and political parties (1984, p.306).

Failure of official policies

The emergence of these groups coincided with a period of deepening political and economic crisis in India in the early seventies. It was a crisis that exposed the inadequacies of economic planning and the failure of the organised political process to translate the rhetoric of social transformation into reality. The situation was complemented by a social crisis, involving the breakdown of the traditional social system and its securities under the impact of a changing economic situation.

The economic crisis was brought on by a combination of failures, in theory and in application. The failure of the "trickle-down" theory of economic growth became apparent soon after the Indian experiment with the externally induced Green Revolution. The Revolution brought in its wake both large-scale pauperisation and proleterisation.⁽¹⁾ It increased the incidence of rural

1. While proleterisation is related to the convergence of people, regardless of caste and class, with the landless labourers at the bottom-end of the poverty scale, pauperisation or immiseration is the entry of a rural workforce into an already saturated field. Sau (1979, pp.71-84) blames the Green Revolution for fuelling both in India. (See note 6 in Chapter I).

landlessness. It was basically an elitist exercise in development;⁽²⁾ inputs were provided to the organised sector, i.e., to people who were economically and socially betteroff, and it was hoped that with time there would come about an eventual redistribution of the benefits of growth. Those people who were in the unorganised sector, especially the Adivasis and the Harijans, whose labour power was their only resource, were bypassed as targets of development.

Added to this, the key institutions of development, including the institutions of agricultural extension and rural credit, were managed by local elites, which resulted in the institutionalisation of caste-based norms of favouritism. With no access to these institutions of development and with absolutely no power to influence the market, vast numbers of the rural populace were reduced to precarious circumstances. They depended solely on their labour power.

There was also a failure of the political process in India, failure of established political parties and failure of the various state governments to intervene on behalf of the poor, to implement legislation and to initiate progressive policies. It was in effect a failure of both national and state governments, of the politics of populism and, perhaps more importantly, of the champions

2. The elitism of development policies seems to be becoming more pronounced after Rajiv Gandhi's taking over as Prime Minister. His policies of large-scale computerisation and liberalisation of the economy are bound to bring in their wake increasing inequalities. As Vanaik points out, these policies have not been complemented by anti-poverty programmes: "If the government has its way,, there will be a... decisive acceleration along the path of the most blatantly right-wing programme for capitalist accumulation since independence... Direct programmes for poverty reduction are not an important preoccupation: it is argued that as long as the economic cake grows fast enough, there will be enough both for the rich to increase their relative share and for the poor to raise their absolute consumption (1985, pp.79f.).

of the working classes - the Communist Parties,⁽³⁾ including the CPI, CPI (M) and the CPI (ML) - to intervene effectively on behalf of the marginalised millions. Steeped in ideological disputes and embroiled in polemics about Marxian exigeses, the Communist Parties in India have exhibited some of the worst features that have dogged the more conservative parties, including a centralised hierarchy modelled on the Russian and Chinese examples, a predilection for electoral alliances - sometimes with dubious right-wing and communal parties - and an inability to feel the pulse of the people. Furthermore, their adherence to classical Marxist frames of analyses -- as for example, their dogmatic insistence on analysing Indian society in terms of classes and not castes, on the need to capture state power as a prerequisite for bringing about social transformation, and on the role of the industrial working class as the vanguard of the revolution - had led to general disillusionment with the Communist movement.

The social crisis was due to the changes that resulted from the modernisation of the agricultural sector. With increasing costs of production and stagnant wages, a vast rural proleteriat was being formed. They overflowed into the cities and became the urban poor. Those who remained in the rural hinterlands were caught in the struggle for survival. This disparate agglomeration of landless people was manipulated both by populist political parties (such as the DMK and the AIDMK in Tamil Nadu) and by unscrupulous landlords.

There was also an environmental crisis brought about by the large-scale destruction of the eco-system. Trees were cut down, and deforestation went on unchecked. Pollution of the environment was beginning to be recognised as a serious problem.

The destruction of the local environment affected a vast number of tribals who were dependent on the forests and their

3. The Communist Party of India broke up in 1964 into two factions, the relatively less leftist group retaining the name CPI. The leftist faction is known as the Communist Party-Marxist. The CPI is committed to "national democratic revolution" while the CPI-M aims at a total "people's democratic revolution". There is a third faction, CPI (Marxist-Leninist) which, at least in the not too distant past, had no faith in parliamentary democracy and wanted to pursue the Chinese method of peasant-based guerilla warfare. The Naxalite movement in Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere was inspired by this ultra-leftist approach. The term "Naxalite" today has more or less the same connotation as guerilla, and a number of SEGs have been branded as Naxalite groups.

produce for livelihood. It is with this mass of people, including both Harijans and Adivasis, numbering about 150 million, that the social action groups were initially concerned. As Kothari puts it,

It is with the plight of these rejects of society and of organised politics, as also ironically of revolutionary theory and received doctrines of all schools of thought, that the 'grass-roots' movements and non-party formations are concerned. They have to be seen as part of the democratic struggle at various levels, in a radically different social context than (sic) was posited both by the incrementalists and the revolutionaries, at a point of history when existing institutions and the theoretical models on which they are based have run their course, when there is search for new instruments of political action... and when large vacuums in political space are emerging thanks to the decline in the role of the State and the virtual collapse of "government" in large parts of rural India. They are based on deep stirrings of consciousness, of an awareness of crisis that could conceivably be turned into a catalyst of new opportunities (1984, p.129).

But it is not as if economic planning had entirely bypassed the needs of the unorganised sector. There have been a number of schemes that were especially created to provide employment, housing, educational and health opportunities for both Adivasis and Harijans. For example, the Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE), the Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project (PIRED), the Marginal Farmers' and Agricultural Labourers Scheme (MFAL) and various programmes exclusively for the Adivasis had been started in order to promote rural development.

But precisely because of the Government's sectoral approach to development and its inability to co-ordinate and integrate the various sectors, the benefits have been transitory. Furthermore, development has always been imposed on the poor and the felt needs of the poor rarely taken into account. A centralised bureaucracy and a corrupt and inefficient back-up system of services had rendered the whole exercise in development irrelevant and meaningless to the vast majority of the rural poor.

For example, the success of schemes such as the MFAL depended on easy access to credit facilities from banks and cooperatives. But banks and cooperatives demanded surety for loans, and it was not surprising that a large number of small farmers could not avail themselves of the credit facilities that were legitimately on offer. The All India Rural Credit Review Committee (1969) had

this to say on the limited impact of rural development on the lower deciles of the population and one of the reasons for it:

It is now generally agreed that the small farmers have not benefited in proportion either to their numbers or their needs from the various programmes of rural development which have been under implementation under the Three Plans. Our review of record of the cooperative agency confirms that it is also broadly true in regard to availability of institutional credit for agriculture.

Failure of voluntary agencies

This failure of the government's development policies to make any significant impact on the lives of the rural poor was one of the major reasons for the emergence of SAGs. But their emergence was also due to the relative failure of the voluntary sector in general - the failure of voluntary organisations involved in health work, education, agricultural extension and in charity and aid-related work. There are a vast number of such organisations engaged in developmental work in India. They include various Gandhian organisations, the Ramakrishna Mission and a number of church-related agencies such as the Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), World Vision and other organisations, both foreign-based and indigenous.

Although it could be claimed that the voluntary sector has fared relatively better than the government in its impact on the rural masses, that impact has not made any major differences in the lives of the rural poor. This can be attributed to a number of reasons. The most significant, perhaps, is the fact that the voluntary sector has traditionally played a complementary role to the official efforts in the area of development. Their goals and objectives and their ideological underpinnings are broadly similar to those of the government. The only major difference between the voluntary sector and the official development sector is that the former, due to its size, local-specific nature of work, and a higher degree of commitment, has been more efficient in the implementation of development projects. Altruism and religiously-inspired commitment are no doubt laudable, but they cannot by themselves bring about radical change. They do not as a rule see poverty in systemic terms, and their approach is more curative than preventive.

In general their concern is to bring about economic development through the transfer of skills and information.

Especially with the Christian agencies there has been the tendency to see development as part of Christian "mission". The approach then becomes paternalistic, and development is imposed from above. Another problem is that the voluntary sector too often attempts to supplement official development projects. Such involvement with government-related projects has made a number of voluntary agencies more government-oriented than people-centred.

A good example of such an organisation is CASA, which has been involved in both relief and development work. But through getting entangled with government-related projects it has indirectly contributed to the exploitation of the masses, and developed a number of constraints which have prevented it from taking action at crucial moments. For example, Matthew (CCPD Document 9) has criticised CASA's role in helping with the implementation of the World Bank-sponsored "Social Forestry Programmes" that involved the largescale planting of eucalyptus trees, both on ecological and economic grounds. Not only has the eucalyptus very negative ecological consequences, but its benefits go to a very small minority of rich people related to the pulp industry. Similarly, CASA has also been criticised for withholding relief at crucial moments, as for example during the anti-Sikh riots following the assassination of Mrs Gandhi in 1984. An article in The Indian Express on the Bhiwandi caste riots in Maharashtra (27 Jan. 1985) has similarly criticised CASA for adopting a "rigid and bureaucratic attitude" towards the aid recipients.

The majority of voluntary agencies working in India have only a limited impact because of their location within the conventional framework of development. But there have been isolated examples of voluntary agencies which have created alternatives to existing structures. The Jamkhed health care project in Maharashtra is one such example; it has establishedd an alternative health care delivery system through a participatory approach to rural health care. Through its emphasis on preventive and social medicine and through securing the active participation of the people in all stages of its work, the Jamkhed project exemplified what could be achieved within the existing system. Similarly, Roofs for the Roofless, a Madras-based voluntary agency, has demonstrated what can be done through a creative approach to rural development. Many of its developmental activities are of the conventional type. These include a Community Fodder Cultivation Programme, Intensive

Veterinary Care Programme, Housing Projects and Functional Literacy Campaigns, but their approach is participatory, and it has helped them to overcome difficulties both internal to the organisation and external. Participation has been a key element in their overall strategy of development and this is emphasised in the Roofs report:

The villagers are more strongly committed to a plan of their own making... In monthly meetings villagers review the results and decide on the next steps, thus keeping the consensus alive. Regular use of this planning method has been instrumental in overcoming deep-rooted divisions and taboos.

SAGs' Role as Catalysts

SAGs fall outside the conventional framework of development. Both in terms of their analysis of society and their strategy of development they are radically different from other groups working in the voluntary sector. Analysing the causes of poverty in terms of class and caste exploitation, SAGs reject the conventional view that poverty is a self-inflicted phenomenon. They believe that poverty is a product of the social system and that it is maintained and reinforced through various unjust institutional structures and practices. Development, therefore, is a process of structural transformation and involves self-transformation of the community and the individual, both materially and mentally.

Behaviourial changes are an essential aspect of this process of development, but such changes are not conceptualised in terms of their contribution to the formation of an individualist and consumerist mentality, only in terms of their role in the progressive conscientisation of the individual. In other words, behaviourial changes are induced through participation in a dialogic process of learning which is solely dependent on the will and the initiative of the individual. Conscientisation is a process in which "action" and "reflection" are harnessed to the development of the individual and the community in the economic, political, social and cultural areas of life. Through it the community becomes aware of its social reality and its rights, of the reasons for its economic, political and cultural subjugation. It learns to conceive of the nature and process of a "development" that is initiated by the people, through the harnessing of their expertise towards a development that affects them positively. People become the "subjects" of development, and not its "objects".

In this process of development, SAGs act as catalysts, as facilitators and not as the controllers of development. As David has said,

Action groups are involved in analysing the socio-political, economic and cultural forces that are deep-rooted in society and in formulating strategies based on the vision of a socialistic society... They believe that socialism cannot be ordered into being from above but that living creative socialism is the work of the creative masses themselves... The revolutionary subjective factor is the key for transforming society. Since human beings' subjectivity is blinded by the forces of society, in which they live, the members of action groups recognise that it is their primary duty to be involved with others in an educative process in order to stimulate and inspire the people towards socialistic goals. In this they act not as leaders who command, but as catalysts who help the people to take history into their hands (CCPD Document 22, pp.3f).

Strategy of SAGs

SAGs see development as a long-term process and they work with communities which have traditionally been the "victims" of development - including tribals, landless labourers, quarry workers, fisherfolk, weavers and other marginalised sections of society. They realise that the marginalised stay poor because they do not have the means to translate the given inputs into a self-sustaining process of development. They also realise that development is much more than providing economic package deals to the poor every once in a while. Instead of making the poor dependent on handouts, SAGs believe that it is far more important to develop organisational and individual capabilities among the poor, thus making them independent and an effective countervailing power.

Rural development thus becomes much more than the mere management and implementation of development projects. It involves a constant struggle, through organisation and co-operative endeavour, towards economic and social justice. In the words of Matthew, the social action groups "view rural development essentially as a struggle for establishing economic and political rights of the poorest among the poor and not just implementation and management of given schemes and programmes (1984, p.8). SAGs believe that development is not a neutral process, but involves taking a choice, and is therefore a political activity.

The most distinguishing feature of the organisation of SAGs is that they are created through the initiative of the "target" people. The people decide whether they want an alternative kind of development. SAGs evolve through a process of participatory and creative deliberation. Initially, social activists might visit a village or stay with the villagers for some time, but a SAG is formed only after a collective request is made. This is an important stage in the formation of countervailing power, because the people collectively decide on a strategy of development and thereby demonstrate a collective will for social change. Thus the target village is not chosen at random - as is generally the case in the voluntary sector.

Central to the organisation of SAGs are the notions of "participation", "democratic decentralisation" and "collective management and responsibility". Participation is a key word in this process of development. It is not participation through proxy, through elected representatives; it is a grass-roots process. Its success depends on the collective involvement of the people in all aspects related to the formation of the organisation and the direction of its activities. Participation is an active process; it means that the community takes initiatives, asserting themselves, taking an active part in the analysis and planning of development. Participation is an educational process as well, and an essential element in the act of conscientisation. Rahman explains the notion of participation in the context of SAGs:

Praxis, and hence participation, is a continuous educative process - a process of progressive conscientisation. Through collective self-reflection on their experiences and problems, people become more aware of the dimensions of their reality and of what can be done by themselves to transform it. With this awareness they decide upon and take collective action, and analyse its results to promote their awareness (knowledge) further. Thus they move on with progressively advanced knowledge of their evolving reality (1981, p.43).

The two dimensions of action and reflection are an essential aspect in this process of development. The dialectical interplay of action and reflection through collective consciousness leading to collective action makes this process an integrated whole. The structure of the organisation, its internal reality, is based on the notion of equality. The leaders, the cadre and the people interact on an equal basis, and the privilege of either

action or reflection is not the sole prerogative of any one or select group of individuals. Access to resources is also democratised in the working of SAGs.

An important difference between SAGs and other groups in the voluntary sector is that their animateurs are more social activists than mere change agents. In other words, these animateurs do not merely hand over skills or information from the outside. They are themselves aware of the larger dimensions of social and structural inequality, and are infused with a desire to bring about change. The animateurs are not "finished products" who act as bankers or mediators of finished, packaged knowledge; they are, on the other hand, catalysts of change, themselves involved in a process of learning with the people. They are involved in encouraging the development of the people's critical and creative faculties and the development of culture. Their main objective is to create with the people a strong base for countervailing power. In the words of Rayan, it is "to make emerge a socially acquired and shared critical awareness of the reality of the situation, of the forces at work in it and the social meaning of the root causes of deprivation and marginality, and the nature of the system itself, as well as an understanding of the values, actions and processes by which structural changes can be brought about as swiftly as possible in the direction of greater humanity, equality, freedom and justice" (quoted in Joseph, 1984, p.261).

In their strategy of development, the SAGs are radically different from organisations working in the voluntary sector. They are not interested in the implementation of projects which have been designed by outsiders. SAGs believe that development includes the vital element of struggle. Thus the progressive empowerment of the people is one of their main concerns. This process of empowerment is achieved in various ways and by the use of a number of different methods. Non-violent mobilisation and cultural actions are important aspects of this alternative process of development. Sustained sensitisation on political, economic, social and cultural realities is an essential component of the process. The conception of development is not limited to its purely economic aspects; the political, cultural and human aspects receive equal attention.

For tactical reasons, SAGs do dabble in economic and health projects, but these are front-activities which disguise the deeper political nature of development as it is carried out.

Chatterji points out the deeper concerns behind the intervention of SAGs in the development process:

For the social activist the primary concerns and issues on which action is to be undertaken transcend the limited and often self-defeating ones of need-satisfaction whether in the fields of economic development or social welfare. However, in the process of mobilisation and conscientisation, action groups may choose one or more such economic or social welfare programmes as part of their strategy. But the emphasis must always be on the struggle against injustice, change in the structures of society, and the participation and the leadership of the poor in this transformation (1984, p.6).

In other words there are two activities involved in the overall strategy of SAGs - an immediate and short-term strategy of limited development in the field of health, production, and the like, and a long-term strategy, through the use of conscientisation towards social transformation.

The issues taken up by SAGs are not purely economic ones. They are taken up on the basis of their situational specificity and on the strength of their possible contribution to the goal of an alternative development. Issues that were traditionally regarded as non-political, for example ecological and environmental issues, women's concerns or cultural issues, have been both politicised and seen as a part of the larger struggle against exploitation. Thus the Chipko movement in Himachal Pradesh and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Bihar politicised the ecological debate and mobilised the people against the large-scale destruction of the environment through both internally and externally induced projects. Lourduswamy notes one of the successes of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, achieved through organisation and mobilisation of the Santals, a tribe in Bihar:

The "social forestry" carried on by the Indian government and being backed by international agencies emphasised the planting of commercial trees like teak and eucalyptus which, aside from lumber and profits for rich farmers, gives nothing to local people who are used to and demand indigenous mixed forests that provide shade and fodder, and whose leaves, roots, bark, fruit and nuts may be as useful as the lumber itself. Their campaign resulted in, for the first time, a World Bank sponsored programme being called to a halt (1985, p.269).

Similarly the Kerala Swantantra Malsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF - association of fisher-folk) and the Board for

Education for Liberation (BEL) and the Association for the Rural Poor (ARP) have politicised the struggle of small fishermen against the destruction of the marine milieu through the indiscriminate fishing activities of mechanised boats and trawlers. The Rural Women's Social Education Centre (RUWSEC) in Tamil Nadu and the women's desk at People's Education for Action and Liberation (PEAL), also in Tamil Nadu, have brought to the fore issues like "women and society", "poverty, powerlessness and women", "the image of women in popular culture" and "women and health".

The People's Science Movements that have emerged in Kerala, Maharashtra and in various other states have attempted to instil a scientific attitude among the poor in India, through the raising of consciousness on science-related issues. The importance of these groups stems from the fact that they work among and with the most exploited sections of society, those people who have traditionally been outside the "official" framework of development. They have responded to local situations, used democratic methods of operation and evolved more open-ended, flexible and participatory organisations and processes of development. As Sethi notes, "the potentiality of these several types of non-party groups lies in their growing recognition of the non-political and non-economic aspects of the contemporary structures of power and domination embedded in the culture of modern politics" (1984, p.315).

Yet another significant difference between SAGs and groups in the voluntary sector is in regard to the methods and frequency of evaluation. In the voluntary sector, evaluation is not a continuous part of the development exercise. It is more a bureaucratic ritual gone through at the end of a project. With the SAGs evaluation is a key element in the overall strategy of development. Since every "action", be it a strike, an exercise in land-grabbing or a fast, is related to a sustained and systematic evaluatory process through the action-reflection exercise, there is a larger possibility for the rectification of mistakes and for strategising in the context of a changing socio-economic situation. Besides, the leaders and cadres are themselves involved in periodic, self-critical evaluatory exercises. Interpersonal relationships, leadership, decision-making patterns, individual growth, changes in material conditions and the development of indigenous capabilities - these are some of the areas that are periodically evaluated.

Before analysing the role of communication within such alternative development programmes, let me make a brief study of the theoretical foundations of SAGs.

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical and methodological foundations of SAGs have been shaped by influences from a number of sources. These include the example and writings of Gandhi, especially his practical demonstration of the power of non-violent struggle; in Christian circles the impact of liberation theology with its emphasis on Christ as the liberator of the oppressed, God's "preferential option for the poor" - an expression first used by a Latin American Conference of bishops - and the prophetic role of the church; the writings of Alinsky on radical community development; the writings of Marx, especially the Marxist analysis of society; the examples of Adivasi and Harijan struggles in the past; the Communist movement in India, in particular its Marxist-Leninist variant; and most importantly, the writings and examples of Paulo Freire, especially his emphasis on cultural revolution as a vital element in the struggles for economic and political liberation.

The influence of Freire is clearly evident among SAGs which use the methods of conscientisation for the cultural empowerment of the masses. I concentrate on Freire because the SAGs I have studied actively use culture as a weapon in the struggle for liberation. But I shall take a brief look at some of the other influences, before I take up Freire.

Gandhi: The contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to the politics of non-violent action has been of seminal importance. Through years of active involvement in non-violent struggle, he refined its technique and enlarged its scope. The technique included satyagraha, boycotts, demonstrations, and rallies and marches like the Dandi Salt March. Gandhi proved the power of mass civil disobedience in bringing about peaceful change. At the methodological level, SAGs have benefited immensely from Gandhi's strategy of non-violent action, though they have rejected his ideological basis and his social vision. Hailing from an upper-class Gujarati family, Gandhi, throughout his life, retained many of the contradictions of his class. While he did set a practical example for his class and caste by identifying with the outcastes - whom he renamed Harijans or people of God - he retained

the religio-philosophical basis of the caste system. Gandhi believed that change would come about through the conversion of the capitalist class, through a change of heart.⁽⁴⁾ As Desai puts it, Gandhi was basically a reformist and never really opted for radical social change:

He sincerely believed in the validity of the existing society based on the capitalist property system, alternative to which he saw social chaos... He indefatigably worked to alleviate the conditions of the masses within the framework of the system... Instead of working for a programme of substituting socialist social relations in place of capitalist social relations, he strove for humanising capitalist social relations. He could not discover in the class structure of society the origin of social ills but in the ethical degradation of man (1976, pp.370f).

Gandhi, although he did mobilise the masses against British rule, did not champion the cause of the Harijans against landlords or against indigenous exploiting classes. Wielenga comments on Gandhi's inability "to take up the demands of workers and peasants, his opposition to the weapon of strike and of non-payment of rent to the landlords, his restriction of the masses which he awakened, his tactics of mobilising pressure for a bargain instead of organising a fight to the finish..." (1976, p.131). As a result, Harijan⁽⁵⁾ and Adivasi struggles in the post-Independence

4. This change of heart policy is based on the concept of stewardship, or what Gandhi called trusteeship. It believes that the landlords are trustees of land and not absolute owners. The policy has rarely led to any substantial changes in rural society. A vast number of Gandhian groups working in the voluntary sector, including the Sarvodaya Movement and Vinobha Bhave's Bhoodan Movement, follow this line of thinking. These two groups have, for example, tried to give land to the landless, through appealing to the "moral" consciousness of rich landlords. The Bhoodan Movement achieved limited success - it collected vast areas of land, and distributed them among the landless. Much of the land was infertile, and the distribution process had to cope with nepotism and bureaucratic bottlenecks.

5. Harijans, in the post-Independence era, have allied themselves to leaders like Ambedkar. As pointed out earlier, they prefer to be known as "Dalits" (downtrodden) rather than by the Gandhian term "Harijan" (people of God). The Dalit Panthers, a militant group formed on the model of the Black Panthers in the USA, have completely repudiated the legacy of Gandhi. Ambedkar felt that Gandhi's approach was patronising and, since Gandhi preferred to lead his struggle for the emancipation of Harijans from within the caste framework, Ambedkar advocated conversion to Buddhism as a way of getting rid of the stigma of untouchability and the system of exploitation through birth-ascribed religious sanctions.

period have disassociated themselves from the Gandhian ideology, while retaining his methodology of non-violent action.

Liberation Theology: The influence of liberation theology has been important among SAGs under Christian auspices or with Christian connections. Emanating from Latin America, the theology of liberation has had an enormous influence on third world theologians in Africa and Asia. Among those who popularised liberation theology in India are people like Father Vadakkan, Father Rayan, Russell Chandran and M.M.Thomas.

Liberation theology reinterpreted the meaning of the life of Christ and the meaning of the church in the context of the overwhelming reality of poverty and oppression in the developing countries. The institutionalised Christian church was taken to task for its preoccupation with pastoral care and an other-worldly interpretation of salvation. It was also attacked for being reformist and for supporting societal structures which were basically unjust and exploitative. Liberation theology understood the Gospel as a call to revolutionary action and Christ as the friend of the poor and the marginalised. It claimed that the church had become a part of the structure of oppression and in order to fulfill its historical vocation, it had to actively take sides with the oppressed and fight for justice and equality. The following statement by Sister Alice of the KSMTF, the fishermen's movement in Kerala, is an indication of the growing awareness among the clergy of the need for the church to align itself with the cause of the oppressed.

The established Church has been catering to the elite and the rich. Its politics has always been the politics of the ruling classes. It has to depend on the elite for its existence, existing as it does in a capitalist society (from Joseph, mimeo., p.9).

The influence of liberation theology on SAGs is clearly seen in this statement taken from Mission Today.

Many of the groups that have come into existence during the last decade have a Christian background. The prophetic tradition of Christianity attracts them in their attempt to fulfill the demands of the gospel. They are convinced that identifying with the poor, fighting for justice and working for the transformation of society are required to follow Jesus Christ... While they may get the tools for analysing society from Marx, they get the spiritual nourishment from the Biblical tradition (December 1982, p.6).

Alinsky: The contribution of Alinsky⁽⁶⁾ to radical community development has influenced the methodology of a number of SAGs. His emphasis on the importance of role-play, simulation games and on the tactics of non-violent confrontation has contributed to the formation and growth of many SAGs in India. But Alinsky is himself a reformist and his experiences come from organising in North America for wages and better facilities, not from organising for social change. Another problem with Alinsky's method is that it is issue-based, and therefore is a short-term method; it is not based on a consistent and long-term policy of social change, and hence lacks a sense of continuity. Nor is his approach based on a clear-cut class analysis of society. His method of problem-solving is in the liberal style, through the use of established procedures such as bargaining and the politics of accommodation. Thus, while SAGs do use some of his tactics in the context of organising and mobilising the masses, they reject his strategy and his ideological basis. As Muricken observes,

"conflict is not something which can be solved through bargaining without any change to the system that was its cause in the first place. In the radical political conception, conflict is the result and manifestation of class domination. Therefore it is not a problem to be solved but a state of domination and subjection to be ended by a total transformation of the conditions which give rise to it (1982, p.142).

Karl Marx: Marx's method of societal analysis has been widely followed by SAGs. They found, in his emphasis on the reality of "conflict" and its root cause in the unequal relationships in the ownership of the means of production and in the relations of production, a refreshing alternative to the functionalist theories of change. Marxist theories provided SAGs with a method of societal analysis that took into account both the manifest and latent realities of the Indian situation.

Earlier struggles: The various Harijan and Adivasi struggles in the past, both in British and post-British times, have sharpened the understanding of the dynamics of struggle, including the dynamics of co-option - both of individual leaders and the struggle itself - and the process of

6. Saul Alinsky's ideology and practice are outlined in his book Rules for Radicals (Vintage Books, N.Y., 1972).

confrontation at the levels of tactics and strategies. This has contributed to the growth of SAG ideology and methodology. The Santhal Insurrection (1855-56) in Bengal, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (1973) in Bihar, the Shahada Movement (1972) in Maharashtra and the Bhoomi Sena Movement (pre-Independence days onwards) also in Maharashtra⁽⁷⁾ are some of the major struggles among the hundreds that have taken place in India.

Communist Movement: One of the major reasons for the emergence of SAGs was the failure of the Communist movement in India to become a vanguard party of the rural poor. Caught in a struggle for survival, the Communist movement took on many of the reactionary characteristics of its conservative rivals. It is not that the Communist movement did not support peasant struggles - there are many examples of Communist-inspired struggles, like the Tebhaga uprising in Bengal (1946), the Telengana struggle in Andhra Pradesh (1946-48), the struggle of the landless in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu (1948), and the struggles in Kerala (1946-48). Many of these struggles, especially organised by the Marxist-Leninist faction of the Communist movement, ended in total failure. With no proper policy of long-term struggle, the "annihilation" campaigns of the Marxist-Leninist groups in Andhra, Bengal and Kerala brought large-scale police repression in their wake. It was the peasants who bore the brunt of it, not the largely middle-class cadre. The failure of the Marxist-Leninist movement provided the SAGs with a number of insights into the "do's and don'ts" of peasant organisation and struggle. Lifschultz explains the reasons for the failure of the Marxist-Leninist movements in India:

7. The Santhal insurrection took place as a result of the Permanent Settlement of 1793 which had caused large-scale dispossession of the land of the Santhals. They fought against the zamindars who had appropriated their land, and made them entirely dependent on the landlords. The Jharkhand Movement was another tribal movement in Bihar which started in the early seventies and was aimed primarily at removing the exploitation of the land and the tribals by the money-lenders (Mahajans). Through their struggles, they learned the value of co-operative farming and to stand together in times of peace and struggle. The Shahada Movement of 1972 was started as a struggle of the Bhils against the exploitation of the Gujars. The Bhoomi Sena Movement, again by tribals in Maharashtra, is one of the success stories of Indian rural movements. Their struggle against exploitation commenced in pre-Independence times, but it was in the seventies that the Bhoomi Sena became an effective organisation for tribal struggle. There are details on the Bhoomi Sena in the study by Haque, et al. in Development Dialogue, 1977, p.2.

In spite of all the extraordinary courage and self-sacrifice which the movement possessed, it lacked the kind of coherence and independence of thought which was...necessary if it were to go beyond mere paraphrases of another revolutionary experience. Among the leadership there was little perception of, or patience for, what was actually required in the building up of a revolutionary organisation. At the theoretical and organisational level there was a deep lack of creative or original political thinking. There was also too much of the dogmatic and the romantic, of what one might call the "petty bourgeois" illusion of a radical urban intelligentsia believing it could grab Indian capitalism by the throat and choke it to death (1981, p.16).

Paulo Freire: But it was the pedagogy of Paula Freire that has had the greatest influence on the theory and practice of SAGs working in India. Before dealing with Freire's major theoretical concepts, a brief introduction to his background may be useful.

Freire was born and lived in Recife, a city in North-Eastern Brazil. Coming as he did from a background of poverty and deprivation, Freire experienced first-hand the reality of oppression in its political, economic and cultural forms. Even though they were poor, Freire's family was middle-class, and his writings are a progressive account of his ideological "ascent", from a reformist and liberal-democrat stance as in his early writings like Education - The Practice of Freedom (1967 - to the revolutionary Marxist-humanism in his later works, such as Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972) and Pedagogy in Process (1978). Freire was involved in adult literacy projects in Brazil and Chile in the early and late sixties and in Guinea-Bissau in the late seventies. His pedagogy is therefore a reflection on and an account of an active "praxis" - an on-going reflection on the practice of revolutionary education. The unity of action and reflection and the primacy of conscientizacao⁽⁸⁾ through the process of dialogue are major aspects in Freire's revolutionary pedagogy.

Freire was greatly influenced by a number of thinkers - theologians such as Teilhard de Chardin who emphasised the

8. The term concientizacao is not a Freirian invention but comes from the works of Bishop Helder Camara of Brazil. In this study, this Spanish term is used interchangeably with its familiar English equivalent conscientisation.

historical vocation of the human being to be more fully human, which became a key concept in Freire's philosophy, and Reinhold Niebuhr, who influenced Freire's thoughts on the nature of classes in society and the oppressor-psyche; existensialists like Emmanuel Mounier, with his emphasis on human "authenticity"; philosophers like Martin Buber whose concept of "dialogue" became a central feature of Freire's pedagogy. Jean-Paul Sartre's critique of the dominant practice of education; Erich Fromm's observations on the ambivalent and sometimes contradictory psyches of the oppressed, Che Guevara's and Amilcar Cabral's life and practice as "caring" revolutionaries - all these influenced his thinking and approach. The eclectic nature of Freire's influence has enabled him to formulate a pedagogy that is both intensely practical and based on a holistic analysis of the nature of oppression in societies in the developing world.

Freire's entire philosophy of education is based on the notion that the human being's historical vocation is to be free from the shackles of psychological and material oppression. Liberation, therefore, is a central goal, and a revolutionary pedagogy is the main means to achieve it. Oppression and exploitation are basic realities in the developing world and they create a number of dependencies, economic, political and cultural. In this situation of poverty and dependency, the oppressed live in a state of mental and physical subjugation. Freire, echoing Fromm and Fanon, notes the ambivalence and the alienation of the oppressed psyche, nurtured through long years of dependency:

The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalised. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting him; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between actors or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressor; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which this education must take into account (Freire, 1972, pp.24-25).

The oppressed live in a culture of silence or ape the dominant culture that is forced on them. In order to break out of

this culture of domination towards an authentic people's culture, Freire proposes a strategy of cultural revolution involving mobilisation and organisation for political and economic liberation.

Freire believes that the act of liberation involves the ascent of the human being towards the fulfilment of his or her historical vocation to be free. But the liberation of the individual and the community comes through self-sustaining efforts - through a growth in individual awareness and community consciousness that evolves out of a process of learning. All individuals, according to Freire, have the capacity for reflection, the capacity for abstract thinking, for conceptualising, for taking decisions, choosing alternatives, for planning social change. The task of the revolutionary educator is to equip the oppressed with a heightened sense of consciousness within the context of an alternative development.

But as Freire notes, it is not merely awareness or the act of knowing that is important but its relation to a project of social transformation, whereby consciousness and action on consciousness are dialectically related. Action and reflection are not separate activities but organic wholes and it is this dialectical interplay between action and reflection that constitutes the process of conscientizacao. Connolly, writing on the praxis of Freire, underlines the essential unity of the action-reflection process:

True reflection must entail action, and action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its results are subjected to critical reflection. Without conscious and concomitant involvement, action is nothing more than pure activism. Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed requires dialogue, reflection and communications to encompass this praxis; slogans, communiques, monologues and lectures will vitiate it (1980, p.72).

Freire's point of entry into the process of radical transformation is through a revolutionary literacy project. According to Freire, illiteracy complements a situation of cultural domination. Literacy can be used as a weapon in the process of cultural action for liberation. Looking at existing efforts at adult education, Freire noticed their elitist nature - not only in their contents but also in the way the process of education worked. It was based on a clear distinction - between the teacher and the

taught, the knowing teacher and the ignorant taught. The students were mere receptacles for knowledge and knowledge was deposited in them.

Freire called this the "banking" concept of education, what Sartre called the "nutritionist" view of education. It was based on the premise that knowledge was a finished entity. It was not there to be discovered in a dialogic encounter of subjects but it was already there, packaged and finished. Freire termed this domesticating education, a sure way of enforcing dependency. He condemned this view of education because of its anti-dialogic nature and its irrelevant content. In a situation of overwhelming poverty and deprivation, the content of "extension" primers mirrored a reality that was totally irrelevant to the context of the oppressed. In his book Cultural Action for Freedom he explains how an analysis of some of the extension-type adult education primers in Latin America revealed the a-historicity of their content, their falsification of reality and their tendency to causally relate literacy with employment:

Merely teaching men to read and write does not work miracles; if there are not enough jobs for men able to work, teaching more men to read and write will not create them... Analysis of these texts reveals... a simplistic vision of men, of their world, of the relationship between the two, and of the literacy process which unfolds in that world (1970, p.24).

Freire notices the paternalism and the benevolent nature of extension education in which people are prepared to accept passively and not reflect upon the content in an attempt to unveil reality. The primacy of the act of critical reflection is an important element in Freire's pedagogy. He believes that the unveiling of reality involves the act of subjects discovering an objective reality through a dialogic encounter. Distinctions disappear; the teacher acts as a catalyst, not as the mediator of finished knowledge. Both the teacher and the taught are involved in the investigation of knowledge and the duty of the teacher is to guide the awakening of the critical faculty of the individual and to relate it to the tasks of political struggle and development.

A key element in Freire's pedagogy is his concept of conscientizacao - awareness leading to action. It is based on the premise that knowledge can be reinvented and worked upon, and that awareness of reality leading to the transformation of reality

is an act of cultural action for freedom. Freire notes that the process of conscientizacao is a historical commitment to liberation that realises itself through the action-reflection process. It is simultaneously both a denunciation and an annunciation - a denunciation of the old order, with its myths, its dependencies and its false consciousness, and an announcing of the new order based on equality, freedom and social, political and economic rights. Freire says:

Conscientizacao...is a "historical commitment" ...conscientizacao is a historic conscience as well, it is a critical insertion in history. It implies that men take the role of agents, makers and remakers of the world; it demands that men create their existence with the elements that life offers them. This is the reason why the more they are conscientized the more they exist, not just live. Man, as a historical being, a maker of history, will be more a subject of the historical process the more he discovers himself as the object of it... Conscientizacao is a permanent critical approach to reality in order to discover it and discover the myths that deceive us and help to maintain the oppressing dehumanising structures (1971, pp.24f). (emphasis mine)

In contrast to the normal process of adult education based on the teaching of alphabets as a prelude to the learning of word and sentence structure, Freire's process of literacy starts with certain key words which he calls "generative words". Working with Portuguese and Spanish, these key words were chosen on the basis of certain criteria, including their phonemic richness, phonemic difficulty and social relevance. The key words were primarily tri-syllabic words and represented a basic existential situation or need or institution. For example, the Spanish word for "slum" favela, and the word for "brick" tijola were chosen because of their significance to the slum dwellers. The tri-syllabic nature of these words was an important criterion for their selection because the words could be decomposed into their constituent syllables and new words could be formed through rearranging the syllables. Thus the word tijola, the key word, could be broken up into its constituent syllables, i.e., ti-jo-la, and through the combination of each syllable with the vowels of the alphabet, generate fifteen syllables:

TA TE TI TO TU

JA JE JI JO JU

LA LE LI LO LU

The learners learn to distinguish the words on the basis of pronunciation and shape and to combine the syllables into words, and later on into sentences. The most important aspect of this process of education is that it takes place within a context of dialogic discussion and is based on the learner's initiative to discover new words through combining syllables together. Thus it enables the learner to decipher for oneself and eventually equips one with the capacity for abstract thinking. Conscientizacao takes place through this process of learning. That process of learning to read and write is related to a complementary process, what Freire calls the "codification" of reality. In order for the oppressed to perceive and grasp the nature of ideological and institutional domination, Freire recommended the use of visual images, representing an existential reality, for example a sketch of a village scene or harvest time, which could be de-codified into its surface and latent structures. Through the breaking down of the image, the oppressed could learn their reality - like the situation of low wages or that of bonded labourers - and also learn to confront and solve the problem.

The popular theatre, as I shall show in a later section, can also be used for the purpose of codification and de-codification. When, on the basis of their learning, group decisions are made and group actions taken, the oppressed learn to value their ability to transform the world and to control their destiny. This process of learning is also a process of cultural struggle - it is a means to counter the cultural domination of the oppressors and to form a people's culture. But, as Freire points out, this process of conscientisation can only be meaningfully realised within an ongoing process of political mobilisation and organisation for liberation:

Conscientisation, which is identified with cultural action for freedom, is the process by which in the subject-object relationship... the subject finds the ability to grasp, in critical terms, the dialectical unity between self and object. That is why we affirm that there is no conscientisation outside of praxis, outside of the theory-practice, reflection-action unity (1985, p.160).

Freire's praxis gave SAGs in India an alternative theory of development which stressed self-reliance and the transformation of self and society. This was totally different from what was followed by the Communists and the dominant developmentalists.

While the Communists advocated the capture of state power as the only basis for revolution, the developmentalists emphasised an incremental approach based on the trickle-down theory of change. Freire, on the other hand, had evolved a theory and practice of change which was based on the "humanisation" of the human being. Development was for him as integrated process comprising psychological and material development which was not imposed, but came about through the involvement of the people in the process of collective reflection and collective action. It is the idea of development reflected in these words of Goulet:

Authentic development aims at the full realisation of human capabilities - men and women become makers of their own histories, personal and societal. They free themselves from every servitude imposed by nature or by oppressive systems, they achieve wisdom in their mastery over nature and over their own wants, they create new webs of solidarity based not on domination but on reciprocity among themselves, they achieve a rich symbiosis between contemplation and transforming action, between efficiency and free expression. This total concept of development can perhaps best be expressed as the "human ascent" - the ascent of all men in their integral humanity (1971, pp.206f).

Freire humanised the praxis of development. He recognised the fact that the success of development depended on initiatives that came from people. Development could only take place in an atmosphere of mutual reciprocity, within a context of sharing, of communion and fellowship. Its success depended on the ability of the educators to transcend the limitations of their class in terms of values and attitudes, and to learn with people in the context of struggle.

This methodology which involved the action-reflection process marked an important advance in the area of rural development. It meant that the poor were involved in a process of development that made them self-reliant, and aware and assertive of the power that came from collective action. SAGs working with the economically and culturally impoverished landless labourers and tribals have used the Freirian method in their situation of struggle for economic, political, social and cultural emancipation. It represents a long-term effort at development and it is based on a technique that involves the constant evaluation of results and policies. The Freirian method is also flexible; it encourages

innovation and creativity and discourages hierarchism and bureaucratisation.

SAGs' Use of Communication for Development

We have seen that development communication, in its official use, is a top-down affair. The whole process is conceptualised, initiated, managed and performed by professional groups of people. The main motive is to persuade people to modernise - use more fertilisers, have fewer babies, eat more nutritious food, cultivate the value of thrift, avoid drinking, etc. The analysis of poverty is based on the assumption that its roots lie in the people themselves, in their traditional attitudes, their non-innovativeness, their belief-systems and their rusticity. Both the mass media and the folk media are harnessed to the channelling of the "right" information to people. Information, it is hoped, will lead to a change in attitudes, and eventually to economic development. In other words, communication is just another "sectoral" activity, unrelated to other processes of development. It is supposed to be a neutral activity; its content does not mirror the existing political and economic situation nor does it relate this situation to the persistence of large-scale poverty.

SAGs' use of communication in the context of political organisation and development is based on the premise that art, defined broadly, should be used in the service of social transformation. Art is not an end in itself; it acquires social meaning and relevance when it is related to a process of awareness-building and to mobilisation for social change. In a social context where domination and dependency are the central realities, SAGs use communication to overcome this situation and to help evolve alternative structures and belief-systems that are authentically grass-roots.

Cultural domination, for example, is a central reality in the life of both the tribal and Scheduled Caste populations in India. The cinema, which has played a pivotal role in the political ascendancy of the ruling AIDMK in Tamil Nadu, has assiduously built up the Chief Minister, leading to a personality cult. It has legitimised the system, and thus played a major role in "mystifying" the masses. The extent of this hero-worship and the pervasiveness of cultural domination are brought out in the following observation taken from the Board for Education for

Liberation's Annual Report (1985, pp.4f). Referring to the Narikuruvas, the gypsies of Tamil Nadu, the Report says: "For Narikuravas, he (MGR) is an "Iyah", "Dorai", "Vathiyar"... He is the undisputed hero and almost every Narikurava or Kurathi has the face of MGR tatooed on his or her body."

The SAGs use communication as a counter-offensive against the dominant culture and its myths. It is specifically used in the context of the critical unveiling of reality. Marcuse noted the nature of this radical communication and its major purpose.

The strong emphasis on the political potential of the arts which is a feature of this radicalism is first of all expressive of the need for an effective communication of the indictment of the established reality and the goals of liberation. It is the effort to find forms of communications that may break the oppressive rule of the established language and images over the mind and body of man - language and images which have long since become a means of domination, indoctrination and deception (1972, p.79).

SAGs use and develop the capabilities of existing media like the popular theatre in the context of a development that stems from within the community. The planning, the composition of the story and the performance in general are all managed by the people. The animateurs act only as catalysts. The whole exercise is intended to develop the innate capacities of the oppressed - to free them from the shackles of dominant institutional myths, make them self-reliant and organise them for social action. In this process, one's understanding of the functions of the media undergoes a dramatic change. From being mere mediators of information, the media become a vital part of the whole effort at social transformation; they play a crucial role in the process of reflection and in the context of a rehearsal for social action.

Drawing upon local situations for their central themes, using the local language and familiar styles of acting and singing, and relying throughout on people's participation, the popular media are used to create a greater awareness and to encourage people to act on the basis of this awareness. Various issues are discussed, including the existing conditions of dominance and dependence, the reasons for them, the nature of power, the history of class and caste domination and the value of a people's culture in the context of organising for authentic development. Through the use of role-play, skits and simulation games, the psychological

inadequacies of the poor are brought to the surface, their internalised states of mind are revealed to themselves, and a concerted attempt is made to instil in them a sense of power and confidence as human beings capable of controlling their destinies.

The creation of people's power through the use of the media is an important objective of most SAGs in India. The popular theatre, for example, is used to create critical awareness and to mirror alternative ways of solving problems. The performance is not an end in itself. On the other hand, the performance itself changes progressively, and each stage of its development is marked by an increased "depth" in its analysis of society and in its strategising of change. The performance is, in Freirian terms, a "codification" of reality. It is part of a process of education, and of a larger process of development. Kidd writes about the importance of relating popular theatre performances to a larger context of struggle:

In this approach the theatre performance is not the total experience: It must be linked with critical analysis, organisation and struggle. The performance can provide a dialectical view of the world but this must be consolidated and sharpened through dialogue and action; it must be part of a continuing process, in which past action (struggle) provides the dramatic material (a historical view of reality) for analysis and strategy leading to future action (struggle) (1980, p.10).

The use of the popular theatre is complemented by the use of other media too. A performance is usually preceded by a "singing session", where revolutionary songs are sung. Such songs are based on existing situations and encourage people to overcome existing dependencies through organisation. Mies (1975, pp.64-65 and 1976, pp.179-80), writing on the Shahada Movement in Maharashtra, noted the role of women in composing and organising the activity of revolutionary singing and the nature of its content:

Five or six women will huddle together, squatting on the ground and putting their heads together... Then they start the songs and the crowd will repeat every verse in chorus... If one looks at these revolutionary songs one cannot but be astonished at their clear analysis of the new type of agrarian capitalism, of the class structure in the area, and of the role of the government and foreign aid which came to them in the form of grain meant for animals only. In the songs the Gujars (landlords) are attacked as having cheated them of their lands, their bullocks, even their ploughs, and of having

monopolised the rural co-operative societies, thus appropriating all government funds for development... The refrain of many of these songs is that now the poor are fed up with empty promises and will take things in their own hands. The lion in the cage has woken up and now the day of revolution has come...

The songs were an indication of the class consciousness of the people, particularly of the women. Poetry workshops, study circles, liberation songs and popular theatre workshops are all important aspects of the organisational methodology of SAGs, and they help the formation of an authentic people's culture that is free from the myths both of the traditional dominant culture and the contemporary culture of modernisation. Thus, both in form and content, the popular theatre is different from the proscenium and the traditional theatre. It is much more flexible, permits improvisation, and is thus not constrained by strict rules of dramaturgy. It uses a minimum of props. An open square is normally the stage. Its success depends on the involvement of the people in the unfolding of its action.

In order to create a country-wide awareness of people's struggles, a number of SAGs, feminist groups, grass-roots forums and legal and human rights groups bring out their own newsletters and magazines highlighting the plight of the poor and their struggles for survival and the need to support these struggles. These include women's magazines such as Sabla (Bengali), Samata (Kannada), Maitreve and Manushi (both in English); grass-roots organisation newsletters and related forum newsletters and journals like The Rural Poor (ARP), Subhoomi, Lokayan, and the PUCL and BUILD newsletters. The emergence of the alternative development communication scenario in India is an indication of a growing democratic consciousness and a growing effort to involve the oppressed in using truly authentic media in the context of their liberation.

The Crisis of SAGs

The emergence of SAGs has been held up as illustrating the resurgence of the democratic consciousness in India. But its impact on the political process has been minimal; it is limited to very specific and localised efforts at development.

While the Communist parties have been the major critics of SAGs, right-wing groups have also been attacking them, especially

through government and pro-government media. The Communist movements' main criticism of SAGs has been articulated in the columns of The Marxist and the The Marxist Review. Articles by Ajit Roy (Sept.1981), J.John (Aug.1982) and Ajit Muricken (Oct.1982) appeared in The Marxist Review, and Karat had a critical article in The Marxist (April-June 1984).

Their main criticism is that SAGs are the agents of an imperialist strategy, as proved by their funding links with the West. The voluntary sector could indeed be a channel for Western influence, but in the case of the SAGs the criticism is largely unsubstantiated. The main problem, as Sethi points out, is the involvement in SAGs groups of people who are, at least on the basis of Marxist theory, the backbone of the Communist movement. The SAGs occupy the same political space as the Communist parties. But the parties often followed a doctrinaire approach, and their internal bickerings have meant an erosion of credibility. Sethi writes:

It is in a sense the rigidity, the bureaucratic and hierarchic nature, the constant side-tracking of issues of direct concern to the people in the name of some abstract cause, the unfeeling arrogance about being the sole repository of all truth and legitimacy which drive people outside the fold of the parties (1985, p.379).

The contention of critics that the SAGs are passing through a state of crisis cannot be totally discounted. This is seen on a number of levels, including the level of ideology, organisation and activities, the level of personalities, and in terms of their relationship with the state on the one hand and funding agencies on the other. Many of these groups have mechanically applied Marxist societal analyses to a situation which is far more complex than a class society. The analysis of Indian society, when it is not undertaken in terms of its multi-dimensional reality, including caste, class, gender and linguistic identity, can become lop-sided, and this can affect the quality of programmes and lead to the formulation of wrong strategies of development and action for development. And many SAGs have failed to analyse Indian society in terms of its dominant realities.

A similar crisis affects some of the SAGs who use the Freirian method of praxis. The mechanical application of Freirian methods in a different context of reality has led to the failure of many attempts at sustained organisation through literacy campaigns.

The Freirian method has to be adapted to the specificities of the Indian situation. Furthermore, Freire's successes were achieved in situations where revolutionary political change had come about. Thus, in Guinea-Bissau, it was the ruling government, the PAIGC, which invited Freire. In India, with no official government support for these programmes of literacy, SAGs have in many cases failed to make sustained efforts at using the Freirian pedagogy of liberation. Conscientisation is a long-term process. Its use implies commitment to a long-term effort to bring about revolutionary change. Freire is himself aware of the dangers involved in transplanting his method of education to different contexts in the developing world, and in the institutionalisation of its techniques. He has commented on "the undesirability of transplanting that which is done in different ways in different areas of Latin America to another historical place, without due respect for the different situations" (1975, p.18). He has also warned against "the bureaucratisation of conscientisation, its institutionalisation which, while emptying it of its dynamism, as if suffering from sclerosis, ends in transforming it into a rainbow of solutions - which is just another way of making a myth of it" (*Ibid*). There is also, as Kidd and Kumar (1981, pp.27-36) point out, a subtle process of the co-option of the Freirian technique by the government of India which uses the Freirian rhetoric but evacuates it of its substance.

There are also organisational problems that affect the functioning of SAGs. While flexibility, democracy and spontaneity are of their very essence, such abstract concepts acquire content only in the context of a responsible organisation of people working towards social transformation. Spontaneity should not degenerate into anarchy. Many SAGs have problems that stem from an inability to find the right balance. The process of organisation and mobilisation is not an anarchic process, and the lack of hierarchy should not lead to confusion of interests. Organisation must involve the democratisation of structures and practices, and SAGs which have expanded over the years have found it difficult to maintain the democratic process. The erosion of democracy has often led to the co-option of the group by vested interests and to fratricidal divisions within it. This trend has particularly affected larger SAGs and prevented them from forming a strong

political base capable of affecting the political process and of intervening effectively on behalf of large sections of people.

SAGs also face problems at the level of the meaningful translation of their objectives. The strategy of authentic development is extremely difficult to implement, given the typical village situation where the oppressed depend on landlords for employment. The oppressed who are involved in the process of alternative development run the risk of losing the only source of income and the securities that come with dependency. Thus many SAGs find it difficult to sustain long-term rural action for development.

The activities of SAGs are usually dubbed as "extremist" by the government. Given the tendency of the government to accuse any anti-government ideology of Marxist-Leninist leanings, the activities of SAGs have frequently invited large-scale police repression. Venkatramani (1984, p.86) notes the case of the government banning two groups which made use of the popular theatre. The people working for both the People's Art Forum and the Organisation for Civil and Democratic Rights were harassed by the Tamil Nadu State Police for taking part in "anti-government" activities, through popular theatre performances. Also given the nature of SAG activities, which is usually of a local-specific nature, many of these groups find it difficult to relate their work to a larger, national process of social change.

There is the all-too-obvious problem related to the funding of SAGs. The problem has two dimensions - an internal dimension that is related to the "clearance" of funds and an external dimension related to the relationship of SAGs with funding agencies. The internal dimension of the funding problem comes out of the state's control over the clearance of foreign funds. Until recently, foreign funds could flow directly to the voluntary sector. But under the amendments made to the Foreign Contributions Act (1976), all foreign funds have to be cleared by the Home Ministry. Voluntary groups have to register with the Home Ministry and funds are cleared on the recommendation of the local administration that voluntary agencies fall under. This move by the government can be seen as an attempt to bankrupt potentially dangerous groups whose operations are opposed to the government policies and style of functioning. In the light of the increased importance given to the voluntary sector in the Draft of the Seventh Five Year Plan, this move by the government may be seen as an

attempt to force voluntary groups to toe the government line. As is noted by Kothari in Lokayan:

It is possible to argue that the dominant thrust of the government, through its entire repertoire of strategies, is simply one of containment. It seems to be looking for a voluntary non-party sector which accepts the ideology, spirit, and content of the official programmes and carries them out in the desired manner. When perceived as collaborative, the voluntary sector can expect assistance, recognition and rewards. Otherwise, it faces either a financial squeeze... or a judicial enquiry... or a straight repression (1985, p.42).

The relationship of SAGs with funding agencies is also a problem. Although there are a number of progressive funding agencies, such as the Christian Aid, Oxfam and Bread for the World, which support SAGs, the vast majority of agencies prefer to support less radical groups. The SAGs have to fulfill the terms of the funding, and this imposes constraints. There is the constant danger of SAGs' losing their identity and autonomy if funding agencies set the direction and scope of their development policies. Sheth notes the dilemma that SAGs are faced with:

At present most of them (SAGs) operate almost surreptitiously trying to advance their internal agenda of social transformation while fitting their organisation and programmes externally to the requirements of the funding, and this reduces their effectiveness in the long run (1984, p.262).

Lastly, there is the problem related to the personalities of the organisers of SAGs. The middle-class background of many of the leaders and cadres in SAGs is an obstacle to the formation of a common class-consciousness with the people. There is a tendency towards the appropriation of the "reflection" process. Middle-class attitudes and ways of thinking stand in the way of mass participation in development. Freire has warned against such middle class attitudes which can hinder authentic dialogue and development:

Among... teachers, and especially among those who have taught before, there will always be those who perceive themselves to be "captured" by the old ideology and who will consciously continue to embrace it; they will fall into the practice of undermining, either in a hidden or in an open way, the new practice

Many of these teachers are conditioned by their class position and by the myths of their superiority in relation to the peasants and workers. They assimilate these myths during their own class education and reduce the learners to mere

depositories of their knowledge. Instead of challenging the peasants to "read" their reality, they offer discourses to the peasants in a language that they are unable to understand (1978, pp.15f and 80f).

In spite of such serious limitations, it needs to be affirmed that SAGs have made significant contributions. By actively taking sides with the oppressed and by giving shape to an alternative strategy of rural development, they have proved the viability of humanising the process of development.

CHAPTER VI

A STUDY ON MEDIA PRODUCTION, DOORDARSHAN, MADRAS

Television-production in the Indian context has been little explored. The audience has been the focal point of much of the research, and a great number of diffusion studies have given primacy to audience attitude measurement. This lacuna in research can be partly explained by the political climate of research in India; the centralised organisations of television and broadcasting are largely closed to research.

In this chapter I attempt to study the production of a development-oriented feature film and to examine the various factors affecting the process of production and the final product. A substantial part of the material collected for this study is the result of time spent on location shooting in Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu, during the last two weeks of September 1984, and on various other occasions in studio during the ensuing three months. It is not in any way a definitive study of the production situation in India. Due to the covert nature of my research, access to crucial facts and figures and people was not available. In spite of its obvious limitations, however, the study does bring out some of the salient aspects of the production situation in India, including the inordinate influence of the film-industry ideology in television-film production.

The chapter includes a brief study of the socio-economic situation of palmyrah workers in Kanyakumari District. This is followed by a study of the Palmyrah Workers' Development Society (PWDS), which had invited the Doordarshan unit to film in their jurisdiction and looked after all location expenses. Then I take up a study of the production process, an examination of the content and an evaluation of the development orientation (if any) of the film.

The Socio-Economic Situation of Palmyrah Workers in Kanyakumari District

Kanyakumari District is situated at the southern-most tip of the Indian peninsula. It is a part of Tamil Nadu State and is

one of thirteen districts in that state. Kanyakumari has a total land area of 1671.8 square kilometers. It is bounded in the north-east by Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, and in the north-west by Neyyatinkara Taluk, Kerala State. The Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea form its southern boundary. The district is divided into four taluks - Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam, Thovalai and Vilavancode. Nagercoil is the district headquarters.

In its physical characteristics, especially in terms of its vegetation, type of soil and rainfall, Kanyakumari is more akin to the neighbouring state of Kerala with its tropical vegetation and climate than to its sister-district Tirunelveli with its less fertile and more flat terrain. It sustains a large variety of crops including paddy, palmyrah, coconut, rubber and bananas. There are about 2.5 million palmyrah trees in the Kanyakumari District, out of a total of 40 million trees in the whole of Tamil Nadu. In the four taluks, more than 20,000 people are directly involved in the palmyrah industry.

The major part of the population in Kanyakumari District consists of the sub-caste known as the Nadars. In the caste hierarchy they are of low status but they are the highest among the low castes. Nadars are found throughout Tamil Nadu and are divided into sub-sects like the Karakar, Pattayer, Mel-Nadar, Natti and Kalla Nadar. The dominant caste in the district is the Vellalla, also known as the Pillais.

The Nadars have traditionally been associated with the palmyrah industry. Although modernisation has taken a number of the Nadars away from their traditional occupation, it still remains a vital industry in Tamil Nadu. In terms of employment alone, the total number of people employed in the palmyrah industry is close to a quarter of a million. Only the agricultural and handloom sectors have more employees.

In Kanyakumari District most of the palmyrah workers directly involved with "toddy-tapping" live on a subsistence economy. Owing to the high rate of illiteracy, low wage structure and the seasonal nature of the occupation⁽¹⁾ the tappers lead a

1. The tapping season varies from district to district. In Kanyakumari District it is between August and February, reaching its peak in December.

precarious existence. In order to survive, they supplement their main occupation through agricultural work in Tirunelveli District in the off-season. Although a number of the tappers own land, the area owned is in most cases insignificant. If the ownership of land in rural India can be used as a yardstick for measuring socio-economic status, then the majority of the tappers may be termed poor.

In a survey conducted by the Palmyrah Workers' Development Society (PWDS) in 1978 (p.41) in Kanyakumari District and Neyyatinkara Taluk, the following land-holding pattern emerged:

Table 1. Landholding Pattern among Palmyrah Workers

Landless	- 1132
0-10 cents	- 6498
11-50 cents	- 9070
51-1 acre	- 1843
1-2 acres	- 549
2 and above	- <u>77</u>
Total	<u>19,169</u>
(100 cents = 1 acre)	

The majority of tappers are attached to landlords and their rent is paid on a "varam" basis. Varam is a system of tenure by which every other day's produce -- palm-toddy in the present case - is given to the landlord. While the manufacture of jaggery, a variety of unrefined sugar which is manufactured from palm-toddy, is the primary source of income for the tappers, many of them are also involved in marketing subsidiary products such as palm-fibre used in the making of mats and the palm-leaf and mid-rib used in the making of handicrafts, chairs, tables, etc.

The government has a substantial interest in this sector and the palmyrah industry is under the purview of the Khadi and Village Industry Commission. Under this central commission are the various state commissions. At the level of the state, the Khadi and Village Industries Board and the Madras State Palmgur Federation look after the concerns of the palmyrah industry. In order to facilitate an efficient system of marketing, Primary Jaggery Manufacturing Societies have been set up in a number of districts. Furthermore, a number of schemes have been initiated by the

government in order to help the tappers. These include the Accident Benefit Scheme which was started in 1969 and the Small Loan Scheme.

Despite the various schemes directed towards the welfare of the tappers, the majority of them still live precariously on a day-to-day basis. A major problem is indebtedness to land-owners; they do not own their own trees. In the PWDS survey mentioned earlier, it was shown that out of the 19,169 tappers surveyed, only 2737 were free of debts; more than seventy per cent of the tappers were in debt to the land-owners, owing between Rs 200 and Rs 2000. Quite a number have also borrowed from moneylenders, banks and cooperatives. Many of their problems stem from the fact that government-sponsored loans are given only on the basis of securities, which has meant that a large majority of the property-less workers cannot apply for such loans. There are also social and health-related problems. Toddy-tapping is a particularly risky occupation and every year there are a number of tapping-related deaths. Compensation for injury or death is slow to materialise because of red-tape and corruption in government departments.

Another of their problems is related to the marketing of their produce. Although the government has tried to evolve a system of marketing, it has benefited very few of the tappers. The jaggery or kul market is controlled either by large traders or by middlemen who extort money from the tappers in fraudulent ways. The PWDS evolved in response to this situation.

The Palmyrah Workers' Development Society

The PWDS was formed in 1977. It is a voluntary agency. Its activities fall under the development mandate of the Church of South India, but for all practical purposes it is an independent body. It was started with financial help from the Evangelical Central Agency, Germany (EZE). The PWDS reflects the typical organisational structure of voluntary agencies in India. It is structurally divided into an administrative section, with a director, managers and secretarial staff, and a non-administrative section consisting of field officers and field assistants. The mandate of the PWDS covers the interests of 12,000 tapper families in Kanyakumari District and Neyyatinkara Taluk. The field assistants, numbering about 120, have direct contact with the tappers and their families. The 12,000 tapper families are further

organised into a hundred societies which are actually forums of a kind where problems are discussed and action implemented.

The developmental activities of the PWDS are of three kinds. In the first place it is involved with activities that they themselves had initiated - nursery schools for the children of tappers, health-care centres and clinics, home industries like handicrafts and tailoring, research programmes and the marketing of palm-related products such as the palm drink. In the second place, and more importantly, the staff are also involved in helping people to take advantage of the financial benefits made available by the central and state governments. In other words, the PWDS acts as a mediating agency between government agencies such as banks and cooperative societies and the tappers. It is involved both in procuring loans for the tapper and in collecting and paying back the loans in instalments to the respective agencies. Thirdly, the PWDS is also involved in organising and mobilising the tappers. As Sam Jebaraj, one of their field officers, put it, one of the aims of the PWDS is to "unite the tappers, create awareness, self-dignity and eventual liberation".

Since 1977, the PWDS has made some contributions to the welfare of the tappers. It was able to get the law related to the provision of the Accident Benefit Scheme changed. This scheme, which was started in 1969, was created primarily to give compensation to the families of the tappers when a member died or was injured during work. But there was a clause which stipulated that a claim could be submitted only if the person killed or injured was not under the influence of alcohol. In effect this meant that the majority of families were ineligible for compensation. Because of the nature of the work, most tappers do drink before they start working. The PWDS submitted a petition to the government and eventually the clause was changed. The PWDS also persuaded the authorities to increase the amount of compensation from Rs 1000 to Rs 5000.

Apart from a few cases like the above, the PWDS has not been able to make a significant impact on the life of the tappers. This is partly due to its unwillingness to go beyond short-term development goals. In conversations with field assistants and tappers, a consistent picture of the organisation emerged. The field assistants complained about inadequate pay and lack of contact between the higher-ups and the field staff in the organisation. The

tappers on the other hand complained about mismanagement of funds. Many of the tappers were critical of the PWDS and the way in which it functioned -- "for themselves rather than for us", as one of the tappers put it. Part of the problem facing the PWDS arises from the fact that they are too closely caught up with various government departments and policies. It means that they cannot actively organise the tappers against government inefficiency or corruption. In that sense, in their relationship with the structure of society they have taken sides.

This is a problem that faces a number of voluntary agencies working in India today. They can organise people against the visible enemy, i.e., the landlord, the money-lender or the various middlemen, but they cannot organise them against the system which creates and supports these exploiters. Even in organising against the visible enemy, the PWDS has had very limited success. This can be illustrated by referring to an incident that took place on 15 September while we were on location at Kaiyalavilai. While I was conversing with a field assistant, a tapper came and told him of an exploitative situation that he was caught up in. The landlord he worked for was also a trader and he underpaid the tapper for what he produced. The field assistant's immediate reaction was to ask the tapper not to sell his produce to the landlord. This was a logical suggestion, but the problem could not be solved that easily. The tappers did not have any alternative marketing outlets and a boycott of landlords in one area would not make any real difference. It had to be an organised boycott of exploitative landlords throughout the area of PWDS's jurisdiction.

By 1984 the PWDS had completed seven years of work. Its tenure had come to an end and further financial assistance was subject to evaluation by the funding body.

Doordarshan's decision to film in the jurisdiction of the PWDS came about due to a number of reasons. Sam Jebaraj, one of the field officers for the PWDS, is also a scriptwriter for radio and television, and he was acquainted with a Doordarshan unit director, Senapathi (Sena). Apart from this personal relationship, Sena himself was keen to make a film on the tappers because he belonged to the Nadar community. Doordarshan directors are encouraged to make films that mirror the concerns of the government's 20-point

programme⁽²⁾ to eradicate poverty, and Panamkadu, a script for a possible film written by Sam Jebaraj mirrored such concerns. There was an agreement between the PWDS and the Doordarshan that the PWDS would take care of the expenses of the Doordarshan during location shooting. All other expenses including studio shooting would be borne by the Doordarshan.

"Panamkadu" - Storyline

Sam's motivation for writing the script of Panamkadu stemmed from his experience as a field officer with the PWDS and his first-hand knowledge of the problems faced by tapper families. On the one hand, Sam's motivation came out of his commitment to the cause of the toddy-tappers; it was clear, on the other hand, that he wanted to establish his own reputation as a scriptwriter. The success of Panamkadu could lead to recognition and a job in the film industry.

The television feature-film Panamkadu (The Palmyrah Grove) is a story based on the lives of toddy tappers in Kanyakumari District and Neyyatinkara Taluk. The script in its original version

2. The first 20-Point Programme was announced on 7 July 1975 and the second in January 1982. Both were formulated to ameliorate the living conditions of the rural poor. The first nine points of the first programme were:

1. Increase in irrigation potential and provision on inputs for dry land agriculture.
2. Special efforts to increase production of pulses and vegetable oilseeds.
3. Strengthening and expanding coverage of integrated rural development and national rural employment programmes.
4. Strict implementation of agricultural land ceilings and distribution of surplus land.
5. Review and effective enforcement of minimum wage for agricultural labour.
6. Rehabilitation of bonded labourers.
7. Accelerated programmes for development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
8. Supply of drinking water to all problem villages.
9. Allotment of house sites to rural families and construction assistance to them.

consisted of fifty-six scenes; in the final version a few scenes were cut and a number of scenes drastically edited.

The story is based on the life of a family of palmyrah workers. It is the story of their struggle for survival in the face of a series of family disasters and exploitative situations -- the death of the father, a situation of indebtedness, callousness of the rich, corruption and inefficiency in government departments and exploitation by money-lenders and landlords. In the original version, the government came under strong attack for its complicity in legitimising the situation of poverty, but in the final version most of the references to government complicity were edited out and individuals like the landlord were blamed for the problem facing the tappers. In the final version, emphasis was placed on the hero's survival in the face of heavy odds and on his ability to overcome the problems of his people through uniting the tappers. The story is as follows:

Chelliah is a toddy-tapper and his family consists of his wife Thayammal, son Mosey and daughter Jaya. Chelliah, however, has a very limited role in the story because by scene 3 he dies in an accident while working. The main character is Mosey and he dominates the story. The first two scenes place the story in perspective. The domestic life of a tapper family is depicted in detail, and the theme of "self-respect" acquired through education is given considerable emphasis. Scene 3 is a pivotal one; it brings in the romance motif and sets the scene for the later relationship between Mosey and Mallika, the daughter of Karrupuswamy, a landlord/money-lender. It also brings up the theme of unity, and stresses the equality of people of all castes. The news of the death of Chelliah while at work is brought to the family. Mosey is now in a difficult situation. He is only fourteen, but must assume responsibility for the family. Scene 4 brings up the topic of compensation. The scene illustrates the complicated process involved in claiming compensation, with all the bureaucratic delay and the corruption involved. Scene 5 is taken up by Chelliah's cremation. From now on the story unfolds rapidly.

Scene 6 brings up the problem of indebtedness. Chelliah had borrowed money from Karuppuswamy, and the family is in no position to pay back the money. This is a situation that most tapper families face. Karuppuswamy suggests that Mosey should not waste his time going to school, because in any case he can only

become a tapper, and for that one needs no education. As he puts it, "A sparrow remains a sparrow no matter how it flies". Between scenes 7 and 14 the compensation fiasco is played out. Thayammal is ignorant of the bureaucratic processes involved in applying for compensation. She turns to Ponnudurai, a toddy-shop owner, for help. He is a typical middleman, a broker who is as unscrupulous as Karrupuswamy. In fact they are the villains in the film. Ponnudurai is introduced in scene 8. He consoles Thayammal and promises to help her with the compensation claim. Mosey suspects his motives, but his mother has faith in the man. In scenes 13 and 14, on two occasions Mosey sees Ponnudurai gambling and drinking away the money that he had taken from his mother. Thayammal must now sell her cooking utensils and even a medal Mosey had received from his school in order to collect enough money for Ponnudurai to pursue the compensation claim. Earlier, scene 11 had introduced the audience to Karuppuswamy's ways of extorting money from people. Mallika is against her father's cruel practices, but he overrides her moral scruples.

By scene 15 Thayammal has sold her land and her house in order to pay the money - Rs 6500 (5000 + 1500 Interest) - which they owe to Karrupuswamy. In scene 16 yet another disaster strikes; Thayammal, while making palm-sugar, faints; her saree catches fire and she sustains serious burns. Scene 17 shifts to the hospital; Mosey pleads with the doctors to give medical attention to his mother, but they refuse because he does not have any money to pay for medical expenses. This is also an important scene because it strengthens Mosey in his determination to confront this unjust system. By scene 20 Mosey has established himself as an articulate defender of the interests of the tappers. In the scene, he is humiliated by Karrupuswamy in front of Mallika and a group of tappers for demanding a more just system of weighing palm-sugar. The tappers are disunited and they do not interfere when Karrupuswamy beats up Mosey.

Scene 22 brings out the "domesticated" consciousness of the tappers. Amavasai, one of Mosey's friends, blames destiny for their situation. Mosey counters this and blames the system. From this scene onwards Mosey seriously begins his attempts to unite the tappers. He believes that strength comes out of unity. In scene 23 he settles a domestic quarrel between two families of tappers and urges them to settle their differences among themselves and devote

their attention to the common cause. In scene 25 Mosey intervenes in a situation that was created by Ponnudurai who had paid money to a number of tappers to set fire to Karrupuswamy's shop. He shows them the pointlessness of taking sides with exploiters. He reasons with them and convinces them of the need for unity in order to solve their problems. The romance motif is, developed in scene 26 and the song that follows the scene echoes the lovers' hopes for a better future. Mallika is determined to marry Mosey, whatever the cost.

A further problem crops up in scene 27. Jaya, Mosey's sister is soon to be married, but the father of the bridegroom-to-be demands more money as dowry than was originally agreed upon. Mosey had planned to save some money but untimely rains had disrupted tapping and the making of palm-sugar. He cannot borrow money from Karrupuswamy. In scene 34 the marriage is called off. Scene 35 introduces the work of the PWDS, but in an indirect way. Mosey and the other tappers try to secure bank loans, but the banks ask for security which they do not have. In scene 37, a volunteer from the Marthandam Palm Labourer's Association, which clearly stands for the PWDS, comes on the scene and exhorts the tappers to organise themselves. People like Ponnudurai try in vain to buy him off. In scene 38 Mosey is made the leader of the organisation of tappers. In the next couple of scenes, Mosey asserts his role as a leader and the antagonism between Karrupuswamy and Ponnudurai on the one hand and Karrupuswamy and Mosey on the other unfolds. Karrupuswamy and Ponnudurai realise by scene 42 that they need to stand together to fight the moves made by the now united tappers. They want to buy off the leaders including Mosey, and they try to break up the unity of the tappers by offering jobs and bribes. But Mosey cannot be bought. He helps organise the women into cooperatives; he wants to evolve an alternative marketing system. By scene 45 many of the tappers have started paying back their debts and they are beginning to stand on their own. In scene 46, Karrupuswamy and Ponnudurai hire the driver of a lorry to ram the carts of tappers taking their produce to the market. But the plan miscarries; the drunken lorry driver runs over some of the bystanders. Karrupuswamy was among them, and he is killed.

Scene 47 introduces the exploitative nature of contract work. During off-season the tappers have to find alternative employment. Mosey demands better wages and living conditions from the contractor. In scene 49, the contractor tries to implicate

Mosey in a rape case but the contractor's brother knows he is innocent and saves him from a prison sentence. Mosey marries Mallika in scene 53. In scene 54 Mosey has an accident while climbing but he is not seriously injured. The following scenes underline the theme of "education for self-respect". Mosey is the guest of honour at his school which he had left long ago, and he urges the students to work hard. Education will surely bring them a better future.

Development-oriented Feature Films

Different from films on development, which are essentially documentaries dealing with a variety of developmental problems and themes, a development-oriented feature film is story-based, with a beginning, middle and end (though not necessarily in that order). It is a fictional interpretation of reality. It does not deal with the lives of extraordinary people or with situations that are fantasy-based or encourage escapism. It is about the lives of ordinary people and the situations in which they are caught up. The relentless nature of poverty, the exploitation of workers, the corruption of officialdom, attempts made by ordinary people to solve problems on their own - these are among the recurring themes. The aim of the development-oriented feature-film is not merely to portray the dark side of reality, but also to bring about awareness, a heightened understanding of situations. It aims to make people think and reflect, and mobilise public opinion in order to bring about change in the lives of the marginalised people. Its aim is to expose the reality of situations, not to gloss over it.

The cast and crew involved in the production of such films should be committed people. They have to be sympathetic; they should have a clear perception of the "why" and "how" of both the issues and techniques involved. More importantly, they must be willing to take a clear stand on the issues portrayed. They cannot afford to be neutral.

The development-oriented feature film in India has stemmed from two sources, the commercial film-industry, and the centrally controlled television enterprise, Doordarshan. Over the last decade, the so-called "Middle Cinema" that had emerged in the context of the Indian film industry provided an alternative version of the Indian reality. Dealing with themes such as corruption and exploitation, poverty and injustice, they have challenged the

pre-eminence of the romance-centred formulae film. There has been an infusion of realism in the Indian cinema and there has also been a perceptible change in audience preferences, from predominantly escapist fare to films that are socially relevant. But unlike in the Doordarshan context the development-oriented feature film-maker from the film industry has opportunities to explore the complexity and many-sided nature of development and underdevelopment. Films like Ee Nadu (Malayalam) and Thaneer, Thaneer (Tamil) in the South have exposed official corruption and inefficiency. There is little censoring, and even direct attacks on the government have been passed.

Doordarshan does not have such clear "spaces" for canvassing alternative interpretations of reality. All Doordarshan productions come under the scrutiny of its censors. But there are "spaces" which are created from time to time because the government is in the business of development and both broadcasting and television are used as platforms for propagating the government's developmental concerns. The government's Twenty-point Programme has developmental implications and producers at the Doordarshan are encouraged to promote the programme. The eradication of poverty and the provision of social justice are two of the directives in the programme. Producers can and do take up such themes. In fact the film Panamkadu voices many of the concerns enshrined in the Twenty-point Programme. The question is to what extent the film was able to explore the space provided. What interpretation of reality does the film provide? Does it contribute to a progressive understanding of reality? Does it advocate change or does it legitimise the present system? To what extent is the film influenced by conventions emanating from the film industry?

The Context of Production

The production of a film is a complex activity. The final product is born out of a series of negotiations and compromises which begin at the idea stage and persist until its translation into the finished product. The film itself is shaped through the confrontation of personalities, institutions and ideologies. Individual members of the cast and crew, the scriptwriter, and members of the administration all play their part in shaping the film. In the context of production in India, certain members of the crew, like the producer, have a paramount role during the stages of

filming. But the final decision rests with the board of censors, who, in the case of Doordarshan, are higher-ups in the administration. They have the power to either "pass" the film for general viewing or subject it to changes in detail. Again, in the context of production at Doordarshan, both civil servants and politicians often play a part in influencing production.

Apart from personal influence, one must also reckon with the influence of organisations and institutions in the context of production. For example, the unit involved in the production of Panamkadu is a part of the larger organisation, i.e. Doordarshan, and Doordarshan itself is a part of the Ministry of Communications. The overall influence of both these institutions had clearly shaped the production of Panamkadu. Production was also influenced by the PWDS. The final product mirrored the result of all this interaction.

Apart from the direct influence of individuals and institutions on production, there were also indirect influences emanating from the ideology and processes of film production in the film industry. There was also the indirect influence of the development institutions; their concepts of development and underdevelopment were echoed by the production unit. Production is also shaped out of an interaction of ideologies, consensus and conflict. For example, in the production of Panamkadu, there was a clash, and finally a compromise, between the scriptwriter's version of reality and that of the director who had to tone down his personal views on the nature and causes of underdevelopment.

The environment of production also influences the shaping of the product. For example, location shooting is in many ways an "open" situation. In the filming of Panamkadu, the director was much less constrained by institutional factors during location-filming. There was a willingness to take risks and to have frank discussions with the members of the cast and crew. On the other hand, the studio situation was in many ways a "closed" situation where the director had to rely on stock techniques of production. The constant presence of members of the administration during studio-filming, and the highly politicised atmosphere imposed discernible constraints on the crew.

Production also depended to a large extent on the cohesiveness of the unit; while on location the crew were assigned to a particular production, in the studio situation they had less chance to stay with the unit. In the studio situation there is a

much higher chance that caste or communal factors can influence the production process. In an institution like Doordarshan, Madras, where high caste people such as the Brahmins have an important role in matters of internal policy-making, the output not infrequently reflects caste leanings. In the religiously pluralistic situation of the country, a producer belonging to a minority religion has to be careful in the way he portrays situations. There are attempts to propagate Brahminic ideals, symbols and values in the social dramas which form the main fare of Doordarshan producers. They also show their clout, I was told, in the organisation and directing of scarce resources in terms of expertise, equipment and finances.

The following micro-level study of production is based on my experiences with the unit of the Doordarshan, both in studio and on location, involved with the making of Panamkadu.

This study does have its limitations. A complete study of production must include the study of the film from idea to artefact, tracing it through all its stages of production, including editing and the pre-view stage, and also account for the response of the audience. For political reasons, I could not be an observer during certain stages of the production and, given the nature of time-induced constraints, I could not do an audience-response study. Nevertheless the study does indicate some of the determining factors in the production of a development-oriented film by Doordarshan.

The Unit - Attitudes, Commitment

The crew consisted of eight members: it included Sena (Producer), Veena (Assistant Producer), Pillai (Cameraman), Raju (Sound), Palani (Still Photographer), Khader (Make-up) and two assistants Veera and Prasad. Sam, the scriptwriter was also at hand during location shooting.

The cast consisted of ten people and included Nazar (Mosey), Mekala (Mallika), Subbu (Ponnudurai), Durai (Karrupuswamy) and Rani (Thayammal). At the Doordarshan, the crew for a production is usually assigned to a unit by senior administrative staff. In the case of the production of Panamkadu Sena himself had picked the crew. He could do this because he was well respected as a producer. He had worked for five years (1979-1984) as an administrative member of staff and had become familiar with senior members of the administration, some of whom permitted him

considerable freedom. Palani, the stills photographer, was the only person in the crew who was not picked by Sena himself. He was the only stills photographer at Doordarshan, Madras, and he had to cover all productions, both on location and in the studio. Sena had worked with this particular crew on previous occasions. He had also worked with some of the members of the cast on earlier programmes. Veena, the assistant producer, was in the process of learning under Sena. Her main task was to transcribe the various "shots". She also helped Sena in other production-related activities. Sena and she are among a very small minority of non-Hindus working at the Doordarshan.

Apart from Pillai, Sena, Veena, Raju and Nazar, who had all had formal training in their fields from the Adayar Film Institute, Madras, the other members of the cast and crew had picked up the skills on their own. Most of the members of the cast had learned to act while employed in various Tamil theatres. In fact, for most of the cast, the Tamil stage was the main employer. Khadar, the person in charge of make-up, had his initial formative experiences in the Tamil film industry. He had joined the Doordarshan primarily because it promised job security. In the film industry, employment is precarious, and remuneration is based on the box-office fortunes of the film.

In terms of content and format, Panamkadu is not a typical product. Normally, producers are involved in producing social dramas at the rate of four every month. They are rarely given an opportunity to use the medium of film, primarily because film-stock is in scarce supply and expensive. Sena was given this opportunity not only because he had worked out a financial arrangement between the Doordarshan and the PWDS but also because he had produced two development-oriented films which had both received critical acclaim. Both were Doordarshan documentaries. One was based on the life of "rag-pickers" in Madras city and the other on the lives of groundnut (peanut) farmers in Chinglepet and Thiruvennamalai, Tamil Nadu. According to Sena, national awards were denied to both these films because of the politics at Doordarshan and because of North-South rivalries. It was because of this and similar frustrations with the production that he took up an administrative job at Doordarshan, Madras, during the years 1979-1984. Panamkadu was his first important production after five years of inactivity.

It should be said, however, that Sena's commitment to development was overshadowed by his commitment to his craft and his ambition to enter the world of Tamil films. He was aware of the root causes of poverty and injustice but he was not willing to portray that reality in any consistent way because, as he put it: "Ultimately, the landlord or any other exploiter is a part of the government. Any criticism can lead to my transfer" (Interview with Sena, 26 September 1984). To compensate for the lack of critical input, Sena tried to conform to high artistic standards. That is to say, he substituted "art" for his inability to take a critical stance in his films. He was aware of this contradiction in his work. He was hopeful that one day he would become an independent producer in the Tamil film industry and then could afford to take a more independent political stance in his films. In other words, he was hoping that Panamkadu would win him a certain recognition, especially among financiers and directors in the Tamil film industry. Like the rest of the crew, he hoped that Panamkadu would lead to a change in the consciousness of the urban audience. He believed that both television and film could be used to change attitudes and that information was a powerful tool to bring about changes in people's behaviour and attitudes.

Veena shared Sena's views on the nature and causes of underdevelopment. She too hoped that the film would lead to a change in the consciousness of the urban audience: "If at least 0.001% of the audience changed their attitudes after seeing Panamkadu then our efforts will be vindicated" (Interview with Veena, 28 September 1984). She subscribed to the theme in the film that education is a means to promote upward social mobility, and she believed that lack of education was one of the major causes of poverty. But she too was more interested in learning the craft than in exploring the deep structures of poverty.

Pillai and Raju were in many ways more aware of the contradictions involved in their profession. They had both worked on previous occasions with farm telecasts in Hyderabad and in Madras. They were of the opinion that producers at the Doordarshan were to be blamed for their unwillingness to take risks. The producers were more interested in security and fame. Raju came from the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh and Pillai belonged to Tamil Nadu. In fact Pillai belonged to a caste known as the Vellalas, the dominant caste in many parts of Tamil Nadu including

Kanyakumari District (which incidentally was his native place). It meant that Pillai was well aware of the real situation that the tappers were in. He believed that little could be done through films to change attitudes -- and any way there was no way to detect such changes in attitudes because Doordarshan had no effective audience-research unit. Raju, like Khader, felt that the centralised nature of operations had effectively emasculated potentially creative staff at the Doordarshan. In effect it made them "yes-men" who were at the beck and call of politicians and civil servants who had little knowledge of what the medium was all about.

Development telecasts, in order to be effective, had to involve local people in programme-making. The situation at Doordarshan was such that agricultural telecasts, for example, were chaired by senior personnel from fertiliser or pesticide companies, with the result that the programme was geared towards the demands of the richer farmers. Both Pillai and Raju were of the opinion that the producer in charge of agricultural programmes had the least creative job among producers at Doordarshan. In fact it was difficult to find personnel for farm telecasts because most producers wanted to be involved in more glamorous productions. This has resulted in an influx from Akashvani, the radio station, and according to Raju the people who came over had little idea of the medium of television. Pillai and Raju were both aware of the fact that their productions were biased, and they attributed it to the lack of individual freedom; most producers interfered with both camera and sound-related aspects of production. If the producer was not willing to take risks, there was little that they could do.

Khader, the person in charge of make-up, had similar views. Because of the political situation at Doordarshan, production had become a mechanical affair. Although they were involved in the making of so-called development programmes, their impact was minimal and those who benefited from it were the richer classes in both urban and rural areas. He had seen Sena's productions and, according to him, Sena was undoubtedly the most progressive producer at Doordarshan, Madras. Unlike Pillai and Raju, Khader enjoyed a fair amount of autonomy in his work. He too blamed producers at Doordarshan for not being brave enough to take risks. Productions like Panamkadu, he felt, could not on their own bring about any large-scale change in the attitudes of peoples; that

will happen only if the government changed its overall approach and made the process of development more people-oriented.

Veera and Prasad, the assistants, had very little to say because in effect they were treated as junior staff, and they were rarely involved in the deliberations of the cast and crew. Palani, on the other hand, was in favour of the policies adopted by Doordarshan; given the state the country was in, centralised telecasting was the only option. Poverty was a matter of fate or destiny, and there was little that could be done to set the situation right.

Among the members of the cast, the only person who had any individual opinion on his profession and on development in general was Nazar who played the role of the hero (Mosey) in Panamkadu. Like Sena and like most members of the cast, he hoped that Panamkadu would bring him exposure and facilitate his entry into the film-world. He too was of the opinion that television was too urban a medium and that as such it did not have the capacity to deal effectively with developmental issues or to create a real impact. He did identify with Mosey's cause and would have liked to portray the full reality, but there were constraints and he was a junior actor who had to bide his time. He preferred the medium of film to the Tamil stage where he was employed. He hoped that at least a small percentage of the urban audience would gain a measure of social awareness through seeing the film. But he believed in his "art" first and he did not mind playing any role; he did not necessarily have to identify with the roles he played.

Mekala (Mallika) did not have any personal views on development or the role of television in development. Her major purpose in playing the role of Mallika was to get recognition and employment in the Tamil film industry.

The Determinants of Production

(a) Conflict and Consensus

Production takes place within the context of a series of negotiations involving institutions, people and ideologies. Negotiation is a continuous phenomenon during production and takes place at various levels. Both conflict and consensus are key factors in this process of negotiation.

Given the nature of society in India, both caste and class play important roles in maintaining existing social structures. It

is not surprising, therefore, that institutions like Doordarshan reflect, both in their structures and in their operations, caste- and class-based rivalries and affinities. Thus while Sena had to confront and come to terms with caste-related problems, which were the cause of many of the divisions within the Doordarshan, he was also involved in maintaining his class position within the Doordarshan. While caste-status is the result of one's relative position in the caste hierarchy, class-status is acquired through one's position in the institutional hierarchy, which is itself based on one's economic and social background. While caste and class denote, for purposes of analysis, two distinct forms of stratification in society, in reality there is a correlation between them, and consequently a blurring of the distinction between the two forms of stratification. For example, at Doordarshan, Madras, nearly thirty per cent of producers (ten out of the total of thirty producers) belong to the upper-caste Brahmin minority. One of the resulting fall-outs directly related to this system of stratification is the tendency to recruit people to the Doordarshan on caste and communal lines rather than on the basis of their ability or merit. This has affected Sena too. Himself a Christian, he tended to favour Tamil Christian applicants, and more specifically those who belonged to his own Nadar sub-caste. This is an unhealthy trend because it merely reinforces the element of communalism which is perhaps the dominant cause for conflict in contemporary Indian society.

During production, conflict arose out of the predominantly caste-related policies within the Doordarshan. It affected production in a number of ways, both directly and indirectly. The production of Panamkadu was delayed for a few weeks because the censors took a long time to approve the script. It meant that Sena was for a long time unsure as to whether he would be allowed to produce the film. He had fixed tentative dates for filming but these had to be changed.

When finally the film was officially passed for production, Sena had a little over three months to produce the film. He had to hurriedly put together cast and crew, make arrangements for their travel and for thier accommodation at the location site. According to Sena and Raju, the delays were caused by caste and communal conflicts on the one hand, and on the other by professional jealousies within the Doordarshan. One of the reasons

for Sena's opting out of production during the years 1979-1984 was the fact that in previous years his plans had on occasion been sabotaged by rivals. This was a cause for intense frustration and Sena frequently blamed caste and communal vested interests. There were also professional jealousies that hindered production. Most producers at Doordarshan preferred working with the medium of film to working with that of television. But there were relatively few opportunities for individual producers to employ the medium of film, and anyone who was assigned to make a film production was deemed lucky.

Two days after the start of location filming, it was discovered that the extra Arriflex camera and the sound equipment which they were expecting had for some reason been sent to Courtallam, a small town in the neighbouring district of Tirunelveli. There was now a further delay in production because Sena had to retrieve the equipment. There was unanimous agreement among the crew that such delays were deliberately caused in order to disrupt production, and that in this case it was intentional rather than accidental.

During the location filming there were two other instances when inter-personal conflict disrupted production. In both instances, Palani, the stills-photographer was involved in altercations with both Sena and Pillai. In the first incident, Palani insisted on rearrangement of the reflectors that had been already positioned, in order to take stills of Mekala, the heroine. In the second incident Palani was seen questioning the judgment of Sena and Pillai; they had decided to delay production because of bad light, but Palani insisted that the light was good enough and that production should continue. Sena was visibly annoyed on both occasions. It affected Sena in the sense that, when faced with conflict, he distanced himself from the rest of the crew and the cast. For example, during the latter half of location shooting, Sena was more inclined to take decisions on his own, without involving the cast and the crew in the decision-making process. It also affected his relationship with the cast; he tended to become irritable and unduly critical. Because of the conflict, Palani left for Madras earlier than he had planned to. Some members of the crew like Veena, Sena and Khader, felt that Palani could pose problems during the later stages of production.

During studio-filming such open conflict was not evident. But there were occasions when both Raju and Pillai were not available because they had been assigned to other productions. This led to further delays in production. Because of delays during location filming, scenes that were originally intended to be taken on location had to be taken in the studio. This affected the quality of the film and to a certain extent led to loss of authenticity and realism.

Apart from inter-personal conflicts, Sena had also to reckon with intra-personal conflicts, especially the conflict between his commitment to "art" and the need to stick to the canons of the commercial cinema. There was also the conflict between his allegiance to the "cause" and his allegiance to the organisation and the state and their understanding of the cause.

The plan was to show the film on television in early 1985 but it had not been released even by the middle of 1985. When I met the scriptwriter, Sam, in December 1985 in Geneva, he told me that the film had been released later that year. Sam, like the others, blamed the delay on communal rivalries and the politics at the Doordarshan. Even the edited version of Panamkadu could have been too inflammatory and subversive for the censors; after all people like Karuppuswamy and Ponnudurai enjoy a species of government protection and patronage. Political considerations do play an important part, especially in the final stages of production.

This was highlighted in the recent decision by Congress-I politicians and civil servants at the Doordarshan to ban the showing of two hard-hitting, socially relevant television series, Kundan Shah's Police Station and Ramesh Sharma's New Delhi Times. Any production that is a potential consciousness-raiser is suspect in the eyes of the government. As Payal Singh said, the government prefers an apathetic audience. "A naïve populace, cocooned in a false sense of security, fed on soap operas and sitcoms is far more convenient for those in power than one that asks uncomfortable questions." (1986, p.27).

Conflict was an ever-present reality. It led to delays in production and to the reinforcing of caste and communal attitudes among the members of the unit. The effects of conflict were felt at personal and interpersonal levels. It did not have any direct effect on the final product, although it did have indirect effects. For example, as was pointed out earlier, scenes that were originally

intended to be filmed on location had to be filmed in studio. This affected the film's continuity, and authenticity in matters of detail. Nevertheless, it may be asserted that the film was produced under an overwhelming framework of consensus which emanated from the written and unwritten rules of the Doordarshan and from Sena's own internalisation of such conventions which in turn were heavily influenced by the worldview of the film industry. Consensus was reached not only through direct means - such as by "vetting" which was a continuous activity throughout production, but also through Sena's very internalisation of the rules of his profession.

Vetting started much before production started. The first vetting was done by Sena and other senior officials even before the actual production. The edited script was subjected to cuts during production and these were initiated by Sena himself. Altogether nine scenes were either cut completely or were substantially edited during production. There could have been a third attempt at vetting after production and immediately after the preview. But this would have happened only if Panamkadu still had scenes that were potentially inflammatory. According to both Sena and Sam, there have been a number of occasions when television programmes were not passed even after the third attempt at editing.

During production, neither the cast nor the crew subjected the Doordarshan to any sustained criticism. And this was consistent with their interpretation of a number of other realities like the state, development and underdevelopment, and the political situation. There were occasions when individual policies of either the government or the Doordarshan were criticised, but there was a shared feeling that both the Doordarshan and the government were doing a good job despite their limitations. Through the specific dissemination of relevant information, it was felt that Doordarshan played an important role in the government's anti-poverty programmes. It was hoped that Panamkadu would help publicise and complement such programmes of the government. In other words, there was a shared consensus among the crew that information was a vital input in development programmes. That wrong information could be a disservice was a view that was contested by Sena. He felt that although blaming individuals like the landlord did not solve the problems, it was the most immediate reality that the poor were faced with. The government affected their lives only in an indirect way. In other words, Sena himself was convinced that the lack of factual

accuracy in the film did in no way interfere with the message - that a united effort by the oppressed at organised levels would make them more independent and self-reliant.

The final version of the script did not take into account the government's role in reinforcing underdevelopment, but then the final version of the story was very different from the original script. Sena portrayed only a part of the reality, not the whole. Producers like him are in some ways the government's mediators of consensual views. They make sense of an event or a predicament in terms of the dominant understanding of it, and then present it as the reality. Sena was not willing to explore the "space" on his own terms. On the other hand, he used his creativity to reinforce the consensual view of development and underdevelopment; he did not deepen his understanding of the Indian reality. To a large extent, as I have observed earlier, his commitment was to his craft and not to his subject. In fact, as he put it on one occasion, "Art can be a substitute for factual accuracy. The film-maker's interpretation of his art confirms his individuality and his uniqueness as a film-maker." (Interview with Sena, 28 September 1984). The second part of his statement might well be true, but it is precisely through this kind of attitude that consensus is maintained. Conventions of art and aesthetics at the Doordarshan are heavily influenced by the conventions of the regional film industry. And as long as producers like Sena concentrate on perfecting the art of the "Song and Dance" sequences rather than on exploring the "real" cause of poverty, Doordarshan has no cause for alarm. Doordarshan does promote creativity as long as the process reinforces established ways of interpreting reality.

(b) The Influence of the Ideology of the Regional Film on the Production of Panamkadu

In Chapter IV, I have referred to the role of the regional film and its influence in both the political and cultural lives of the people. Film has been used by both the DMK and the present party in power, AIDMK, to propagate party ideology and project stars-turned-politicians like the present chief minister of Tamil Nadu, M.G. Ramachandran (MGR). To an extent, the Tamil stage also has been used for such purposes. In the Indian context, more so in the context of Tamil Nadu, popular culture is to a large extent synonymous with the culture of the film industry. Given the close

links between the political party in power and popular culture, it is not surprising that media institutions like the Doordarshan and the Akashvani have themselves come under the influence of the regional film industry's ideology. In fact, a significant part of air-time is given to the airing of programmes that have a base in the regional film. For example, Doordarshan spends a good deal of time airing programmes consisting of "Song and Dance" sequences that have been taken from regional and national films. And Akashvani devotes a disproportionate part of its time broadcasting film songs.

The influence of the film industry is felt not merely in the programming patterns at the Doordarshan but also in its working. During the production of Panamkadu both Raju and Pillai shared with me their criticism that the Doordarshan was excessively dependent on the film industry for its fare. Large amounts of money are being spent annually to acquire the rights for showing films and "song and dance" sequences. The importance given to the industry and its personalities was brought home at the Silver Jubilee celebration of the Doordarshan where film personalities and producers were given awards and felicitated, while the regular staff at the Doordarshan, including creative and technical staff, were not given the recognition that they deserved. This feeling of being discriminated against was widespread among the crew, and Sena made the same complaint.

Another source of influence is the Tamil stage. As mentioned earlier, cast involved in the production of Panamkadu came from the Tamil theatre. They brought with them a certain style or acting which was both heavy and over-dramatic. The Tamil theatre's fare consists of mythological and historical plays and social dramas. While historical plays and mythologicals are not over-represented at Doordarshan, social dramas are. In August 1984, I had witnessed the production of a social drama by Sena entitled Suspicion. People like Subbu and Durai were also involved in the production. Not too long ago there was considerable influx of personnel to and from the regional film and the Tamil stage. Now it is the Doordarshan which acts as the conduit for actors and actresses who want to find a niche in the Tamil film industry or the film industry in general. In other words, Doordarshan gives exposure to aspiring actors and actresses.

Contemporary Tamil cinema, like Indian cinema in general, can be divided into three categories - the epic, multi-star

thriller, the parallel cinema with its accent on realist styles of characterisation, and the "Art" cinema which is predominantly realistic in approach and caters mainly to an educated elite. Characterisation in Panamkadu reflects influence from both the epic and the parallel traditions of the regional cinema. Karruppiah, for instance, was modelled on the architypal villain in the epic cinema. He embodied all that was evil, all that was wrong with society. Ponnudurai is also such a type. Mekala who played as Karruppiah's daughter was type-cast in the role of the typical, long-suffering, upright, devoted woman who, despite all odds, achieves what she sets out to achieve. And in a style that was again characteristic of the regional epic cinema, these characters were built up through using certain stock shots. For example, Karruppiah was frequently portrayed in full-screen, low-angle shots that were meant to heighten his particular character. Mallika was built up using soft lenses and close-up shots taken from a variety of angles.

Mosey, on the other hand, had been influenced by the Tamil parallel cinema. In his appearance, his style of acting and in his tone of voice, Mosey was closer to the realist traditions than any of the others in the cast. But then it must be pointed out that the realist tradition of characterisation has itself become hackneyed. When the parallel cinema first appeared in the mid-seventies, there were high hopes about its revolutionary potential. But on attaining commercial viability, it lost much of the motivation it once had to bring about radical changes. Themes like poverty and exploitation are still the main fare of the parallel cinema, but the realism is interspersed with escapist fare such as the song and dance sequences, and thus considerably compromised.

For example, in Panamkadu, the main confrontation is between individuals, not between individuals and the system. The system is forgotten, or only incidentally referred to, while individuals confront and interact with each other. One is left with the impression that poverty is not a structural phenomenon, but is caused by certain individuals like the landlord and the middleman.

Derek Malcolm, writing in the summer 1986 issue of Sight and Sound, made the following comment on parallel film-makers: "It is intriguing, to say the least, to hear many of these populists condemning the commercial cinema out of hand, while making films

that are not so very far from the offerings which have, after all, kept India's 12,000 cinemas in profit for so long."

The popularity of the regional film is to an extent dependent on the songs in the film. Sena was aware of this. Songs and dances would get him an audience. He further wanted to prove that song and dance sequences could be based on very low budgets. An inordinate amount of time was spent in search for locations especially for filming such sequences. It was a time-consuming affair, especially because each bar of the songs had to be complemented by shots taken at particular scenic spots. All these meant that the filming of the plot as such was not given the importance it deserved.

Sena was of the opinion that a song and dance sequence could be used to heighten the element of pathos. But it is basically escapist in its effect. It halts the action and takes away attention from the reality of the plot and the theme. Interestingly enough, during production, many of the tappers who were interested spectators were visibly amused by the sequences. They were of the opinion that such sequences were irrelevant.

The influence of the regional film was evident not only in the actual processes of production, but also during the recesses. The conversation revolved round films, film-makers and stars and abounded in anecdotes from the film-world. There was also much discussion of Panamkadu's genre; it was generally felt that it was a perfect parallel film.

There was a problem with the language used in the film. The Tamil spoken in Kanyakumari includes many words and turns of expression popularly used in Malayalam, the language in the neighbouring state of Kerala. Although there were occasions when Nazar did try to speak in local Tamil, for the most part the language used was the standardised film Tamil, which is more or less standard Tamil. The target, after all, was the predominantly urban audience in Tamil Nadu. But this involved a further erosion of realism. It meant, however, that on a number of occasions the tappers could not follow the inflexions of the actors.

Such discrepancies were obvious. But what Sena and his colleagues found it hard to understand was the fact that a realistic interpretation is itself a structured activity. What the camera mediates and what the audience sees is one interpretation of reality. It cannot be the only interpretation of that reality.

Realism is itself an ideological construct, and one's interpretation of reality depends to a large extent on one's own ideological leanings.

Thematic Treatment

The story, for the purpose of analysis, may be divided into five sections. (1) Scenes 1-2 are mainly descriptive. They place the story in perspective. (2) Scenes 3-19 unfold a series of disasters that befall the Chelliah family. It starts with Chelliah's death and is followed by the compensation fiasco - Ponnudurai's attempts to cheat Thayammal of both her compensation and her property. It continues with Karrupuswamy's attempts to exploit the family in various ways, and concludes with Chellammal's accident and the doctor's refusal to treat her. (3) Scenes 20-33 concentrate on Mosey as an activist. Except for the postponement of Jaya's wedding, the immediate family is not affected by any major disasters, but disaster does strike other tappers and their families. These scenes serve to highlight Mosey's involvement with his people and his growth as their spokesman and leader. Mosey counters Karuppuswamy's machinations, brings together two quarrelling tapper families and exposes the way they are being used by landlords and middlemen. The emphasis is on the need to organise. (4) Scenes 34-48 show the various ways in which Mosey actually organises the tappers and their families. The theme of unity is developed and the value of organised movement is stressed. With the help of a volunteer from a local group, Mosey forms a tappers' organisation. He organises their families into cooperatives, chalks out an alternative plan for marketing their produce and arranges for the repayment of debts. He also organises the "contract" workers. (5) Scenes 49-52 concentrate on the romance theme. A major thrust is on education as a solution to the problem of poverty and deprivation.

Thus, while unity is the main theme, there are a number of secondary themes which include poverty and exploitation and the importance of education. How far are they consistently presented, and to what extent are they related to the real situation of the tappers?

(1) Unity: This is the central theme and the basic message - the strength that comes from a united organisation of tappers. It is a theme emphasised in the objectives of the PWDS.

As their study puts it, the "Palmyrah Workers Development Society attempts to provide a framework to organise..., to provide education for social awareness...struggle for assuring fair price for their products...give welfare and accident benefits, and to initiate...measures for education and employment of the members of the tappers' families" (1978, p.1).

All these call for unity, and it is not surprising that unity became the main theme of Panamkadu. But the concept of unity mediated through the film is very different from how social action groups understand it. Such groups believe that unity evolves through the combined efforts of people; the emphasis is not on cultivating strong leaders because such leaders may be tempted to appropriate its fruits and betray the struggle. Emphasis is placed on cultivating the capacities of all the people involved in development, and leaders are only enablers or catalysts. In Panamkadu, Mosey is all-important. He is modelled after Moses of the Bible who leads the oppressed to the promised land. He becomes central to the story, and his growth as a leader receives more attention than the struggle itself. The other tappers like Amavasai and Thayammal seem static and stagnant; they do not grow.

In fact, at the end of the film one is left with the impression that only a strong individual with heroic qualities can be the saviour of the masses. Films as a rule promote individualism and Panamkadu is no exception to the rule. With its stress on the outstanding individual, the film is not very different from films such as the DMK film Engavittu Pillai (1965), in which MGR, the hero (and the present chief minister of the state), single-handedly saves his people from the oppressors.

Mosey does unite the tappers and their families, but in the very last scene, scene 52, he talks of destiny and the immutability of fate, thus calling into question the very possibility of change which is a dynamic constituent of unity. In the speech given at his old school, Mosey underlines the role of education and the part it can play in changing the status-orientation of the tappers; but he also adds that tappers like himself cannot change their profession: "I am destined to be a tree-climber. No one can do this except me. That this why God has created us."

Nor is the theme portrayed in depth. The ideological and structural constraints that militate against organisation and unity

are underplayed. The chief obstacles in the way of the organising of the rural poor are not isolated individuals but endemic systems.

(2) Romance: Out of the 52 scenes, 12 scenes in one way or another advance the relationship between the lovers. According to Sam who wrote the script, the romance motif was added to satisfy the expectations of the audience. The scenes provide light relief in an otherwise relentless story of hardship and struggle. But while they do provide entertainment, they remain totally irrelevant to the development of the main theme, i.e., unity through organisation. In fact these scenes take attention away from the major theme. Panamkadu promotes the impression that the successful outcome of a love affair depends on diligence and moral integrity, and that a sure way to overcome a situation of poverty is to fall in love with and marry the landlord's daughter. The Indian reality is totally different. Marriages are normally "arranged". Caste considerations play a decisive role in marriage. So do financial and status considerations. The whole episode is far removed from the situation of the tappers.

(3) Poverty, Exploitation: These related themes have been much explored in the Indian cinema. In Panamkadu, poverty is portrayed starkly and vividly. It pervades the first half of the film. Poverty creates a vicious circle and, caught in it, one cannot escape. The experience of the Chelliah family is by no means untypical.

Throughout the film, however, the symptoms of poverty are attacked, not its causes. For example, Mosey in scene 22 criticises his friend Amavasai for taking to drink. He looks at the issue from a moral standpoint. In the original script, Amavasai counters Mosey's moralism and points out that while the government urges people not to drink, at the same time it promotes the liquor industry by opening liquor shops. That part was edited out because it was critical of the government's policies. Amavasai also points out that drinking is not an evil in itself; he is forced to drink because of the circumstances that he is in. It is a source of nutrition and can complement their rice-based diet. But in the end it is Mosey's views on drinking that come through - that it is morally wrong to drink.

Similarly, the theme of exploitation too is only partially explored in the film. Exploitation is attributed to the avarice of unscrupulous individuals. In the original version, scene 4 focuses

on government apathy; when Chelliah is dying, they cannot get the government ambulance to take him to the hospital. In the filmed version a taxi driver is blamed for not taking Chelliah to the hospital. Again, in the original version in scene 8, Ponnudurai explains how a number of government officials have to be bribed before the compensation may materialise. This too was cut.

In the original version of scene 17, when a doctor at the government hospital refuses to treat his sick mother, Mosey in his anger hurls to the ground a framed photograph of Gandhi, and loudly asks what good independence has brought to the country. Again in scene 35, there was stringent criticism of corruption in the government department dealing with loans. But these too were cut. In no part of the film is the government's role in the exploitation of the masses exposed or the nexus between the rural rich and the administration brought out. In a sense the film legitimises the government's version of reality, through its selective interpretation of the nature of rural poverty and exploitation.

(4) Education: Throughout the film, education is held up as the source of success in life. Mosey believes that education will bring a sense of self-respect to the tappers. There is an obvious naïveness about the film's commendation of the values of the existing educational system. Most social action groups believe that the present system of primary and secondary education is bankrupt and that it leads to the domestication of people. In Panamkadu, Mosey stays with the traditional educational system and, in scene 52, calls upon the children to work hard and become "officers, scientists, doctors, advocates, engineers". In spite of the "Reservation" policies⁽³⁾ of the government people of lower castes cannot easily enter the professional sector.

Production for Whom?

In this chapter, I have tried to study the production of a development-oriented television feature film. A number of distinct influences that told upon the production have been recorded, as for

3. The policy by which places in educational institutions and jobs in government departments and public sector undertakings are "reserved" for underprivileged groups, like the tribal people and scheduled castes. This, of course, involves inverse discrimination, as it undercuts the parameters of merit and competence, and has given rise to much controversy and conflict.

example the indirect influence of the political system, the caste/communal factor, and the ideology of the regional film. All these different elements had their impact on the shaping of the final product. The product was shaped by attitudes and commitments. I have shown that the majority of both cast and crew were not committed to the issues that were at the heart of the film; their commitment was first and foremost to their craft and only secondarily to the subject of the film. Personal "exposure", a sort of self-aggrandisement, was their key objective, and both cast and crew were hoping to get a break into the world of the regional film. Given such contradictions - both in the organisation and practice of production, in the attitudes of the cast and crew and in the treatment of the theme - it is doubtful whether the final product can be called a development film or even whether it can be classified as a "social awareness" film. It could not transcend the limitations that have dogged the parallel cinema.

In a development-oriented film what should be the nature of the filmed reality? Whom should it benefit? And what are its major objectives? There are of course innumerable constraints, but the producer has to deal with these constraints in such a way that the filmed reality is in some measure consonant with the existential reality which it attempts to mirror. If the product is to have an emancipatory impact, the producer cannot afford to be neutral either personally or in his or her interpretation of the film. Sena tried to be relatively neutral in his interpretation, but the final product clearly mirrored a political position - the official interpretation of reality. Neutrality is in itself a political position, although Sena did not agree with the politics of neutrality.

A feature film like Panamkadu can do very little on its own to change people's attitudes, nor can it make people more socially conscious. And given the Doordarshan context, with no possibility of follow-up of any kind and no provision for audience research, the organisation will never know whether they have achieved what they had set out to achieve through the film. Panamkadu, in other words, will remain a "shot in the dark".

Panamkadu's version of reality is a compromised version; a part of the problem is substituted for the whole, and little attempt is made to explore the deep structures of poverty and exploitation. The part of reality left out is a multifaceted one. Often the roots

of poverty and exploitation can be traced to the very institutions of the government and to its policies - development institutions, local government bodies, institutions of law and order, the nexus between the landlord/money-lender and the government, the marketing system. One of the more immediate factors of exploitation is the tappers' relationship with the market. Panamkadu merely touched on this unequal relationship, and in fact at that point it oversimplified the issue. In actuality, the market consists of a number of intermediaries who come between the tapper and his product. These intermediaries buy the product, palm-gur (kul) , both directly at the village level and from the tappers. They in turn sell it to the big traders who have political connections. The intermediaries buy the kul at a price that has already been fixed by the big kul traders - a price system which follows the dictates of the demand and supply curve. The tappers sell in the peak season and in the slack season they have to borrow money to survive. It is a vicious circle and both government officials and politicians are involved in this extortionate system. This is the real problem, which is not portrayed in any depth in the film.

It must be admitted that it is extremely difficult to evolve an alternative system of marketing; the PWDS tried to evolve such a system, and failed in its attempt. But Mosey in the film evolves an alternative system which does scant justice to the complexities of the situation. The film fails to provide an adequate picture of the various forces that the tappers have to contend with in their efforts to organise an alternative marketing system.

In the film, the PWDS is indirectly portrayed as a benign and selfless organisation, totally committed to the development of the tappers and their families. In reality, despite the few changes that they have helped bring about, the PWDS has not in any substantial way touched the lives of the tappers and their families.

The production of the film Panamkadu was geared primarily to an urban audience. There was very little involvement of the tappers themselves in the production of the film, although their presence was quite pervasive in the location situation. The chances of the tappers either seeing the finished film or benefiting from it in any way are limited. The real beneficiaries are the cast and the crew of the Doordarshan, the Doordarshan itself, and the PWDS. Individual members of the cast and crew get a measure of exposure,

Doordarshan receives a certain recognition and PWDS has had publicity and may receive further financial assistance from foreign funding agencies.

Panamkadu mirrors in an indirect way the theory and practice of both development and development communication in contemporary Indian society. In the next chapter I study another attempt by the government in the practice of development communication, primarily through the use of interpersonal methods of communication.

* * *

A Note on Observation and Production

Observation is to a large extent dependent on the environment. In my study with the Doordarshan, I observed in two different environments - the studio and the location. In a number of ways, these situations were markedly different from each other and I had to adjust in different ways to the two situations. In the studio situation, "access" was a perennial problem. There was a "pass" system in operation and all visitors had to secure and present a pass. At times even a valid pass was not good enough for entry. On occasion I used the script as a sort of pass. There were many occasions when I had to wait in the lounge and look out for a familiar face, someone who could get me into the studio. Access to Sena's room was an even greater problem - the only way to get there was to follow Sena or the assistant producer Veena.

In July 1984, during the first month of my field study, I did try to secure "official" sanction for my work. I visited Doordarshan on a number of occasions, and after days of waiting in the corridors of the Doordarshan, I was granted an audience with the Director, who was not entirely sympathetic with the nature of my work. He suggested that I work at SITE and he assured me that he would write to Delhi and ask for permission on my behalf. I waited for a few weeks and there was no reply. By a stroke of good fortune, I happened to meet Sena. We struck up a good relationship and he invited me to watch the production of a social drama called Suspicion, and soon after that asked me to join him for the shooting of Panamkadu. Sena did not bother to secure official permission; according to him, it took months to get clearance from Delhi. He was aware of the risk he was taking and there were a number of

occasions when he felt that I was too much of a risk and so would not invite me for certain studio and location sessions. I had to adjust to his situation. There was one occasion on location when Palani, the stills photographer, questioned my presence on location. Sena sent me back to the hotel. At first I was quite annoyed, but then I decided to do the cast and crew a favour by booking their return tickets by train from Tirunelveli, a city about a hundred kilometres from the location. The cast and crew were grateful for the help, and that night they opened up, and we discussed a number of issues. Palani left a few days earlier and then I had no problem getting information from both the cast and crew.

I had not much of a problem with "identification", especially with the crew. They were quite free with me and on no occasion did they hesitate to answer my questions. The cast was a different matter. They wondered whether I was a trainee actor, or a government official sent out to spy on their activities; it took some time before they accepted me.

The studio situation was difficult for me as an observer. I sometimes felt that it was I who was being observed. The presence of various officials made the task difficult, and at times I pretended that I was part of the cast. I was aware that my stint with the Doordarshan was unofficial. It was a "covert" activity, but it did not pose an ethical problem; I was not involved in any sort of subversive activity. I was only interested in finding the facts about production, facts which need to be known by both academics and lay people. Media researchers in India rarely question the working of the official media and I intended to do just that. Sena, Raju, Pillai and Khader were the chief sources of information. Note-taking was done in the field, but I systematised it on my return from both location shooting and studio sessions. I used a combination of both observation and the open-ended interview during my stint with the Doordarshan.

Sena knew that I was critical. Most of the points I have raised in this chapter had come up in conversations. Sena's attitude was ambivalent, but our relationship was excellent, and he had no objection to my incorporating my criticism in the thesis. In one sense he had little choice, but it was happily more than that.

CHAPTER VII

THE USE OF COMMUNICATION IN HORTICULTURAL EXTENSION

The majority of studies on communication and development in India, as I have shown, have concentrated on the phenomenon called the diffusion of innovation and ideas. They deal with the various personal and impersonal determinants of the process of diffusion and catalogue the various facets of the diffusion situation. Diffusion studies have of late come under a good deal of criticism. The main criticism is that they emphasise the over-determination of the communications process and de-emphasise the structural factors which in many ways determine the diffusion process. In this chapter I examine the communication flow or non-flow from within this larger structural dimension.

The role of communication in rural development can be analysed either in terms of its reinforcing and supporting continuity in existing structures and belief-systems or in terms of its helping to change structures and belief-systems in a way that real development takes place in a democratic milieu. Continuity and change are the foundations of underdevelopment and development. Underdevelopment is caused by the tyranny and persistence of unequal power structures and institutions that control one's life; development is brought about when structures are freed from monopoly control and freedom becomes a reality for the majority. Communication can be used either to reinforce the existing system or to change it.

The official development communication in India consists, for the most part, in attempts to distribute information regarding the different facets of development, like health, hygiene, agriculture and animal husbandry. No doubt such provision of information is a vital factor in development. The part played by structural factors in underdevelopment is acknowledged, but the irrational behaviour of the peasant is seen as an even more

fundamental problem. The following study is an attempt to examine the role of information in promoting or retarding development.

The major findings here are based on my field experiences with the Department of Horticulture, Ootacamund Taluk, Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu State, during the periods 15-30 November 1984 and 7-30 January 1985.

My previous study concentrated on the production of a feature film for a predominantly urban audience; here I look at agricultural communication, its production and distribution in a rural situation, and the impact, if any, it has. The emphasis is on inter-personal forms of communication and their effects within the larger context of development and underdevelopment, change and continuity.

The Nilgiris - General Features

Ootacamund Taluk, or Ooty as it is more familiarly known, is in the Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu State. The Nilgiris (Blue Mountains) is the south-west part of the state. It is bordered by the Karnataka State in the north, Kerala State in the west and the Periyar District and the Coimbatore District in the east and the south, both of Tamil Nadu. The Nilgiris Hills consist of a compact plateau, and they form a part of the Western Ghats, a major chain of mountains that runs along the western part of peninsular India.

The last census (1981), places the population of the Nilgiris at 630,169, the density of population per square kilometre being 247. Ooty taluk has more than 100,000 inhabitants.

Nilgiris District has a total area of 2542.5 sq. kms. It is an extremely mountainous area and the elevation of Ooty is 7,300 feet above sea-level. Ooty is the administrative headquarters of the district. There are two other taluks in the district, Gudalur and Coonoor.

In its agro-climatic conditions, the Nilgiris is different from other districts in Tamil Nadu. The soil variety found here is the acidic red-soil; the average rainfall is about 1,700 mm, brought by the South-West monsoon during the months of June-September and the North-East monsoon in October-December. The latter showers, known as the "mango" showers, are extremely important for the potato crop.

Nilgiris has a total area of 255,000 hectares out of which 53,000 hectares are cultivable land. The breakdown of cultivated crops by area is as follows:

<u>Table 2</u>	
<u>Breakdown of crop/land ratio in the Nilgiris</u>	
	<u>Hectares</u>
Plantation crops including Tea	
and Coffee	28,500
Potato	9,000
Millets/cereals	4,650
Paddy	3,300
Vegetables	2,500
Spices	1,400
Fruit trees	1,145
Tapioca	865
Chicory	331
Fodder	500
Pulses/Amaranthus	570
Grazing	<u>600</u>
Total area	<u>53,311</u>

Source: Librarian, Horticultural Department, Ooty

As is clear from the above figures, the plantation economy is quite strong. A large part of the workforce, especially Harijan labour, is employed in the plantation sector, but accurate estimates of this workforce are hard to come by because the census, though it treats estate workers separately from agricultural workers, does not provide relevant statistics.

Table 3 - Number of Operational Holdings and area operated by size and class of

Operational Holdings

Source: Tamil Nadu Agricultural Census 1970-71, Vol.II, p.459

Size Class hectare	Individual Holdings		Joint Holdings		Total Holdings	
	No.	Area in hect.	No.	Area in hect.	No.	Area in hect.
0-0.5	24096	5471.53	..	..	24096	5471.53
0.5-1	10111	7148.52	..	..	10111	7148.52
1-2	10630	13854.50	..	..	10630	13854.50
2-3	3701	8447.71	..	..	3701	8447.71
3-4	512	1692.03	..	..	512	1692.63
4-5	916	4014.43	..	..	916	4014.43
5-10	480	3218.50	..	..	480	3218.50
10-20	138	1788.73	11	185.25	149	1973.98
20-30	1	28.29	11	315.24	12	343.53
30-40	..	..	..	..	..	..
40-50	..	..	..	..	..	..
50&above	..	..	60	25611.43	60	25611.43
Total	50585	45664.24	82	26111.92	50667	71776.16

The main agricultural seasons are: (1) Karbokam, which extends from March to September. It includes March-April for sowing and planting and July-September for harvesting. (2) Kadaibokam, which extends from August to February. It includes August-October for sowing and planting and December-February for harvesting. Cultivation is carried out on both terraced and non-terraced land and 50 per cent of the land is under double cropping.

As table 3 indicates, there are a total of 50,667 land-holdings in the Nilgiris and the average holding is below one hectare. These figures have to be treated with a certain amount of circumspection because they give no indication of actual farm size. For example, although total holdings in the 0-0.5 hectare class number 24,096 there is no indication of the exact distribution. It could well be that a large number of the land-holders have half an acre or less. The table also shows the disparities in land-holding. For example, individual owners in the 3-4 hectares to 20-30 hectares make up 4.02 per cent of the total number of land-holders, and they own 23.5 per cent of the total land.

The population of the Nilgiris consists of a number of castes and tribes, the predominant caste being the Badagas numbering more than 100,000, close to 15 per cent of the total population. Apart from the Badagas there are a number of other castes including the Gounders and Scheduled Castes⁽¹⁾ such as the Adi Dravidas and the Adi Karnatakas. The most important of the tribes in the Nilgiris are the Todas, the Kotas and the Kurumbas. The Badagas are the most prosperous caste, and quite a few of them are extremely wealthy and have invested both in business and the plantation economy. A substantial majority of them, however, are either small or subsistence farmers.

1. The term "Backward Classes" includes the Scheduled Castes and tribal peoples. They are scheduled or listed, and preferential rights have been conferred on them by the nation's constitution, which also prescribes protection and safeguards. Among the safeguards are "the abolition of untouchability and the forbidding of its practice in any form" (article 17) and "the promotion of their educational and economic interests and their protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation" (article 46). But such safeguards are not strictly enforced. According to the 1971 census there are nearly 8 million people in Tamil Nadu belonging to these categories.

The Badagas originally came from the neighbouring state of Karnataka. Thurston (1909) dates their arrival in the Nilgiris in the twelfth century A.D. The Badagas themselves are divided into six sub-castes, five high castes - the Udaya, Harnra, Adhikari, Kanaka and Badaga - and one low caste, Toreya. Their main god is either Vishnu or Siva. The Badagas live in a line of houses under one continuous roof.

In the following study I focus on development communication as undertaken by the Horticultural Department, Ooty, and on its beneficiaries, the farmers involved specifically in horticultural activities.

The History of the Horticultural Department, Ooty

While horticulture had been a major source of income for a number of small farmers since the nineteenth century, it was only in the late fifties that the government began to take a substantial interest in horticulture. From the very first Five Year Plan, the development of horticultural industry was emphasised. But the horticultural industry is comparatively small, and the major deployment of government resources has been in the agricultural sector. Horticulture needs special agro-climatic conditions, and both the government's intensive and extensive attempts at horticultural development have been concentrated in specific areas like Simla and Darjeeling at the foothills of the Himalayas in the north and districts like the Nilgiris in the south.

Before 1967, the horticultural department was primarily involved in extending the area of potato, vegetable and fruit cultivation in the Nilgiris. The emphasis was on extension rather than on scientific crop-research or on scientific cultivation. In the 1960s there was a serious outbreak of crop-related diseases in the Nilgiris, including late blight, Alternario, virus diseases and the potato cyst nematode. This resulted in a drastic reduction in yield, and the system of mono-cropping was blamed for the high incidence of plant diseases. In 1966, the Federal Republic of Germany decided to start a horticultural project in co-operation with the existing department in the Nilgiris. The German Agency for Technical Co-operation Ltd. (GTZ) funded a large part of this project. The Government of India provided part of the finances. The Indo-German Project, as it was called, was started in 1979, and emphasised the scientific cultivation of crops and a large part of

the money was spent on research. Project support from Germany came both in the form of money and in terms of expertise and infrastructure. Joint training exercises were conducted, and a number of Indians were trained in the Federal Republic of Germany. Vehicles, machinery and a complete infrastructure for soil-testing and nematode laboratories were imported from FRG. Research into High Yielding Seed Varieties, fertilisers and pesticides and techniques of horticultural production was integrated with a system of marketing and credit structure. The emphasis was on integrated horticultural development.

The Indo-German project lasted for ten years. Its term ended in 1978. The period may be divided into four phases: (1) 1969-70, when the emphasis was on field trials and systematic planning for optimum horticultural production. (2) 1970-72, when the results of earlier research were put into practice. Demonstration plots were laid out and a number of scientific methods of cultivation were introduced. These included nematode control and the introduction of HYV seeds. (3) During 1972-74, there was a continuation of the activities that were started under the second phase. In addition there was an attempt to link these activities to training programmes, loan schemes and infrastructural development. (4) During the last phase, 1974-78, the emphasis was on extending the area under cultivation and the formation of an effective marketing system.

The impact of the Indo-German Project on the Nilgiri agronomy was quite significant. It has had both positive and negative consequences. Among its positive contributions were the effective control of the Golden Nematode, the introduction of multi-cropping patterns, the provision of a marketing infrastructure through organising the Nilgiri Vegetable Growers' Association, the provision of seed farms and effective soil testing laboratories which have also been used to test samples from other districts, and the emphasis on scientific production techniques.

Among the negative consequences were the following. The project introduced scientific farming, and this meant that farmers were encouraged to invest substantial sums on pesticides, fertilisers, etc. During the early years of the project, certain fertilisers were imported from Germany. When the project-term was over and funding dried up, the horticultural department was unable to continue the work on its former basis. With the departure of the

project-team, the infrastructure which they had created was taken over by the government and the prices of previously subsidised inputs went up. In other words, the project brought the ordinary farmer into the larger economy, and now that farmer is entirely dependent on the vagaries of that economy.

The project also created dependencies. During the early years of the project a number of experts from the FRG were stationed in Ooty. Today their number has gone down, but their influence persists. There is frequent interchange of personnel, and Indian staff are sent to the FRG for training in advanced techniques of horticultural production. The Indo-German Project emphasised productivity, and although it did try to evolve a systematic approach to integrated horticultural development, it did not consider ways of tackling the structural factors that were an obstacle to production.

Although there was an attempt to create credit facilities, most of the loans went to the richer farmers. Only they could use HYV seeds and technology to good effect.

The emphasis was short-term and the project showed all the characteristic weaknesses of short-term development. Although it did create higher yields in the short-term, its long-term consequences are discouraging. HYV seeds are not very resistant to diseases and many of the farmers that I met complained that crop loss was high because of diseases. Previously, prior to the Indo-German Project, animal manure was used as fertiliser. Today the farmers are dependent on fertilisers and pesticides and their availability is uncertain and the prices are steadily going up.

With the completion of the Indo-German Project, the entire project was taken over by the state department of horticulture. It inherited a good deal of machinery and resources and the horticultural department in Ooty is one of the best-equipped under the agricultural ministry.

The Training and Visit (T&V) System and the Present Structure of the Horticultural Department

Since 1982, the programmes of the Horticultural Department, Ooty, have been subsumed under the Training and Visit System of Agricultural extension. The T&V system was the brainchild of Daniel Benor, a World Bank agronomist. As Robert McNamara defines it in the foreword to the book by Benor and Harrison (1977), the key purpose

of the T&V system is "to improve and expand agricultural extension through an intensive system of training and visits, and thus, to reach large numbers of farmers quickly with advice covering the entire production cycle" (p.iii).

The T&V system is in a number of ways different from previous extension models. It emphasises in its operations a strong linkage between the research system, the linking system and the client system. Unlike in previous extension systems, the Village Extension Worker (VEW) in the T&V system is of vital importance to the overall success of the project. In previous extension systems in India, the VEW was a multipurpose worker. He/she was usually under the local Panchayat but was delegated to undertake a number of secondary jobs in the various government departments, including health care and family planning. In the T&V system, the VEW sheds the multipurpose role and becomes solely attached to the agricultural department. His/her work consists entirely of agricultural extension. Training and visits are an essential part of the VEW's programme and as Table 4 shows, in a two-week period, the VEW has to visit the field on eight occasions. Fridays are spent on either reviewing or training, Saturdays are make-up days for lost man-days and Sundays are holidays.

Table 4
Fortnightly Timetable for VEW, Ooty

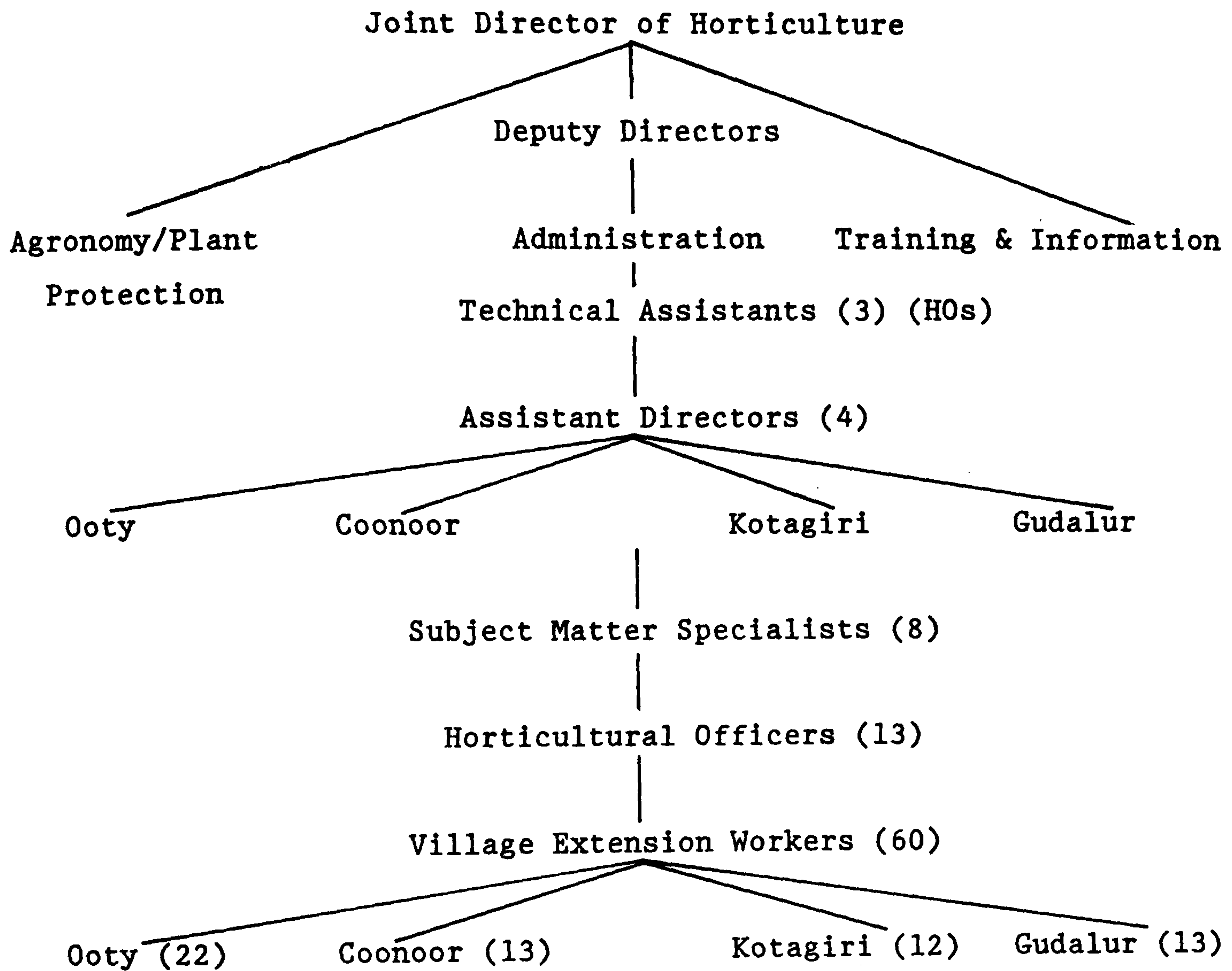
	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tues</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thurs</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>	<u>Sun</u>
First week	V	V	V	V	REV	ADD.V	H
Second week	V	V	V	V	TRA	ADD.V	H

Great emphasis is laid on research and new posts such as the Subject Matter Specialist (SMS) have been created. The SMS works with the VEW and the job of the VEW is to provide the SMS with information about the various crop-related problems that the farmers may have. The SMS usually diagnoses the problem during the training sessions, but more complicated problems are referred to the research laboratory.

The T&V system is also a highly hierarchical system. It is modelled closely on a "supervisory" system and strict emphasis is laid on individual accountability and responsibility. For example,

each Horticultural Officer (HO) is in charge of eight VEWs and each VEW is in charge of 500 families in eight villages. More specifically, he is in charge of eight contact farmers in each of the eight villages. Communication is an essential part of this system and the VEW is in charge of conveying to the farmers the messages that have been formulated by the scientists and in providing feedback from the farmers to the SMSs and scientists. Clear messages are given to VEWs at training sessions and these messages consist of information on various aspects of the horticultural situation, including pricing, weather, optimum use of fertilisers and pesticides, etc.

Figure I
Structure of Horticultural Department, Ooty



The Horticultural Department in the Nilgiris operates in four areas, Ooty, Coonoor, Kotagiri and Gudalur. The main office is at Ooty and it is the main decision-making centre. The Joint Director of Horticulture works from his headquarters in Ooty. Under him are three deputy directors of horticulture who are in charge of agronomy and plant protection, administration, and training and information. Under the deputy-directors are three technical assistants who are also known as Horticultural Officers. The four assistant directors are accountable to the deputy directors and they are formally in charge of the operations in the four areas. The subject matter specialists are accountable to them but they work on a rotation basis and are therefore accountable to the director in the area they are delegated to. The SMSs are in charge of the horticultural officers and these officers are in charge of the VEWs. Although on paper there are sixty VEWs, fifteen of them have been assigned to work under the Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP), also in operation in the district. There are, of course, a number of other posts in the organisation, but they are either of a technical or of an administrative nature, and the incumbents do not have any direct contact with ongoing programmes. In the four areas, a total number of 35,000 farmers are covered by the department. These farmers are predominantly involved in potato cultivation and vegetable growing, the exception being the farmers in Gudalur who farm a total area of 4000 hectares of paddy (rice).

The horticultural department's activities are closely linked with other organisations too. The soil laboratory and the seed farms under the horticultural department work in collaboration with other such centres in Tamil Nadu and in other states in India. They maintain a close link with the State Seed Farm in Simla, West Bengal, and they get a regular supply of both cabbage and carrot seeds from there. These seeds cannot be produced in the district because of climatic conditions. The department has also direct links with agricultural research stations throughout India. It maintains close relations with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, which provides scientific help and personnel. In fact, a large percentage of the staff at the horticultural department, excluding the VEWs, graduated from this university.

The department also maintains close links with the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, which is involved in the training of VEWs. Each VEW under the T&V system must undergo two

years of training there. Coimbatore also has a studio of the All India Radio. This station provides a service for the western and northern districts of Tamil Nadu. The horticultural department delegates SMSs to the All India Radio who prepare scripts for agricultural broadcasts to the Nilgiris. Although, for all practical purposes, the horticultural department is an independent body, it is related to the larger state ministry of agriculture.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study is a combination of participant observation and survey. It must be emphasised that the major mode of study was observation. I used a qualitative technique for a number of reasons, the most important being my desire to get to know the dynamics of the social setting and come to an understanding of "latent", non-measurable data. Quantitative methodologies have their use, especially in the context of large-scale surveys - they do provide valid data of measurable situations, and one can make generalisations from such data. But traditionally, in the Indian context of development communication research, quantitative methodologies have been used to describe atomised entities or discrete behavioural characteristics of individual farmers. In most cases, the subjects of these have been studied in total isolation from their social context. A study that enumerates the various behavioural weaknesses of non-adopters is of little value if it does not locate these non-adopters within their wider social context. Behavioural responses or non-responses to adoption of innovations are entirely dependent on the farmer's social status within the wider political, economic and social situation. Such factors, which are fundamental, are often bypassed by quantitative studies; instead "information" is given a central place in development.

A second reason for adopting a primarily qualitative methodology is that in a village situation in India, with a high rate of illiteracy, quantitative methods may yield invalid answers. A period of actually getting to know the subjects of one's study is useful because with a measure of "acceptance" people respond even to searching questions. Information of this sort has more validity especially in studies that deal with complex social situations. In the following study, the emphasis is on finding out the "patterns" that arose from the relationships of the institutions of development

and communication to their subjects, i.e., the farmers in an area of the Nilgiris, the Ooty Taluk; it is not on finding out answers to purely quantitative questions.

Thirdly, in order to come to a valid understanding of village societies in India, it is extremely important to compare "official" statistics with the actual situation. Official statistics cannot be a valid basis for quantitative studies because they are often not entirely accurate. For example, official statistics on land-ownership cannot be relied upon because they do not account for the complexity of land ownership patterns, tenures, or the actual quality of the land. A major reason for this state of statistics is that the powers that be in the village have sufficient influence to "hide" their lands with the connivance of the administration. Of this, more will be said later on in the study.

Although the method of observation is a more comprehensive method, in order for the data to be valid, quantitative methods will have to be used to substantiate some of the more general findings through observation. Participant observation is a rigorous method of analysis and there are a number of pitfalls that can invalidate data. One of the problems that I encountered during my study was with "informants". They are a vital part of any observational study, but if the researcher is not observant enough, the informants can direct the scope and direction of one's study. For example, some of the VEWs, having come to know that I had gained "access" through one of the deputy directors, tried to paint an "ideal" picture of their work situation and their relationships with the farmers. Some of them were under the impression that I would report everything they said to the deputy director. They tried to direct my research, by taking me to visit only contact farmers or to only "co-operative" villages. Nor did they always provide accurate or truthful answers. In order to get more valid information from the field, I had to be firm with my informers and insist on meeting as many farmers as possible, irrespective of social or caste status. In any field situation there is a bewildering array of opinions, beliefs and so-called "facts". It is up to the observer to negotiate these complexities and follow the direction that is most valid for his/her particular study.

Unlike the Doordarshan study, which was a covert study, access in this case was obtained through the proper channels. I approached the department through a very reliable "contact" and I

was immediately given access. The process of getting access is a political process, and social status remains an important condition.

My purpose was (1) to ascertain the nature of communication activities in the field, and gain an understanding of the quality and "dynamics" of extension, and (2) to come to an understanding of the factors that either aided extension or were an obstacle to it.

In November 1984 I spent time familiarising myself with the activities of the horticultural department, getting to know its personnel, the farmers and their situations. I conducted the survey during my second session, in January 1985. During both periods, I visited the field, attended weekly training camps and reviews, and interviewed different personnel in the department. Most of my work was conducted in villages that were scattered around Ooty taluk. On occasion I did visit villages that were on the outskirts of Ooty taluk, including Naduvattom, situated to the west of Ooty, near Gudalur, and Ebbanad and Kaguchi which lie to the east of Ooty, near the border of Coonoor taluk. The other villages that I visited, in fact the majority of them, were situated nearer the district headquarters, and they included Adaisholai, Empallada, Kothamudi, Sholur Panchayat, Nanjanad Panchayat, Kapachi, Kilkutti, Chinna Coonoor Panchayat, Denadacombai and Kulisholai. Although the villages chosen for both the survey and the observational study are in and around Ooty taluk, these places are broadly representative of other areas in the district, with the exception of Gudalur.

It is difficult to assess the representativeness of the results of the study vis a vis the other districts in Tamil Nadu. The Nilgiris is in many ways unique in terms of its physical characteristics, its climate and its agronomic situation. Most other districts in Tamil Nadu are in the "plains" and, paddy cultivation is the major agricultural activity.

Social contexts vary from district to district, even from village to village within the same district. But it is possible to come to an understanding of a system in operation, for example, the T&V system in the Nilgiris, and make generalisations that are fairly valid across districts in the same state and elsewhere. This is because systems such as the T&V have certain unique features and these are common to all such projects. For example, in my study it was evident that the main channel of contact between the organisation and the farmers, the VEW, who is the centrepiece of the T&V system, had become a professional or a specialist. This was one

of the objectives of the T&V system, but in the process the VEW has become alienated from his rural base. This will be true of other situations where the T&V system is in operation.

The pattern of field study was as follows. During the weekly review, the horticultural officer assigned me to different villages based on the availability of VEWs. There were certain "un-cooperative" villages which they did not want me to visit, but I did visit some of them. An "un-cooperative" village was one where, for one reason or another, the farmers did not follow scientific farming methods propagated by the VEW.

I was usually accompanied by the VEWs. This had both its advantages and disadvantages. They normally took me to their contact farmers, but having come to some understanding of the nature of my study, they also introduced me to non-contact farmers. I talked, on my own, to a number of farmers from different social backgrounds. The working day was 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Note-taking was done in the field. I made use of statistical information provided in the handbooks of the VEWs, especially when creating a sample for the survey. The information that I collected was gained through a survey that I conducted and through non-formal interviews in the field. Much of the data ^{were} was collected from contact points such as the tea-shop or the barber-shop or the village store.

Communication activities at the Horticultural Department - the Official Version

The effectiveness of any strategy of agricultural extension depends largely on its communication component. Different extension systems emphasise different forms of communication mixtures or a particular "optimum". In the T&V system, the emphasis is on inter-personal communication, especially the quality of contact between the linking system, i.e. the VEW, and the client system, i.e., the farmer. As Benor and Harrison (1977, p.11) note, "the goal (of the T&V system) is to develop a single modern professional service capable of giving farmers sound technical advice on their entire farming operation". The most important communicator in this process is undoubtedly the VEW.

At the Horticultural Department there was unanimous agreement among both senior and junior members of staff that communication was a primary determinant of change. According to Kailasam, deputy director in charge of information and training,

communication is the central element in any strategy of agricultural extension. Nanjan, one of the subject-matter specialists, took a similar line; he added that the quality of interpersonal communication is a key factor in agricultural extension. Horticultural officers like Ravi felt that it was not the quantity of information that mattered but its quality, its easy understandability, timeliness and practical nature. The farmer should be able to translate this information into practice.

A number of the VEWs were convinced that under the T&V system, they had an important role to play. Bhojan, Chandran, Ramamurthy and Madhan, among others, felt that their major role was as mediators between the scientist and the ordinary farmer. Their chief task was to explain to the farmer the advantages of scientific methods of cultivation, the logic behind using new innovations, the optimum use of fertilisers and pesticides, the effects of climate on cultivation, etc.

At the Horticultural Department, the accent was on information dissemination, the quality of information at contact-point, timely and practical doses of information, and the use of a proper communication mix, which included both interpersonal and mass forms of communication.

Information-production at the Horticultural Department is of two types: (1) In-house production of information, which can be further sub-divided into (a) production of purely administrative information for circulation within and between the various departments, and (b) the production of information for extension purposes directly carried out by the department. (2) Production of information that has its sources both within the horticultural department and outside it. For example, the All India Radio agricultural broadcasts from Coimbatore for the Nilgiris region are produced by SMSs from Ooty and specialists from the Agricultural University at Coimbatore and the AIR. The Horticultural Department is also involved in disseminating information produced outside - films made by the State Films Division and audio-visual material on extension. For the purpose of this study, the focus of attention will be on the production of information under (1b) and (2). Under the T&V system of agricultural extension, the production and continuous transmission of information, both vertically, i.e., SMS-VEW-Farmer and vice versa, and horizontally, i.e. VEW-Farmer, and Farmer-Farmer have been the main foci of emphasis.

The major source of information that is in many ways a constant resource handbook and guide to SMSs, HOS and VEWs is the Training Manual. This manual is usually produced at state-level through the collaboration of scientists from various agricultural universities within the state and elsewhere, and senior officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and its various departments. While most agricultural extension departments in Tamil Nadu can use this manual with minor modifications, Nilgiris, being different in terms of its topography, crop-structure and climatic conditions, uses the same manual but with substantial modifications that have taken into account these differences.

The training manual consists of certain fundamental guidelines that are used as the basis for message formulation. Although the SMSs formulate messages based on specific needs, these messages are themselves based on the guidelines provided in the manual. The manual provides general information on most aspects of the horticulture-related situation in the Nilgiris, including information on different horticultural practices, climatic variations, optimum use of pesticides and fertilisers, etc. During the fortnightly training session for the VEWs, this manual is used as a resource book and the prevailing situation in the field is assessed against the guidelines.

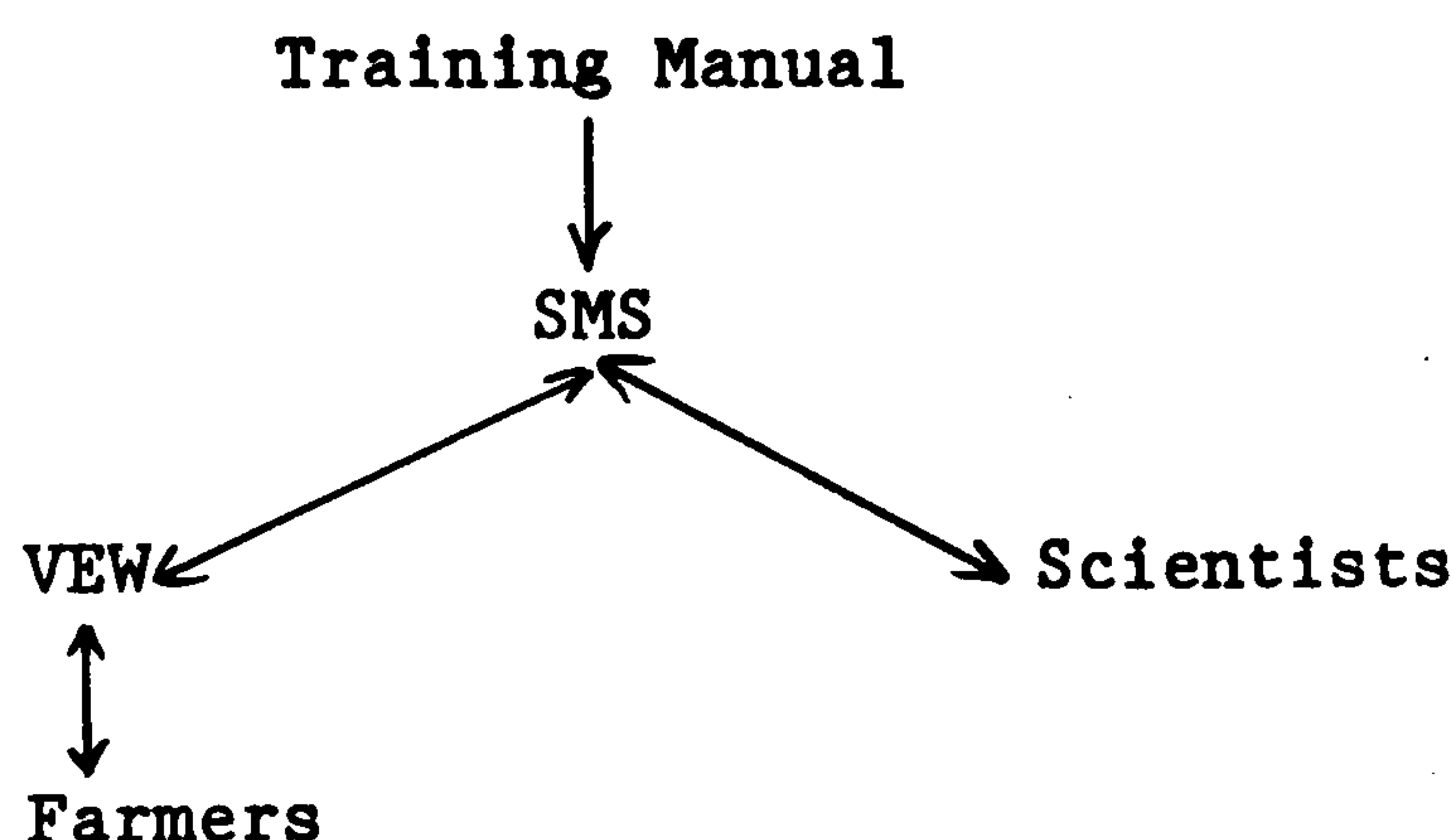
SMSs are in charge of message-production, and information is processed into print, and it is also explained in simplified terms to the VEWs. To a large majority of the cases presented - individual horticultural related - at training sessions, by the VEWs, the SMSs formulate on-the-spot answers to problems pertaining to particular field situations in the respective jurisdictions of VEWs. I had attended two training sessions where this was the case. But sometimes the SMS is confronted with a problem for which he has no ready answer. On such occasions the SMS refers the problem to scientists at the agricultural university at Coimbatore or to other scientists doing research in the Nilgiris. During the next fortnightly training session, messages based on research conducted by these scientists are given to the respective VEWs.

Printed material on a variety of subjects pertaining to the horticultural situation is distributed to all contact farmers. It includes short booklets on the different diseases affecting the potato crop including pests such as the Golden Nematode, on potato blight, on the optimum use of fertilisers and pesticides for

different vegetables and roots, on different modes of sowing and tilling, multi-cropping patterns and soil conservation, etc.

In principle, therefore, messages are formulated on the basis of the guidelines provided in the manual and on the basis of information received from the farmers. Messages are situation-specific and the model of message-production is as follows:

Fig.2 - Model of message production and dissemination
at the Horticultural Department



It is important to note the connection between the research-linking system and the linking-client system. Under the T&V system, the production of messages is based on a two-way flow of information. The source of raw information is the farmer. The VEW is the immediate organisational contact at the local level. He conveys the problems to the SMS. It is this VEW-farmer relationship that defines the quality of extension under the T&V system.

Interpersonal forms of communication are in turn complemented by other media including print, radio, audio-visuals and films. The Horticultural Department has its own field publicity unit involved in the production of posters, charts, slides, hand-bills, etc. The SMSs play an important part in the activities of the unit and they accompany the mobile unit on its "demonstration" trips to the various villages. Apart from situation-specific booklets, booklets of a more general nature, statistical charts and area maps are also produced at the publicity unit.

The Horticultural Department is also involved in the production of programmes for the All India Radio (AIR), Coimbatore. Scripts for these programmes are produced in cooperation with

scientists from the Agricultural University in Coimbatore and staff from the AIR. While agricultural programmes are transmitted daily from 7.30 to 8.00 p.m. in Coimbatore region, the programmes on Sunday are specifically meant for the Nilgiris region. There is also a daily agricultural announcement in the mornings between 6.30 and 6.45 which includes a weather forecast and the reading of the prices of agricultural products.

The format of the evening programmes varies, but the most common one is a question and answer session. Usually scientists or researchers figure in these. Occasionally, personnel representing fertiliser or pesticide companies are invited to take part. The clientele consists of farmers in the Coimbatore region and the Nilgiris. The question and answer format is meant to help village discussion groups, especially those farmers who were a part of the radio rural forum. According to Lingam, one of the SMSs in charge of writing radio-scripts, these programmes would benefit discussion groups most - especially those that are organised on the basis of the radio rural forums. Apart from the question and answer format, there are occasions when quiz programmes are aired. Rural songs are also given air-time. The objective in general is to complement interpersonal with other forms of communication. The radio message is both situation-specific and timely, and is supposed to reflect felt needs.

Apart from being involved in the production of radio programmes, the information wing of the Horticultural Department is also involved in the production of audio-visuals and films. But though the department has its own film production unit, it does not produce many films. Most of the films shown to farmers in the Nilgiris are those produced by the Films Division, Government of India. Audio-visuals are produced both by the publicity department and the publicity unit affiliated to the University of Coimbatore. These are usually shown during demonstrations and training camps; many of them focus on the identification and control of pests and diseases. VEWs learn to handle audio-visual equipment and they are expected to use them during their field visits.

Information-transfer is also carried out through frequent pre-season training camps organised for the VEWs and at times for farmers, during campaigns and demonstration trials, and camps where

farmers have opportunities to meet SMSs and other senior officials from the Horticultural Department and discuss their problems with them.

The predominant objective behind the production and dissemination of information is to change the attitudes of farmers and to induce them to adopt more scientific methods of cultivation. Information is seen as a fillip to productivity, and the staff at the Horticultural Department are convinced that lack of information is a major obstacle to increased production. There is also the widespread belief that personal sources like the VEWs are more powerful change-inducers than impersonal sources like the radio. Radio could at best reinforce the VEWs' messages.

There is also great faith in the efficacy of demonstration trials. Here is the possibility for a large number of farmers from all socio-economic backgrounds to learn about new innovations and ideas. Contact farmers are considered to be reliable sources of information-transfer. These farmers are chosen for their reliability, accessibility and standing in the village community. The better their "standing" the greater the possibility that others would imitate the practices adopted by them. Campaigns are meant to persuade people to change old and outdated horticultural practices. A favourite example is the case of the Golden Nematode beetle that had threatened the entire potato crop in the Nilgiris in the 1960s. Through a systematic and wide-reaching campaign, farmers were persuaded to switch to rotation and thus lessen the incidence of Nematode infection.

What is significant is the emphasis laid on the attitude-changing role of information. Information is allied to production and it is felt that proper information provided at the proper time is a key factor to greater horticultural productivity. Many of the emphases in the dominant paradigm of communication and development - the role of information in changing attitudes and beliefs, emphasis on the two-step flow, the importance of the opinion leader or contact farmer, and belief in the inevitability of "diffusion" throughout the whole community - were clearly discernible in the philosophy of development communication at the Horticultural Department.

Observation

During the study, as a part of observational exercise, I conducted unstructured interviews with 110 respondents from 13

villages. The sample was drawn from the caste/community spectrum in the villages. I used some of the data provided in the VEW's handbook to erect the sample. As Table 5 shows, the sample included a preponderance of people from the Badaga community. This was because they are numerically the dominant community in the Nilgiris. People were chosen also on the basis of their land-holding status. The following table indicates the land-holding pattern of those interviewed (according to official statistics).

Table 5

	<u>0-1 Hectare</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2 & above</u>	<u>Total</u>
Badaga	29	26	8	63
Harijan	22	5	-	27
Gounder	-	3	5	8
Kota	8	-	-	8
Muslim	-	1	-	1
Nair	<u>3</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3</u>
	<u>62</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>110</u>

Out of the 110 people interviewed, 31 were contact farmers and, as the following table shows, only one of them belonged to the 0-1 hectare category.

Table 6

Contact farmers according to land-holding

0-1 hectare	1
1-2 hectare	17
2 and above hectare	<u>13</u>
Total	<u>31</u>

That is to say, 28.18% of those interviewed were contact farmers. This was disproportionate but could not be avoided because, as I have explained in the section on problems encountered in the field, I had to include them in order to get the cooperation of the VEWs. In other words, this was partly a structural problem, and a risk one had to take.

In the course of conversations with the 62 respondents who belonged, according to official statistics, to the 0-1 category, I

found that 43 of them owned land below an acre. In other words 69% or nearly 3/4 of the respondents who were officially in the 0-1 hectare category owned far less land than one would expect on the basis of official figures. In fact, there is good reason to assume from the survey too that a large percentage of those officially lumped together in the 0-1 hectare category have land holdings which are miniscule. From the statistics that emerged from interviews, the following landholding categories seemed to be closer to the actual situation with regard to the distribution of land.

Table 7
Landholding Pattern

<u>Owner Category</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Landless	4	6.5
10 cents-80 cents	43	69.4
81 cents-1.40 acres	6	9.7
1.41 acres - 1.99 acres	5	8.1
2 and above acres	<u>4</u>	6.5
	<u>62</u>	

Of the 35 respondents in the 1-2 hectare category, 23 owned between 1 and 1.5 hectares, while 12 belonged to the 1.6-2 hectare group; the variations in the 2 and above category were even more striking. Out of the 13 belonging to the 2 and above category, 5 owned between 6 and 7 acres (2.3-3 hectare) and 8 owned between 10 to 20 acres (4-8 hectare). A number of the farmers both in the 1-2 and 2 and above category owned small estates of eucalyptus or tea. In other words, the farmers in the 2 and above category were involved in a dual economy - plantation and horticulture.

In the study, I have given a central place for land ownership because it is the most important means of production in rural India. Landholding pattern in correlation with indicators of socio-economic status can give a fairly valid picture of the class structure in these villages. While a large percentage of the sample, 96.4, owned land of some sort, there were considerable differences in productive capacity between holdings. For instance, those in the 0-1 hectare category, especially those in the 10-80 cent group, and also some in the .81-1.40 and 1.41-1.99 groups, had to supplement their income through doing additional work on bigger farms that

belonged to relatives, friends or neighbours. In other words, during a part of the year, in order to survive they had to work on land that did not belong to them. And, unlike the children in the families belonging to the 2 and above category, children in the 0-1 category were also employed in productive activities like looking after cattle or collecting firewood.

In the 0-1 category 12 were also tenant farmers; they had taken out land on lease for which they paid at the rate of Rs.2000 per acre. This was the case also with 22 of the farmers in the 1-2 hectare category. In other words 31% of the sample or 34 farmers were involved in tenancy-related work.

While land was an economic asset, the ability to make it productive was crucially linked to the farmer's material and financial resources, his access to credit, seeds, information, pesticides, fertilisers and irrigation facilities. The larger the holding, the more varied was the crop. For example, those in the 2 and above category had in addition to potato, which was the main crop, land set aside for the cultivation of cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, spring onions, etc. But the majority of farmers in the 0-1 category did not have the means to diversify their output. Although a few of them did cultivate cabbage, its production was entirely dependent on one's relationship with the VEW who had almost total control of the supply of cabbage seed vouchers, and the seed was perennially in short supply. One could buy it in the open market, but its quality was unreliable. A number of farmers I interviewed told me how reliance on seed bought in the open market had led to almost total loss of the crop.

Access to seed, therefore, was crucial. On three occasions I observed the distribution of seed. While contact farmers were personally handed over the seed packets, the non-contact farmers had to congregate at a particular place at an appointed time, and while some got the voucher to collect the seed at the horticultural department, a number of others were not given the vouchers.⁽²⁾

Although fertilisers and pesticides could be bought in the open market, the village co-operatives had adequate supplies. But

2. While cabbage and carrot seeds could not be produced in the Nilgiris, because of unsuitable weather conditions, seeds for most other vegetables were produced at the state seed farms belonging to the Horticultural Department. The wealthier farmers had the resources to produce their own seeds. These farmers had a distinct advantage over smaller farmers because they had ready stocks of seed.

again, there were anomalies in the process of "distribution". According to some farmers belonging to the 0-1 category, frequently artificial shortages were created by those in charge of the co-operatives. This was invariably followed by a rise in price, and small farmers could not afford to buy the fertilisers. In all the 13 villages that I visited, contact farmers were in charge of the co-operatives and supply stores, and most of them belonged to the 2 and above category.

R from Kothumadi, a farmer who had 16 acres of irrigated land and also a small plantation of eucalyptus trees, was a typical example. As a leading farmer in the village, he had become the head of the co-operatives. N at Chinna Coonoor, was a similar case. Owning more than 12 acres of prime land, he was also in charge of the local co-operative.⁽³⁾ Some of the farmers belonging to the 0-1 category told me that because of his position in the village they could not easily approach him. Many felt it was pointless going to co-operatives because they just could not afford to embark on scientific farming due to the prohibitive cost and the smallness of the holdings. The horticultural department and state agricultural department were committed to advance scientific farming, but it was clear from my observation that only the richer farmers could afford to try out the new methods. Many of the small farmers were excluded from the benefits of scientific farming. A scheme basically meant for the poor farmers has ended up by benefiting the rich.

Again, with respect to the marketing of the produce, farmers in the 1-2 and 2 and above categories have a distinct advantage over smaller farmers. Those in the 0-1 category could sell only a very small part of their produce. Their production was subsistence-oriented. Those in the 1-2 and 2 and above categories produced for the market. A large part of the produce, apart from potatoes which could be stored, consisted of perishable vegetables like cabbage and cauliflower. Those with the right connections, transport, and influence in the market had an advantage over others. Similarly those who had adequate storage facilities could sell their

3. A few of those in influential positions were also leaders in the local political hierarchy. While two of them were supporters of the ruling AIDMK, one was the leader of the opposing faction, the DMK. Although there was no direct evidence of their using their power to political and economic advantage, it is normally the case and has been well documented in the studies of Djurfeld and Lindberg (1975), Menscher (1978), Thorner (1964).

produce later, when vegetables were in short supply and fetched higher prices in the market. Out of 48 respondents who belonged to the 1-2 and 2 and above categories, 12 had transport facilities.

Table 8

	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2 & above</u>
Ownership of transport	4	8
Ownership of storage facility	17	13
Connections in the market	6	9

Fifteen farmers had connections in the market, which included acquaintance with influential people. The big markets were in Ooty and in Mettupalayam, a town situated at the foot of the Nilgiris. These markets are linked to both district and national markets. According to a few of the VEWs and some of the farmers, the market in Mettupalayam is dominated by 3 or 4 people who dictate prices of the produce.

While the majority of the farmers in the 1-2 and 2 & above categories had access to finance, or had no pressing financial need, a number of those in the 0-1 category, because of a lack of collateral security, had to turn to money-lenders for loans. Out of the 62 respondents in the 0-1 category, 54 or 87% were indebted to money-lenders, many of whom were themselves farmers in the 2 & above category. Although there is no evidence that the big farmers, money-lenders and merchants were together in a conspiracy of exploitation, it was clear that they all belonged to a better socio-economic background. In fact, there was none from the 0-1 hectare category involved either with marketing or in money-lending activities.

In terms of the ownership of assets, the results of the study were similar to the results of my survey. Ownership of assets cut across caste boundaries but the majority of those owning assets belonged to the 1-2 hectare and 2 & above hectare categories.

Information Flow - the Field Situation

On a normal working day, VEWs tended to concentrate on passing on information, mostly to contact farmers. In some villages, the contact point was the contact farmer's house and many non-contact farmers, because of their lower status, could not meet the

VEW at such points. On a normal day the VEW would visit four to five contact farmers. Many non-contact farmers had hardly met the VEW who was in charge of their village. The same went for the HO. Every HO was in charge of 8 VEWs and the HO's job was to oversee the activities of the VEWs and check their work in the field. He was also supposed to meet individual farmers. But during my field study only on two occasions did I actually meet HOs in the field. It can be argued that the VEW's jurisdiction is too extensive to be covered in a fortnight, but the fact remains that he does not make a serious attempt to meet non-contact farmers in his area. His job has become that of a mediator between the organisation and contact farmers.

During training camps VEWs were seen to make use of audio-visual equipment, but they are not allowed to take such equipment to the field. VEWs are meant to conduct demonstration camps, but none of the farmers could remember attending one. They had seen demonstrations conducted by HOs, and many of them were of the opinion that such demonstrations only helped the better-off farmer because more often than not the emphasis was on scientific cultivation and on the provision of inputs which the ordinary farmer could ill afford. While a majority of the contact farmers felt that the VEW was a reliable source of primary information, non-contact farmers felt that they received information on new practices from neighbours, from friends and relatives, from posters, and only secondarily from VEWs. While many of the contact farmers had been persuaded to change their traditional ways of cultivation through the efforts of the VEW (including changing methods of sowing, tilling, use of fertilisers and pesticides, cropping patterns and soil control), non-contact farmers continued with practices commensurate with their resources. Some of the non-contact farmers had heard of higher yields obtained by contact farmers, and had decided to use scientific ways of cultivation, but in most cases they could not afford to persist, and so their yields were not particularly good. It was evident that the VEWs laid great emphasis on inorganic inputs. HYV seeds need such inputs to survive, but large quantities of such chemicals are not good for the soil in the long run. The use of organic fertilisers was not stressed by the VEWs.

In the field situation, the flow of information, to a large extent, was to only one segment of the population. Even when the majority of the farmers got information, few could put it to

practice because of the lack of resources. This was also the case with information received through the radio. Most of the farmers who owned radio sets used them primarily for entertainment and only secondarily for horticultural information.

Kailasam, the deputy director, and Lingam, an SMS, had assured me that radio programmes on horticultural issues were helpful to farmers who were members of radio rural forums, but none of the farmers I had talked with belonged to such forums. Radio rural forums, as far as I could make out, were not as popular in the Nilgiris as officials at the horticultural department made them out to be. There were people who listened to farm broadcasts, and some of them complained that these were too technical, and difficult to understand. Another common complaint was that those programmes which the VEWs encouraged people to listen to were all about the use of often expensive inputs.

Although Kailasam had stressed communications "mix" as an important part of the T&V strategy of extension, there was little evidence of it in the field. As I have mentioned earlier, audio-visuals are rarely used in the field and films are even rarer. I came across one farmer in the 2 and above range who had seen a film in 1980, and that was on paddy cultivation! Films such as these are produced by the Documentary Division, and then circulated through all government extension departments, regardless of whether their content is relevant to the particular area.

What was quite evident in the field was that VEWs concentrated on providing information that was only pertinent to direct horticultural activities. But it is important to note that this narrow concern does not take into account the need for providing information on the total milieu of horticultural development, including the larger economic and environmental contexts. In previous extension systems, the VEW had a multi-purpose role, and in some instances such a role was more helpful to the average illiterate farmer. For example, the VEW used to help farmers with filling up bank loan application forms. Such services are no longer provided by VEWs, and nobody else has taken over the responsibility for giving basic information or rendering basic help. Many of the farmers I met were ignorant of the processes involved in getting loans.

With the stress on "targets" and "production", not much emphasis is given to promoting ecologically sound methods of

cultivation. The horticultural department encourages the sinking of tube-wells, often indiscriminately, usually in or near the fields of rich farmers, and the wells have resulted in a drastic lowering of the water-table in certain parts of the Nilgiris. Over the last few years there have been frequent instances of water shortages in the Nilgiris and resulting crop losses. Information on conservation of water resources is not disseminated by the VEWs.

The major problems in the field are not related to a lack of information but to structural factors. And like all other extension systems that have been tried before, the T&V system also does not recognise the importance of structural factors in rural development. The translation of information into productivity is itself dependent on a host of other factors including timely access to resources, both financial and material, marketing facilities, storage facilities, irrigation facilities, etc. It is to this structural problem that we turn in the following section

Structural Determinants in the Translation of Information into Production

The single overwhelming weakness of the T&V system is that it has been foisted on an existing structure characterised by unchanging institutions. There is no denying the fact that the T&V system has introduced new ways of doing things; new posts have been created like that of the SMS, new systems of accountability have been organised, the VEW's role has become "professionalised". But the philosophy of the T&V system is essentially an "incremental" one, and development is conceived as a gradual process with some benefiting immediately, and most benefiting eventually. The existing inequality of rural structures is not challenged in any radical way. Only the big farmers can make use of the technology and the new ideas. In theory innovative projects are for all people, but in practice only the well-to-do reap their benefits. There is a tacit assumption that in order to get increased yields and better productivity, it is necessary for the T&V system with its scientific orientation and the well-off farmer to work together. The context of horticultural production is not seen as an obstacle to the development of the majority of farmers. The marketing system and the institutions of credit continue to function as before, a monopoly of individual traders and people with political influence. Caste and

class factors come into play and many farmers are denied access to credit and non-financial resources.

In other words, the T&V system accepts the inequalities of society as necessary evils. It does not, indeed cannot, address structural issues. Given this situation, communication can only reinforce existing inequalities. As I have shown earlier, it is harnessed to narrow purposes and limited aims, aims that are in effect "dismembered" from the total communication needs of the horticultural situation. The T&V system is based on the assumption that poverty is caused by low productivity and that higher levels of productivity will lead to a more egalitarian situation. But this is not borne out in practice, and "high-tech" agricultural revolutions like the Green Revolution, as has been well documented by Griffin (1975), Francine (1971), Menscher (1978) and others, has merely widened the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

The government is aware of the problems that selective development presents and it has initiated projects aimed at the development of more vulnerable groups such as the small farmers, landless labourers and the tribals. But at the same time it has increased aid to high-tech agricultural projects aimed at the more wealthy farmers. The projects aimed at the more vulnerable sections of society are often co-opted by members of the local administration who are in charge of overseeing them, or have become defunct due to mismanagement and financial troubles. Projects like the T&V system, with their elitist bias, seem to be rapidly becoming the extension model in most states in India (see Thorner (1964), Francine (1977), etc. in bibliography).

Political considerations are the chief driving force behind short-term projects aimed at the lower income groups. As Stryker observes, political considerations emanating from the dominant development philosophy of the West are an important part of the World Bank's support of the T&V system in the third world:

The Bank can be viewed as a vanguard for the latest phase of capitalist expansion, in which the resource-rich Third-World is fully incorporated into the capitalist economy... Indeed the major purpose of deepening extension work, in the eyes of Bank officials is to "demonstrate to farmers the economic benefit of improved technology" which quickly generates demand for a greater variety of increasingly sophisticated production inputs and services (1979, p.330).

Structural inequalities are a primary constraint to development, and information is not in any way the chief determinant of social change. As Shetty (1968, EPW, Aug. 17) found out in his study of "leaders and laggards", lack of innovation was caused by lack of resources and inequalities in assets.

Table 9
Characteristics of Innovators, Imitators and Non-Adopters
in South India, 1965

	<u>Innovators</u>	<u>Imitators</u>	<u>Non-Adopters</u>
Sample number	24	172	69
Assets per capita (rupees)	22,535	4,326	2,976
Area cultivated	8.0	3.3	2.5
Per cent of cultivated area that is rented	26.4	54.7	79.8
Education of farmers (year)	9	4	2
Extension contact (score)	6.4	3.1	2.0

Source: Shetty, op. cit.

Survey

The survey that I conducted in the Nilgiris was part of the overall observation study. Using the method of "opportunistic sampling", the survey was conducted among 114 literate farmers belonging to 7 villages situated in and around Ooty taluk. I chose to survey literate members of the population because I hoped to gather qualitatively better data from them. The questionnaire (see Appendix III) included questions on the socio-economic context of horticultural production and on individual perceptions and experience of the communication and development situation. In many respects, the questions in the questionnaire were identical with the questions asked in the unstructured interviews that I conducted separately among 110 respondents from 13 villages in Ooty taluk.

As it turned out, the quality of information I got from the survey was not in any way better than what I got from the largely illiterate people whom I had interviewed. The term "literate" in India denotes functional literacy (the ability to sign one's name);

covered by the term are people who have a university education and people with a background of rudimentary schooling. Out of the sample of 114, 80 (70%) had had very little education. The others covered a wide range of educational backgrounds.

Problems in the field - the social context of the survey and researcher bias

Conducting a survey all by oneself is normally a difficult exercise. It is even more so in a developing country like India where social and cultural factors impinge on the process. The operationalisation of any survey is affected both by the bias that rises from its particular social context and by researcher bias or the subjective bias of the researcher. Researcher bias was a constant factor in all stages of the survey. The choosing of the site, time, respondents, the wording of the questionnaire and the nature of the respondent-researcher relationship were all influenced in one way or another by the subjective bias of the researcher. Given the fact that I was interested only in particular aspects of the social situation of the farmers, and given the time constraints, I did not have the opportunity to widen the scope of the questionnaire to include questions on the village ethnographic situation, the household economy and its relationship to the village and district economy, or the political situation.

One of the problems in the field that constantly challenged the validity of the data was the fact that it was difficult to distinguish between those who had opinions of their own and those who merely voiced the opinions of the elders or the caste groups, or simply voiced the dominant worldview of the village. Added to this, both my presence and that of the VEWs would have played a role in influencing the nature of the response. The contact farmers, for example, were for the most part uncritical of the enterprise of extension and of the role of the VEW. This was perhaps because they were the main beneficiaries. On the other hand, except for a handful of farmers who owned less than a hectare of land, the majority were critical of both the nature of extension services and the role of the VEW in it. These small farmers had experienced no tangible benefits from the T&V programme and they had no qualms about criticising the system. A few farmers who were personally known to the VEWs were also uncritical of the nature of the services provided under the T&V system.

In a male-dominated society and culture, where women do not as a rule converse with strangers, it was impossible to get opinions from women members of the family. This was unfortunate because, as in many traditional societies, the women in a typical Badaga village are involved with both household work and work on the land. In fact, it was the women and not the men who did a large part of the work in the fields. The one woman I managed to talk to happened to be a Muslim. The lack of women respondents is a serious drawback in the survey.

Inevitably my sample includes a sizeable representation of contact farmers, disproportionate to their actual number. This too could not be avoided because I had to get the co-operation of both the VEW and the contact farmer in order to carry out my research. Nevertheless, more than two-thirds of the sample are non-contact farmers. It was imperative that I first met the important contact farmer, after which I was free to see other farmers.

The sample was drawn primarily from the information provided in the handbooks of the VEWs. It was based on a number of criteria, including landholding, caste grouping and on whether they belonged to the categories of contact/non-contact farmers. As can be gathered from Table 10, the survey inevitably sample includes a number of people from the Badaga community primarily. Although there were a few villages in the area with predominantly Harijan or tribal populations, these were exceptions to the general rule. I used landholding as a central basis for the composition of my sample frame because in rural South Asia it is the most important indicator of socio-economic status. Landholding figures in conjunction with data on socio-economic assets are valuable indicators of the class structure of these villages.

Table 10
Sample Survey: Composition

<u>Caste/Religion</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>% of total sample</u>
Badaga	75	69.9
Harijan	21	18.4
Gounder	11	9.6
Kota	4	3.5
Brahmin	1	0.9
Christian	1	0.9
Muslim	<u>1</u>	0.9
Total	<u>114</u>	

Table 11
Sample Survey - Composition - Contact/non-contact farmers

Contact farmers	35 (30.7%)
Non-contact farmers	<u>79</u> (69.3%)
Total	<u>114</u>

Table 12
Sample as percentage of total population including
contact and non-contact farmers

Total population in 7 villages	4324
Sample size as percentage	2.6 (114)
Total number of contact farmers in 7 villages	70
Sample size as percentage	50 (35)
Total number of non-contact farmers in 7 villages	913
Sampe size as percentage	8.7 (114)

NB: Statistics on total population taken from VEW Hand Book.

Table 13 - Socio-Economic Status of those Surveyed

Community/Caste		<u>BADAGA (a)</u>			
		<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&A</u>	<u>Total</u>
Land Ownership in Hectares					
Ownership of 2-Storied House		-	5	8	13
" " 1- " "		7	15	-	22
Non-Ownership		39	1	-	40
Connections with the Market/		-	4E, 2T	1M+E	4E, 1M+E
Ownership of Business/Plantations			2E+T	4T, 3E+T	6T, 5E+T
" " Farm Animals		17	16	8	41
" " Irrigation Pumpsets		-	5	7	12
" " Farm Vehicles		-	2	8	10
" " Storage Facilities		2	10	8	20
" " Tractors/Seed Machines		-	-	3	3
Access to Credit Facilities		10	22	8	40
" " Agri. Technology		4	14	8	26
" " Irrigation Facilities		4	22	8	34
Ownership of Radio/Cassette		12R	17R	2R	31R
			5R+C	6R+C	11R+C
Subscription to Newspapers/ Magazines		-	7	5	12

Note: E=Eucalyptus, T=Tea, B=Business, M=Market Connections, R=Radio, R+C=Radio-cassette players

Community/Caste		<u>HARIJAN (b)</u>			
		<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&A</u>	<u>Total</u>
Land Ownership in Hectares					
Ownership of 2-Storied House		-	1	1	2
" " 1- " "		4	2	1	7
Non-Ownership		12	-	-	12
Connections with the Market/		-	-	1T	1T
Ownership of Business/Plantations					
" " Farm Animals		10	3	2	15
" " Irrigation Pumpsets		-	1	2	3
" " Farm Vehicles		-	-	-	-
" " Storage Facilities		-	2	2	4
" " Tractors/Seed Machines		-	-	-	-
Access to Credit Facilities		7	3	2	12
" " Agri. Technology		-	1	2	3
" " Irrigation Facilities		4	3	2	9
Ownership of Radio/Cassette		9R	3R	1R, 1R+C	13R, 1R+C
Subscription to Newspapers/ Magazines		-	-	1	1

Community/Caste

GOUNDER (c)

	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&A</u>	<u>Total</u>
Land Ownership in Hectares				
Ownership of 2-Storied House	-	2	4	6
" " 1- " "	1	2	1	4
Non-Ownership	1	-	-	1
Connection with the Market/	-	1M, 2T	1M+T	1M, 2T, 1M+E
Ownership of Business/				
Plantations		1T+E	2T+E	3T+E
" " Farm Animals	2	5	4	11
" " Irrigation Pumpsets	-	2	4	6
" " Farm Vehicles	-	-	3	3
" " Storage Facilities	-	3	4	7
" " Tractors/Seed				
Machines	-	-	3	3
Access to Credit Facilities	1	5	4	10
" " Agri. Technology	-	4	4	8
" " Irrigation Facilities	1	4	4	9
Ownership of Radio/Cassette	2R	2R, 2R+C	4R+C	4R, 6R+C
Subscription to Newspapers/				
Magazines	-	1	2	3

Community/Caste

KOTA (d)

	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&A</u>	<u>Total</u>
Land Ownership in Hectares				
Ownership of 2-Storied House	-	-	-	-
" " 1- " "	2	-	-	2
Non-Ownership	2	-	-	2
Connections with the Market/	-	-	-	-
Ownership of Business/Plantations				
" " Farm Animals	3	-	-	3
" " Irrigation Pumpsets	-	-	-	-
" " Farm Vehicles	-	-	-	-
" " Storage Facilities	-	-	-	-
" " Tractors/Seed				
Machines	-	-	-	-
Access to Credit Facilities	2	-	-	2
" " Agri. Technology	1	-	-	1
" " Irrigation Facilities	1	-	-	1
Ownership of Radio/Cassette	3R	-	-	3R
Subscription to Newspapers/Mgs.	-	-	-	-

Community/Caste

MUSLIM (e)

	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&A</u>	<u>Total</u>
Land Ownership in Hectares				
Ownership of 2-Storied House	-	-	-	-
" " 1- " "	1	-	-	1
Non-Ownership	-	-	-	-
Connections with the Market/	1B	-	-	1B
Ownership of Business/Plantations				
" " Farm Animals	1	-	-	1
" " Irrigation Pumpsets	-	-	-	-
" " Farm Vehicles	-	-	-	-
" " Storage Facilities	-	-	-	-
" " Tractors/Seed				
Machines	-	-	-	-
Access to Credit Facilities	1	-	-	1
" " Agri. Technology	-	-	-	-
" " Irrigation Facilities	1	-	-	1
Ownership of Radio/Cassette	1R	-	-	1R
Subscription to Newspapers/				
Magazines	-	-	-	-

Community/Caste

BRAHMIN (f)

	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&A</u>	<u>Total</u>
Land Ownership in Hectares				
Ownership of 2-Storied House	-	-	1	1
" " 1- " "	-	-	-	-
Non-Ownership	-	-	-	-
Connections with the Market/				
Ownership of Business/Plantations	-	-	1E+T	1E+T
" " Farm Animals	-	-	1	1
" " Irrigation Pumpsets	-	-	1	1
" " Farm Vehicles	-	-	1	1
" " Storage Facilities	-	-	1	1
" " Tractors/Seed				
Machines	-	-	-	-
Access to Credit Facilities	-	-	1	1
" " Agri. Technology	-	-	1	1
" " Irrigation Facilities	-	-	1	1
Ownership of Radio/Cassette	-	-	1R+C	1R+C
Subscription to Newspapers/				
Magazines	-	-	1	1

Community/Caste

CHRISTIAN (g)

	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&A</u>	<u>Total</u>
Land Ownership in Hectares				
Ownership of 2-Storied House	-	-	-	-
" " 1 " "	1	-	-	1
Non-Ownership	-	-	-	-
Connections with the Market/				
Ownership of Business/Plantations	-	-	-	-
" " Farm Animals	1	-	-	1
" " Irrigation Pumpsets	-	-	-	-
" " Farm Vehicles	-	-	-	-
" " Storage Facilities	-	-	-	-
" " Tractors/Seed Machines	-	-	-	-
Access to Credit Facilities	1	-	-	1
" " Agri.Technology	-	-	-	-
" " Irrigation Facilities	1	-	-	1
Ownership of Radio/Cassette	1R	-	-	1R
Subscription to Newspapers/ Magazines	-	-	-	-

TOTAL (h)

	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&A</u>	<u>Total</u>
Land Ownership in Hectares				
Ownership of 2-Storied House	-	8	14	22
" " 1 " "	16	20	1	27
Non-Ownership	54	1	-	55
Connections with the Market/	1B	4E,4T	1M+E, 1M+T	1B,4E,9T
Ownership of Business/Plantations		3E+T	6E+T,5T 1M	9E+T,1M+E, 1M+T
" " Farm Animals	34	24	15	73
" " Irrigation Pumpsets	-	8	14	22
" " Farm Vehicles	-	2	12	14
" " Storage Facilities	2	15	15	32
" " Tractors/Seed Machines	-	-	6	6
Access to Credit Facilities	22	29	15	66
" " Agri. Technology	5	19	15	39
" " Irrigation Facilities	12	29	15	56
Ownership of Radio/Cassette	2R	22R,7R+C	3R,12R+C	53R,19R+C
Subscription to Newspapers/ Magazines	-	8	9	17

Results of the Survey

The questionnaire was divided into five sections. Section I was a general one. It included questions on ownership of land, other socio-economic assets and communication in general. Section II included questions regarding the consequences/non-consequences of information flow and on the factors that limit the translation of information into practice. Section III was mainly on the usefulness of farm broadcasts. Section IV was on the communication capability of extension workers and audience judgment of his work. Section V was again a general section on communication - including the impact of other techniques of information transfer like film, audio-visuals, etc.

Despite the limitations of the survey, one of the patterns that emerged was in respect of the correlation between socio-economic status (seen in terms of land ownership and other assets) and the ability to translate information into productive practice. Table 14 gives a picture of the landholding patterns among those surveyed.

Table 14
Landholding pattern of those surveyed

	(Hectares) <u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2 & above</u>
Badaga	46	22	8
Harijan	16	3	2
Gounder	2	5	4
Kota	4	-	-
Brahmin	-	-	1
Christian	1	-	-
Muslim	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total	<u>70</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>15</u>

Out of the 70 surveyed who belonged to the 0-1 hectare category, in reality 54 had only between 20-60 cents, less than an acre, whereas a number of those in the 1-2 hectare and 2 and above categories owned land far in excess of what was officially shown in the records of the VEW. As Table 15 shows, all the contact farmers belonged to the 1-2 and 2 and above categories. All the 15 farmers in the 2 and above category were contact farmers, as were 20 of the 29 in the 1-2 hectare category.

Table 15
Composition of contact farmers

1-2 hectares	20
2 & above	<u>15</u>
Total	<u>35</u>

There was no contact farmer among the 70 respondents in the 0-1 category, which seemed to indicate a clear bias in favour of recruiting contact farmers from the socio-economically better-off sections of society. The statistics show that the official version regarding the recruitment of contact farmers does not necessarily hold true. This tendency to recruit socio-economically better-off farmers as contact farmers is also indicated by the fact that, out of the 30 contact farmers that I separately interviewed, none belonged to the 0-1 hectare category.

In predominantly rural areas, as in the Nilgiris, land is the primary economic asset and those with substantial landholdings also tend to be socio-economically better off than those with small holdings. Table 13 shows that those in the 1-2 hectare and 2 and above categories clearly have more in terms of economic assets than those in the 0-1 hectare category. It may thus be assumed that there is a class structure that cuts across the caste structure. Plantations are not included in calculations of individual holdings, and there is no effective way of assessing the extent of such holdings. A number of farmers in the 2 and above category had land exceeding 30 acres (13.6 hectares). Tea prices were extremely high in 1984 and many farmers in the 1-2 and 2 & above categories who owned small tea plantations had reaped the benefits of a good year. Both tea and eucalyptus are profitable enterprises. As Table 13 shows many of these rich farmers also owned agricultural technology like tractors, and irrigation equipment like water pumps. Many of them had got loans for pump-sets from the co-operatives. Some of the farmers in the 0-1 and the 1-2 hectare categories mentioned in their answers to the questionnaire that the lack of irrigation and the difficulty of getting loans were two major factors that affected production in direct ways. A number of the respondents, especially those belonging

to the 0-1 hectare category, were critical of the bank loan policy with regard to pump-sets. R and S in Adaisholai and G and R in Kapuchi and a number of others were critical of the fact that banks gave loans only to those who could produce substantial security.

In terms of the ownership of media, out of the 114 respondents, 53 owned radio sets, and 19 respondents mainly belonging to the 2 and above category owned radio cum cassette recorders. These last are a status symbol and their ubiquitousness is a sign of the commercial revolution in India. It also made clear that those who could afford them belonged to the middle or upper classes. Given the fact that only 6 of the respondents had higher education, it was somewhat surprising to find that 17 respondents claimed to subscribe to either a magazine or a newspaper - or both. While two of the 17 subscribed to Tamil news magazines, 7 subscribed to Tamil light magazines. Table 16 gives a breakdown of the magazines/ newspapers subscribed to by the 17.

Table 16

Magazine/Newspaper subscription breakdown

Daily Thanti (newspaper)	7
Kumudam (light magazine)	7
Dina Mani (newspaper)	6

On the existing information situation, the survey revealed some interesting variations. To the question regarding the source of agricultural information, the answers varied considerably. As Table 17 shows, the large majority of those in the 0-1 hectare category cited either traditional cumulative knowledge, neighbours, or radio as their most important source of information; while 62 out of the 70 were of this opinion, eight cited the extension agent as their main source of information.⁽⁴⁾ On the other hand, those farmers in the 1-2 and 2 and above categories cited extension workers, contact farmers, radio and neighbours as their major sources of information.

4. The presence of the extension agent might have contributed to the positive answers in favour of the extension agent as the major source of information. Throughout the study I came across only a handful of farmers in the 0-1 category, who were helped in one way or another by the VEW.

Table 17
Source of information - Primary

	<u>0.1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2 & above</u>	<u>Total</u>
VEW	(11.4%) 8	(56.6%) 17	(80%) 12	(32.5%) 37
Traditional handed-				
down knowledge	(61.4%) 43	1	-	(38.6%) 44
Neighbours	10	3	-	(11.2%) 13
Radio	9	6	3	(15.8%) 18
Contact with outsiders	-	-	-	
Contact with farmers		(2.5%) 2		(1.6%) <u>2</u>
				<u>114</u>

As the table shows, 58.6% of those belonging to the 1-2 hectare category and 80% of those belonging to the 2 and above category cited the VEW as the chief source of information. This is perhaps not very surprising because all 29 belonging to both these categories were contact farmers. The remaining six contact farmers, three from the 2 and above category and three from the 1-2 category, included four Harijans, one Brahmin and one Gounder. While there was no evidence, as far as I could see, of discrimination against the Harijans on the part of the VEW, some of the Harijans did mention that the VEWs tended to favour their own caste group, the Badagas, who were in the majority. 61.4% of those belonging to the 0-1 category felt that the whole organisation had not affected them in any way; they had always relied on information that had been traditionally handed down to them. Significantly, only two out of the 79 non-contact farmers cited contact farmers as their primary source of information. This was confirmed during the interviews I conducted. Although contact farmers are officially chosen in terms of their capacity as opinion leaders, they seem to have little actual influence.

On the question about the major hindrance to the translation of information into productive practice there were again significant variations in the responses. As seen in Table 18, those in the 0-1 category cited small landholdings and lack of loans as the primary obstacles. 71% of these belonging to this category gave expensive

input as a secondary obstacle. Interestingly, 79 of the respondents belonging to all three categories cited expensive input as secondary obstacle.

Table 18

Obstacles to the translation of information - Primary & Secondary

	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&above</u>	<u>Total</u>
Expensive inputs	50S	20P 29S	12P	32P 79S
Small landholding	58P 11S	2P 12S	-	60P 13S
Non-availability of fertilisers/pesticides	26S	3P 17S	3P 5S	6P 41S
Non-availability of seeds	20S	4S	-	24S
Marketing structures	11S	-	-	11S
Lack of loans	12P 18S	4P 75S	-	16P 75S
Total sample 114	<u>Note:</u> P primary S secondary			

Section III of the questionnaire was on the farm broadcasts and their impact. I included this section because the staff of the horticultural department had stressed their importance. Out of the 28 respondents belonging to the 0-1 hectare category 27 cited the use of the radio primarily for entertainment purposes. Only 7 respondents, including two from the 1-2 hectare category and five from 2 and above category cited the use of the radio primarily for getting information on farm broadcasts. Significantly, 65 of the 72 who owned radios (90.3%) used radio to get information on the weather. For 51 respondents, i.e. 64.6 of the sample, the radio was primarily an entertainment medium.

Table 19

Use of radio

	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&above</u>	<u>Total</u>
Entertainment	27P	18P	6P	51P
Political information	-	-	2S	2S
General news	-	2P	4P	6P
Farm broadcasts	5S	2P	5P	7P 5S
Weather reports	24S	29S	12S	65S

Total radios: 79

Questions in the next section dealt with the work of extension workers. The results in this section are more difficult to evaluate, because the presence of extension workers could have influenced the nature of responses. Since the system had invested both money and resources into perfecting a system of extension in which the VEW played a crucial role, as mediator between the contact farmers and scientific researchers, I was interested to know the extent to which VEW had directly influenced the adoption of various new farm practices. I was also interested in finding out the importance given by the respondents to the VEWs.

Table 20
Adoption as a result of the VEW

	<u>Hectare 0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&above</u>
Adoption of new farm technology	-	4	7
" Cropping pattern	2	7	11
" Seeds (HYV)	4	12	12
" Fertilisers	6	15	12
" Pesticides	5	14	12
" New methods of sowing	-	4	8
Sample size 37			
Sample breakdown	8	17	12

Note: 37 out of the 114 answered this section. They were asked to respond, where necessary, to more than one instance of adoption directly attributable to the VEW.

As can be gathered from Table 20, those who were directly influenced by VEW came primarily from the 1-2 and 2 and above hectare categories. They were also mostly contact farmers. Interestingly, eight of the nine from the 0-1 hectare category belonged to the Badaga community. For farmers in the 1-2 and 2 and above hectare category, the VEWs seem to have played an important role in their adoption of high-yielding varieties of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides. Table 21 shows the relative importance given to the work of the extension workers by the respondents.

Table 21
Opinion on Extension work

	(Hectare) <u>0-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2&above</u>
Very hepful	3	16	11
Helpful	6	9	4
Not helpful	39	2	-
	48	27	15

It may be noted that 31.4% of those belonging to the 0-1 hectare category did not answer this question. But of those who answered it, 81.3%, answered in the negative.

Section V comprised a set of general questions. It included questions regarding the frequency with which they had seen films and audio-visuals which, according to the officers in the Department, played an important role. As it turned out none of the respondents had seen either the films or the audio-visuals.

The significance of the survey, notwithstanding its obvious limitations, is that it does point to a certain pattern of information dissemination which is itself based on the existing socio-economic structures of the villages, and the findings correlate with some of the findings in the observational study. Official attempts at the dissemination of information seem to focus on contact farmers who belong to the richer groups in society. The inability to translate information into productive practice is primarily due to structural factors like small landholdings and lack of credit facilities. It is not due to the traditional psyche of the farmer. Those who have more resources to begin with have a better chance of translating information into practice than those who do not have such resources.

A note on official statistics

As I have mentioned, some of the information that I used in the construction of the sample was gathered from the data in the handbooks belonging to the VEWs. These statistics were initially helpful, because they did give me a rough estimate of the field situation in terms of demography, the extent of land holdings, etc. But on closer examination the data in these handbooks were found to be incomplete and misleading.

The following is a typical example, and highlights some of the problems that can affect the validity of a sample, especially if it has been constructed solely on the basis of information provided by official statistical handbooks. But more importantly, the inadequacies of official statistics reflect official attitudes on the relevance and importance of such data to the work. Ultimately such data provide the basis for translating organisational imperatives into action, and inadequate data may well impede that process.

The continuing lack of proper official data also indicates the reluctance of officialdom to face up to the reality of inequalities in the field that have come about in many cases through state support.

Table 22
Statistics on Kotiatty

Total population	987
Farm families	205
Labourers	50
SC/ST	-
(a) 0-1 hectare category	130
(b) 1-2 hectare category	60
(c) 2 & above hectare category	15
<u>Total</u>	205
Tenants	7%
Contact farmers	10
Total area	90
Total area cultivated	85

Some of the major problems in this piece of statistical information are related to conceptual inadequacies in the construction of categories. For example, "labourers" as a category is a misleading one because it does not indicate if these are landless people or seasonal labourers. Anyone who labours in the field is entitled to be called a labourer. I also found out that the term refers solely to male labourers and not to female workers. This makes it difficult to understand the relations of production because women labourers do a large part of the work both at home and in the fields. The category below of SC/ST which stands for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (the official terminology that indicates reservation

status) is equally misleading. People in these two categories belong to different ethnic groupings. Yet they are lumped together and thus their respective identities are submerged.

The categories and statistics on land holdings are perhaps the most misleading. Those belonging to the 0-1 hectare category, 63% of the individual landholders, may own anything from 0-2.47 acres (1 hectare = 2.47 acres). Given that the total cultivable area is 85 hectares, it is highly unlikely that the majority in the category will own more than an acre. More significantly, the total holdings of 205 do not seem to correlate with the total cultivated area. If there are 60 individual landholders in the 1-2 hectare category and 15 in the 2 & above category, they should between them account for a minimum of 90 cultivated hectares. But Kotiatty has only a total of 85 cultivated hectares.

Also, the statistics on landholdings say nothing on the quality of holdings. It does not indicate the relative fertility of the land - whether it is suitable for two-crop yields or just one per year or whether the land is "wet" or "dry". A farmer who owns two acres of "wet" land, i.e., land that has a perennial supply of water, is definitely better off than a farmer who owns more land but has no assured source of irrigation. With such inadequate statistics, the official data do not provide a reliable yardstick to measure the reality of the field situation.

The category of tenants is also misleading because it does not indicate the type of tenancies that these 7% belong to. During the interviews, evidence of different types of tenancies emerged. There were those who paid an annual fixed amount of Rs 2000 per hectare to the owner and those who paid in kind, or in cash and kind. I came across two cases where relatives of large farmers were the tenants. The amount they paid was much smaller than what the other tenants paid.

Conclusion

It was clear from my observational study that the obstacles that stood in the way of translating the information provided by the T&V system into farming practice were two-fold. There were factors related to the policy and practice of the Horticultural Department, including the role assigned to the VEW who is the chief link. There were also institutional factors, like the systems of marketing and credit facilities.

It was abundantly clear that there was a built-in bias in favour of bigger farmers. The VEW's work focuses on them, and one got the impression that the VEW had largely abdicated his responsibility for the majority of farmers. But then the VEW himself is considerably marginalised.

Through the years the VEW has become a specialist, with a clear job to do, accountable to his HO. But he still occupies the lowest rung in the department's hierarchical ladder. In theory, after 15 years of service he can become an HO, but that post is now more or less the monopoly of agriculture graduates. The VEWs stagnate; they cannot hope for promotion or recognition and they have become apathetic. Most of them have no understanding of the larger issues and goals of development. Without motivation and commitment, the VEW seems merely to acquiesce in the system.

In the field the VEW is to mediate information. He has no authority to initiate methods of extension work, and he must refer every problem to the HO or the SMS. Often the HO is much younger than him, a fresh graduate from the university. His own experience, the VEW feels, is undervalued. The job is secure but VEWs can be transferred within the district, which will mean uprooting the family and starting all over again. Nilgiris is very hilly and the work is strenuous, and the daily routine is hard. The VEW is not entitled to a vehicle or even a loan to buy one, unlike the HO who, though he visits the field only rarely, can avail himself of loan facilities to buy a motor cycle. In the circumstances the VEWs make friends with the richer farmers who can help them and their families in many ways.

The indifference and lack of motivation on the part of the VEW is symptomatic. It reflects the general approach of the horticultural department to extension work. The T&V system is itself indifferent to the real needs of the majority of farmers. It is elitist in orientation, and sees development basically as an incremental process; it aids the few in the hope that eventually the majority will benefit. But that does not happen. Nor does the system encourage integrated development. Its own activities are not co-ordinated with other activities like the provision of inputs in terms of finances, fertilisers and pesticides.

And that brings me to the institutional constraints which were pointed out by a number of people I interviewed.

Most of the farmers in the 0-1 category mentioned credit constraints as the most serious problem they faced, while others

blamed the lack of proper land holdings for their poverty. Most farmers in the 0-1 category were critical of the policy of the agricultural banks. These banks demand surety. For example, the Empalada Co-operative Agricultural Bank gave loans only on the basis of proper surety. In order to get a loan of Rs 2000, the bank demands a surety of Rs 5000 and a number of farmers mortgage their jewellery and land to get the loan. The loans are paid in cash and kind - only Rs 500 is paid in cash, the rest comes in kind and includes nine bags of fertilisers, and pesticides. The loan has to be paid back in six months. In most cases this loan is not sufficient to keep up with the increasing cost of agricultural production. Table 23 gives the breakdown of cost per acre of potato cultivation.

Table 23
Breakdown of costs per acre

Inputs	Quantity	costs/kg	Expenses
		Rs.	Rs.
Seed	1300	X 2	= 2600
Fertilisers	10 bags	X 142	= 1420
Temik (anti-fungus)	8	X 50	= 400
Dithan M40	6 sprays	X 60	= 360
Preparation for cultivation			1100
Hoeing, earthing charges/ first hoeing, second hoeing			<u>500</u>
		Total charges	<u>6380</u>

Given the fact that only Rs 2000 is officially paid as a loan, most farmers in the 0-1 category go to the money-lenders for a loan of Rs 3000-4000. Although the money-lender demands exorbitant interest, between 15-30%, farmers were of the opinion that money-lenders are more dependable and the process of getting a loan less complicated.

The rising cost of production is of course another major problem. The situation is made worse by the fall in the price of outputs. While potatoes can be stored, perishable goods like vegetables have to be sold immediately after the harvest. At such times prices are low. Many farmers complained of poor yields because of irregular Monsoon rains. A large number of farmers, especially in

the 1-2 and 2 and above categories, were planning to diversify into plantations like tea and eucalyptus because these were more profitable and less dependent on climatic vagaries.

Farmers in the 0-1 category are seriously handicapped by the lack of proper marketing facilities. There are two kinds of marketing operations: (i) marketing done through the Nilgiri Co-operative Marketing Society in Ooty and (ii) marketing through private traders. While NCMS handles a large part of the potato produce, most of the poorer farmers deal with private traders. These traders are in many cases also money-lenders and the poor farmer has no option but to trade with them. They fix the prices, in tandem with commission agents, and the prices are not advantageous to the small farmers. Sometimes these traders buy the crop before the actual harvest. They pay low prices for the harvest but charge high fares for transporting the produce to the market in Ooty or in Mettupalayam. It is difficult for the farmers to get a fair price for their produce because a number of them are in debt to these traders.

Apart from credit, farmers in the 0-1 category also cited inadequate and haphazard supply of fertilisers, pesticides and seed as major obstacles. Co-operative societies are supposed to stock and sell fertilisers and other such inputs, but there are times when stock is in short supply. At such times, the price of these inputs goes up. A large number of farmers buy their inputs in the open market because of the scarcity situation at the co-operatives. The failure on the part of VEWs to make adequate and timely supplies of seeds available was pointed out as another perennial problem.

Among other factors is the lack of proper landholding. It was evident that a number of the richer farmers have land in excess of what is allowed under the Tamil Nadu Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling on Land) Act, 1961, which was itself amended in 1971. The ceiling is fifteen acres.

The findings of the survey on the whole reinforced the results of the observational study. There is a clear correlation between information flow and socio-economic status. It was interesting to note that the flow of information was not directed to any specific caste groups; its beneficiaries were people who belonged to more or less the same class. A few Harijans did complain about the pro-Badaga bias of VEWs, but this was not evident in the field.

What was evident was the preferential treatment received by the well-to-do. That people who have start with an advantage is a

truism. But that a communication strategy devised for a development programme like the T&V system would contribute to the perpetuation of that advantage - and, in the process, further impoverish the poor - was not obvious in the same way. As it is, the strategy and the process of communication have resulted in reinforcing existing inequalities.

Perhaps what is called for is a change in developmental priorities - from an emphasis on an intensive and selective strategy to one on an extensive, villaged-based one. The alternative communication experiments to which I turn in the following chapter are meant to serve such an extensive and integrated developmental strategy.

CHAPTER VIII
ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT?
ARP EXPERIENCE

In this chapter I focus on the practice of an alternative strategy of development communication in India. I shall deal with the communication practices, especially the use of the popular theatre, by a social action group in Tamil Nadu.

Any alternative to the official theory and practice of development communication implies a qualitatively different approach to both development and the role of communication within it. An "alternative" implies a difference in ideological basis, in purpose and goals, and in methods of operation. It implies a changed perspective, a different approach to the production, consumption and distribution of communication. It could also imply a change in its forms, in its relationship to the audience and in its patterns of ownership.

My major purpose is to explore the extent to which this alternative strategy of development communication is truly "alternative" and the extent, if any, of the contribution it has made to qualitative changes in the lives of people.

The History, Growth and Present Status of the Popular Theatre
in India

Contemporary forms of popular theatre in India have evolved from, and been influenced by, a variety of sources from within the country and outside it. They have also been influenced by the political protest theatre of the pre- and post-Independence periods and by the writings and practices of Latin American popular theatre practitioners such as Augusto Boal. The writings of Paulo Freire have exercised an indirect influence on their evolution.

The popular theatre has undergone several changes in its ideology and its objectives, in its form and content and in its relationship with the audience. Among its immediate forebears is the political protest theatre in India which can be traced back to the early nineteenth century. As I have pointed out in Chapter 4, during

the colonial period, especially during its later stages, the protest theatre was used both in the north and the south by the Indian National Congress and quite a number of regional parties to mobilise people against British rule and to inculcate nationalistic feelings among the populace. Gradually, as we have seen, it also became a platform for the anti-Brahmin movement both in the West and in the south. Later it grew into a vehicle for the spread of the ideology of regionalism in the south.

Perhaps the first significant political protest play was Dinabandhu Mittral's Nildarpan (1872). The story was based on the exploitation of indigo-workers by British planters. The play was quite successful, and it paved the way for other productions of protest theatre. The colonial government soon realised the enormous potential of the protest theatre for creating unrest and, in order to clamp down on the operation of this medium, passed the Dramatic Performances Act in 1879. The Act made it mandatory for any theatre company or individual to submit the final script to a board of censors before performance. Instead of political themes, the plays for a while emphasized social themes like alcoholism. Before the end of the century, however, the protest theatre once again became political in orientation. Instead of directly criticising British rule, a number of plays made use of mythological stories, and drew attention to the similarities between the colonial regime and its rulers and evil regimes and characters from the Hindu epics. For example, Probhaker Khandilkar's Keechakavadha (1906) was based on a story from the Mahabharata. Keechaka, a powerful general, has designs on Draupadi, the wife of the Five Pandavas, but Bhima, one of the Pandava brothers, kills Keechaka and saves Draupadi. Keechaka stood for Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India, and Bhima represented the Hindu Nationalist leader Lokamanya Tilak.

Bengal was the home of the protest theatre, and it was here that the political protest theatre flourished. Before the 1940s, this theatre was very much an urban medium both in Bengal and elsewhere in India. Its audiences were primarily from the literate middle-classes and upper-classes and its form was predominantly based on dominant Western forms. But there were important exceptions; dramatists like Mukundu Das (Bengal) and Shahir Nahiadekar (Maharashtra) used folk forms such as the Jatra and Tamasha for political purposes and concentrated on a rural rather than an urban audience. The impact was tremendous, and the first

significant political protest theatre movement in India, the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), which was formed in Bengal in 1942, owed a great deal to the pioneering efforts of Das and Nahiwadekar. The IPTA, like many of the other regional theatre groups, had party affiliations. It was formed under the aegis of the Communist Party of India (CPI). The CPI was especially strong in Bengal and, under its influence, political protest was carried out against the excesses of the British rulers, and the local bourgeoisie. Bijon Bhattacharya of the IPTA wrote two plays - Jabanbandu and Nabanna (both produced in 1944) - and both were based on the recent Bengal famine. For the first time the ugly side of capitalist exploitation was exposed and challenged.

Nabanna had a tremendous impact and the CPI's popularity increased among the rural and urban poor. In fact the success of Nabanna gave political protest theatre a new vigour and purpose. Kironmoy Raha wrote:

In content and form, Nabanna blazed the trail of a new theatrical idiom. Gone were the artificial sets, the painted wings and the striving after illusory effects; gone too were the histrionic pyrotechnics of individual brilliance and the familiar forced accommodation of available actors... The play and the production had the germinal ingredient of a new theatre movement. The moment was ripe. Death by starvation on a colossal scale brought about not by the vagaries of nature but by greed, corruption and collapse of moral values was too outrageous an experience not to have generated anger and protest. Nabanna gave articulation to both (1978, p.129).

The IPTA formed theatre groups in other parts of India, in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, states which had strong CPI leanings. Indigenous folk forms were used by the IPTA and adapted to the practice of the political protest theatre. After Independence and with the break-up of the CPI into different factions, the IPTA lost much of its former vigour. The decline of IPTA's popularity was to an extent offset by the formation of the People's Little Theatre in Bengal by Utpal Dutt. His plays such as Angar (Spark) and Teer (Arrow) were dramatisations based on real incidents - like a mining disaster, and the plight of the Marxist-Leninist Naxalites belonging to Naxalbari in West Bengal. His plays appealed to the disaffected in Bengal but did not have a national impact.

During the late forties and fifties, political theatre was also used by regional parties like the Dravida Kazhagam (DK) and its

splinter groups such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu. But their objectives were narrow; although they were militantly anti-caste, they were in other respects reactionary.

The political protest theatre is still an important medium used by the Naxalite movement in many parts of India in their attempts to mobilise the rural and urban working classes against the state. Since the late sixties, revived branches of the IPTA and a number of independent theatre groups, such as the Delhi-based Jan Natya Manch, have taken the theatre to the people.

The political protest theatre has major limitations. As political activists the groups move from area to area, and there is very little follow-up on the performances. The IPTA used to have occasional post-performance discussions. Such one-off performances, with very little audience involvement in the productions, have only a limited impact. At best such performances can make people aware of their rights and expose the machinations of the state and allied institutions, but they do not link the groundswell of "sympathy" with an ongoing process of "struggle". They have made people aware of the importance of class struggle but without providing them with concrete strategies for achieving their aims and objectives. There was a certain built-in impermanence about such political protest theatre and it was this kind of impermanence that the Latin American popular theatre theorist and practitioner Augusto Boal criticised. He provided in its place a more radical, progressive and popular version of people's theatre.

Augusto Boal's praxis of popular theatre grew out of his experiences in organising communities in Peru and Brazil. Like Freire, Boal believed that the oppressed communities could overcome their situation only by becoming conscientised, and through strengthening their various capabilities in order to direct their own development. Oppression has two dimensions; it affects people both physically and mentally. It domesticates them, alienates them from their traditions, and makes them passive by providing them with a hashed version of culture, of which they are a part while remaining in a significant sense outside it. This culture is imposed on them, and in their beliefs and activities they merely reinforce the myths of this culture. In order to free themselves from the shackles of oppression, they must actively evolve a counter-culture within their context of development and, in that process, the people must plan and direct the process of development that they are

involved in. Culture, in other words, is to be used as a weapon to counter the impact and persistence of dominant cultural myths. In this context, the performing arts, like the popular theatre, are to be used in a deliberate and purposeful manner in order to mobilise the oppressed, conscientise them and deepen their understanding of the realities of existence.

Boal's thesis on the theory and practice of the popular theatre is contained in his book Theatre of the Oppressed (Pluto, 1979). In a number of ways, this theatre is different from the political protest theatre. It is participatory, dialogic in method and part of a continuing process of long-term development. Far from a finished product, it is a means towards an end which is long-term, the economic, political, social and cultural liberation of the oppressed.

The importance of the cultural component in any strategy of development has been little emphasised in the strategies of development employed in the Third World, including India. The Indian government's use of the traditional theatre for development, for example, was only to persuade the masses into accepting the populist development activities initiated by the government.

Theorists of the popular theatre like Augusto Boal, Ross Kidd and Badal Sircar give the term "popular" a much wider meaning: they would define it along the lines of Bertolt Brecht in his polemic against Lukacs:

Our concept of what is popular refers to a people who not only play a full part in historical development but actively usurp it, force its pace, determine its direction. We have a people in mind who make history, change the world and themselves. We have in mind a fighting people and therefore an aggressive concept of what is popular... Popular means intelligible to the broad masses, adopting and enriching their forms of expression, assuming their standpoint, conforming and correcting it... relating to traditions and developing them. (Quoted in Mwansa and Kidd, 1985, p.5).¹

1. Quoted from "'We'll turn the whole world bottoms up", a report on the Third World-Canada popular theatre exchange: THUNDER BAY WORKSHOP on community animation theatre (CAT), 19 to 27 May 1985, prepared by Mwansa, D. and Kidd, R. Also quoted in McGrath, J. "A good night out; popular theatre audience, class, form", by Eyre Methuen Ltd., London 1985, p.63.

In a significant sense Boal's poetics went beyond that proposed by Brecht. Brecht popularised the idea of "Verfremdung", alienation, i.e., the act of performers stepping outside their respective roles and the right of the audience to criticise and judge these roles in the process of the production of political theatre. In the Brechtian approach to political theatre, while the audience delegated authority to the actors/actresses to act on his/her behalf, they could reserve their judgement and did not have to agree with what was acted out on stage. During post-performance discussions the two sides presented their views and the performers acted out alternative ways of seeing reality. But the barrier between the audience and the stage still remained. There still remained a clear difference in the audience's relationship to the means of production of the theatre.

In Boal's poetics, this difference between those who act and those who are only spectators, albeit "thinking" spectators, is broken down. The audience do not merely criticise the performance but actually intervene in the process of production. They direct its scope, and its "denouement" is related to the needs of the ongoing struggle in which the people are involved. Popular theatre animateurs merely act as catalysts. They help deprived communities to learn the techniques of the popular theatre so that it becomes a tool in the context of their development. In some ways, the Brechtian theatre is a "finished" theatre. Criticism follows performance. In the popular theatre according to Boal, the "tokenism" of post-performance discussion which is tacked on at the end is replaced by a process of discussion which is interwoven into the very act of production. In other words, the audience is involved at every stage in the production of meaning.

Boal proposed a systematic use of the theatre in the context of cultural struggle. He divided the process of learning popular theatre into three stages. Stage 1 involves the learning of physical exercises in order that people become aware of their bodies and learn to use their bodies to express and reflect their own mental and physical handicaps. In Stage 2 games involving the use of the body predominate and these are meant to heighten one's sense of bodily expression. During the first two stages, mime is the form of discourse. During the third stage, language is combined with bodily expression. It is divided into three parts - (a) Simultaneous

Dramaturgy where the audience demonstrate to the performer what to perform; (b) Image Theatre where the audience insert themselves in the actual production; and (c) Forum Theatre where the audience act as full participants directing the scope of the play, using individual analysis of situations and means of countering them. The learning of popular theatre is linked to non-formal classes where people learn about the realities they are involved in. There is a dialectical relationship between this learning process and the exercise of popular theatre which is linked to a critical understanding of reality.

The use of popular theatre is not the primary determining force in this alternative strategy of development; it is one among a number of methods used to organise and conscientise the oppressed. It has a supportive rather than a central role. It is an organic part of a larger people's movement and it is this larger end that validates the use of popular theatre in people's struggles. It helps deepen the action-reflection process which enables people to overcome their mental and physical dependencies and to form a strong class consciousness in the midst of their struggles.

In the development work of social action groups in India, the popular theatre has been used and adapted in the light of the existing conditions in the country. Since the mid-seventies, popular theatre was also used by individual theatre companies such as Aranyak in Bangladesh and Thedal in southern Tamil Nadu. These theatre groups were involved in making theatre with the people. They are made up of political activists and they organise theatre workshops where people learn to use the methods of popular theatre to heighten their understanding of local and national realities which affect them.

But they suffer from disadvantages similar to those which affected the IPTA. Their workshops are usually short exercises and they are rarely involved in follow-up action. The initial enthusiasm is soon lost, and as a result people are not able to make use of the popular theatre in a self-sustaining organising process. As Ross Kidd notes:

On its own, People's Theatre will never by anything more than an interesting spectacle - a chance to let out grievances and frustrations. It will work as a medium for social transformation only when it is woven into an ongoing process of critical analysis, organisation and struggle (1977, p.7).

In a report published by Proshika Unnayan Kendra, Bangladesh, 1983, popular theatre is defined as follows:

A medium controlled by the people for expressing their ideas, concerns, and analyses (at a time when other forms of expression and media are outside their control).

A means of resisting the ideas propagated by the dominant institutions and media.

A way of recovering, revising, validating and advancing people's own culture and history.

An experience of participation, interaction and self-expression through which people overcome their fears and develop a sense of their own identity and self-confidence.

A people's curriculum, reflecting popular ideas, concerns and aspirations (rather than the externally-imposed text-books of conventional education).

A form of popular education, bringing people together and building a spirit of solidarity.

A codification or objectification of reality for purposes of discussion (a means of mirroring reality in order to stand back and study it critically).

A process of popular education - drama as a tool of analysis, of testing out (through role play) the limits and possibilities for action and unveiling the contradictions and structures underlying everyday reality.²

Association for the Rural Poor (ARP) - A Brief History

Like many of the other established SAGs in India, ARP was formed during the mid-seventies, during the first wave of alternative rural development strategies. It was formed by six Harijan graduates in 1974. In its early days, the organisation was called Action for Cultural and Political Change, but with the declaration of the Emergency (1975) and the government's crackdown on radical groups, it was decided to give it the more innocuous name Rural Community Development Association (RCDA).

2. From Asian Action Newsletter of the Asian Cultural Forum on Development. A Dialogue on Drama, March/April 1977, No. 7. Popular Theatre Dialogue - International Workshop 1983. A Report published by Proshika Unnayan Kendra, Bangladesh.

The impetus for the formation of the RCDA came from some of the trends and aspects of the Indian developmental situation which I have already touched upon in Chapter 5 - the breakdown and bankruptcy of conventional methods of development, the growing incidence of landlessness and unemployment in rural areas, the gradual pauperisation of Harijans and Adivasis and the social and cultural emasculation of the rural poor. The founders of RCDA were influenced by a number of people and philosophies - for example Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, Freire's theory of conscientisation and alternative development, the Latin American theology of liberation, Marxian social analysis and Alinsky's methods of building popular movements. They were convinced that the purpose of development was closely aligned to the liberation of the human being from all his/her captivities. They understood their role not as change agents in the traditional sense, who acted as conduits for information transfer from above. Rather, their role was to facilitate the growth of communities in such a way that they would eventually direct their own course of development. They were to be participatory co-workers in a dialogic framework of development.

The history of the ARP can be divided into three phases: (a) 1974-77, when the focus of its activities was concentrated in 65 villages in Madurantakam taluk belonging to Chinglepet District, Tamil Nadu. (b) 1977-79, when its activities expanded into the neighbouring district of North Arcot, in 45 villages around Polur taluk, and (c) 1980 onwards, when it has been involved in trying to forge both macro- and micro-movements, and expanded its range of activities, widened its organisational base and started work in South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

During the first phase, i.e., 1974-77, the RCDA chiefly concentrated its activities among landless Harijan labourers in Madurantakam taluk and Chittamur in Chinglepet District. Chittamur was chosen as the rural base for RCDA's activities because there was a large population of Harijan labourers in the area. As in most areas where ARP worked, there was extreme disparity in the distribution and ownership of land. There were also a number of cases of caste conflict. The landlords, who were mostly Reddiars, exploited the workers and their families in a number of ways. Many of these large farmers owned up to a thousand acres.

Before moving into the area, the RCDA conducted a socio-economic survey and studied the nature of underdevelopment in

the region. Before moving in, a meeting was called where they stated categorically that they had neither the means nor the desire to conduct programmes of a purely economic nature. They explained their concept of development and what it would entail. A petition inviting the RCDA was drawn up and signed by the people of the village. Only after receiving the petition, the RCDA decided to move in. This policy of letting the villagers decide whether they needed the services of the RCDA has been followed in other places.

In Madurantakam and Chittamur the RCDA was involved in five main activities: (a) non-formal education of Harijan children, (b) issue-oriented literacy classes for adults, (c) cultural action, including the use of the popular theatre and liberation songs, (d) leadership training, and (e) formation and consolidation of a strong people's movement.

There was a large incidence of illiteracy, and literacy work was used as a strategic entry point. But unlike conventional literacy methods, the RCDA used Freirian techniques including the use of keywords. Classes were held in the late evenings and included role-play sessions where people were actively encouraged to express their ideas and develop confidence in themselves. Strong local leaders were picked by the villagers and these people were trained in community organising and in planning and leading workers' struggles. At first the action committees that were picked by the villagers took up small issues that were "winnable". With an increase in their confidence they began to take up more fundamental issues like landlessness, low wages, bonded labour and the exploitation of Harijan women. These issues were systematically studied by the villagers with the help of the RDCA animateurs.

By the time the RCDA moved out of this area in 1977, it had helped create a strong workers' movement that was both self-sufficient and highly successful in its involvement in organised struggle and people's development. The movement was called the Rural Harijan Agricultural Development Association (RHADA). In 1978, among other achievements, the RHADA had organised and won two wage strikes, distributed land among the landless and freed a number of families from bonded labour.

During the second phase, 1977-79, RCDA concentrated its activities in and around Polur taluk and Vandaivasi in North Arcot District. The socio-economic situation here was similar to that in Madurantakam. There was a high percentage of Harijan landless

labourers, and caste conflicts between the higher castes and the Harijans were frequent. The Minimum Wages Act had not been enforced, and men were paid less than Rs 3 per day while women were paid Rs \$.50. The strategy of development pursued was similar to that in the first phase, but there were also new emphases. RCDA decided to involve in it all landless labourers and small farmers regardless of their caste. In order to build class consciousness they had to break down caste barriers among the villagers, especially among those in the lower income bracket. RCDA also formed strong women's groups in these villages. In fact, in this second phase women's groups played an important role in the development strategy. There was a strong emphasis on systematic and regular training for animateurs, local cadres and villagers. The staff of the RCDA had doubled and it was now receiving financial help from foreign aid agencies. During this phase conscientisation programmes were more strongly emphasised, because it was found that many of the villages in Chinglepet District that the RCDA was involved with had reverted to their old unorganised state. Conscientisation programmes were regularly held at the Rural Service Centre that was formed in Kettavarampalayam, North Arcot District.

During the third phase, i.e., 1980 onwards, the RCDA expanded into other regions, including South Arcot, and in the process increased its rural base. The people they worked with included quarry workers, fishermen, salt workers and agricultural labourers. It was during this phase that RCDA decided to decentralise its activities. It was decided to change the name of the organisation - from RCDA to Association for the Rural Poor (ARP). The change in name was partly due to the attention that they were getting from the state. In the late seventies and early eighties many SAGs working in Tamil Nadu were harassed by the government and accused of aligning themselves with the Naxalite movement. Decentralisation was also a tactic to solve the funding problem. EZE and Bread for the World, two western aid-agencies, had provided a large part of RCDA's funds. But with rapid expansion, its financial needs had gone up. Funding agencies could now deal with these groups independently of the parent organisation ARP.

In 1980, the Agricultural Labourers Movement was initiated by the ARP with its headquarters in Vellore, North Arcot District. This movement has increased in strength from 3000 members in 1980 to more than 8000 in 1984-85. This macro-movement was started with the

intention of creating a politically strong workers' movement as an alternative to existing rural-based unions, which had been co-opted by the various political parties.

In 1980, ARP started a movement called the Traditional Fishermen's Movement in South Arcot District. The Society for Rural Education and Development (SRED), a mainly women's movement, was also started in this period. Like the Association for Rural People's Education and Development (ARPED) that was also founded during this phase, the SRED is financially independent. Other movements like the agricultural and fishermen's movements are dependent on ARP for funds because as registered unions they cannot receive funds from abroad. During this phase another rural base was created in Ambakkam in Andhra Pradesh, close to the Tamil Nadu border.

ARP's main administrative office is in Royapuram, Madras, and this is its financial headquarters. Both the centres at Ambakkam and Royapuram are used for training sessions. ARP has also started a women's centre at Chittamur and a ten-bed hospital at Ambakkam. It had been involved in health programmes even before the hospital was opened. Primarily the hospital functions as a sort of front, so that the government can visibly see some tangible development activities. The strength of the staff has dramatically increased, and there are more than sixteen animateurs and over a hundred local animateurs and village level cadres. The animateurs live in the areas where they work. They spend most of their time in the field. Dr Felix Sugirtharaj, the director of ARP, spends more than four days a week in the field visiting the various centres.

Although ARP has become a large organisation, its aims and objectives remain the same. The objectives are as follows:

- To conscientise and organise the rural workers such as agricultural labourers, salt workers, quarry workers, traditional fishermen, and rural artisans for effective participation in the socio-political sphere at both micro- and macro-levels;
- To motivate the oppressed rural poor and liberate them from the clutches of money-lenders, feudal lords, landowners, caste fanatics and pseudo-religious and social forces, and to unite the rural poor into trade unions to oppose structural injustice and regain workers' basic rights;
- To organise study classes, popular theatres, leadership training for the rural proletariat, and to create a class consciousness so as to increase the revolutionary potential for a class struggle;

- To engage in study and research on the different sections of the rural labour all over the country and form a national forum of rural workers. (People's Movements), (ed. Anbarasan R.S., ARP, 1983, p.113).

In the following study ARP's popular theatre strategy will be my major focus of attention. It will be studied from within ARP's larger cultural strategy of liberation.

CASE STUDY 1:

South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, 12-22 August, 1984

Introduction

South Arcot District lies to the immediate south of Chinglepet District which is itself adjacent to Madras. It covers an area of 10,899 square kilometres. The 1971 census placed its total population at 3,617,723. As in most of the other districts in Tamil Nadu, with the exception of the Nilgiris, the economy is predominantly agriculture-based. South Arcot is divided into eight administrative taluks.

This study was conducted in Tindivanam taluk, primarily in a few fishing villages situated near the town of Marakkanam. All the villages studied were situated fairly close to each other on a five kilometre stretch of beach bordering the Bay of Bengal.

The fishing industry in India employs more than seven million people and over seventy per cent of them are traditional, subsistence fishermen. These traditional fishermen contribute more than seventy per cent of the total annual "catch" in the country, although most of the profits are cornered by the big fishermen, the middlemen and the state fishing industry. In Tamil Nadu, traditional fishermen belong primarily to three castes, the Karaiyan, the Paravan and the Pattainavar. In this particular region, the Pattainavars predominated. The villages - Chettynagar, Mudaliarkuppam, Nutchikuppam, Pudukuppam, Koonomedukuppam and Anachikuppam - were divided in their political loyalties. They belonged to three political parties: the two regional parties (the AIDMK and the DMK) and the all-India party Congress-I. There were very few sympathisers for any of the Communist parties. Each of the villages had a strong local organisation with affiliation to the local Panchayat. The tradition of the hereditary village leader had

all but disappeared in all the villages, and it had been replaced by new groups whose status and power lay in their ability to command financial and material resources. These new village leaders had party affiliations and they used their status to mobilise people in their villages. Factional conflict was rife in all six villages.

The class structure is based on the means of production. First came those who owned more than one catamaran (20-30 feet boats), sails and a variety of fishing nets, next those who owned a catamaran and 1-2 nets, and last those who depended solely on their labour power. In five out of six villages there was a mixture of fisherfolk of varying economic status. The exception was Koonomedukuppam which had a predominant number of fishermen who did not own any means of production.

While those in the first category did not take part in the actual fishing operations, those in the second category were fully involved in fishing and also worked part of the year for bigger fishermen. There were a number of absentee owners in the first category and they came from a variety of backgrounds - landlords, those employed in industry, and teachers. Many of them supplemented their income through money-lending activities and a good percentage of those belonging to the second and third categories were indebted in one way or another to these rich fishermen. Loans were advanced for a number of reasons, including social and economic ones. There was also a borrowing in kind - catamarans or nets are loaned out for a fixed amount of part of the catch. Interest was paid on a "varam" basis similar to the type in Kanyakumari District (see Chapter 6). But it was a little different in the sense that while half the catch went to the owner, the rest of the catch was divided according to seniority - the master fisherman took a quarter, and the rest was distributed among the other three or four.

Fishermen in the second and third groups faced a number of problems. Because of their low economic status and their lack of bargaining power, they had to agree on the prices fixed by the middlemen for their catch. Many of the middlemen were themselves employed by the rich fishermen and, since many of the others were indebted to them, they had to comply with the relatively poor offers made by the middlemen. Fish is a perishable commodity, and since they have no infrastructure for freezing their catch they have to sell it within a few hours. Both at the levels of production and at the market, these traditional fishermen are exploited.

The government has been trying to help traditional fishermen ever since the First Five Year Plan, but they have not really benefited from the government schemes. The larger fishing industry, on the other hand, has benefited from loans provided by government banks. Under the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), 1978, the government does make provisions for loans to poor fishermen. But the banks demand surety which the ordinary fishermen cannot afford. So most of these fishermen do not get the loans to which they are entitled by law.

These subsistence fishermen also face problems caused by indiscriminate trawling close to the coastline. Large trawlers, owned by companies and individuals, fish extensively in the coastal waters, and in the process deplete the fish stock that traditionally was the monopoly of these small fishermen. Not infrequently, these trawlers plough through nets laid by traditional fishermen, and they do not pay compensation for the damages caused. Coastal fishing is quite lucrative because most of the commercially viable fish breed in coastal waters, as do prawns and shrimp. Apart from overfishing, the fishing methods used by these trawlers, including purse-seining, destroy the natural breeding grounds of fish and prawns.

ARP is involved in organising the fishermen and increasing their bargaining power not only vis a vis the richer fishermen but also with the government. It also helps them to secure loans from the co-operatives. It is involved with both micro-level development and macro-level organising among these fishermen in South Arcot District.

A Workshop

During a ten-day workshop I attended, the major form of communication used was the popular theatre. Of the four types of popular theatre that ARP used in their programmes, the emphasis here was on the use of the socio-problem-oriented theatre and the political-historical theatre. While the folk-theatre as such did not figure during this programme, both Guna, who was in charge of the socio-problem-oriented theatre, and Jeyraj, the organiser of the political-historical theatre, used the silent theatre and its techniques during performances and at the workshop.

The programme started in the following manner. On the 13th, a "Prachana Yatra" or problem-solving journey was organised by both the teams. The yatra started from the base village, Chettynagar,

which, like the other six villages, was situated on a stretch of beach. During the day-long yatra, all six villages were visited. The purpose of the yatra was twofold: (a) to attract a crowd and make people aware of the theatre group, and to explain its aims and objectives, and (b) to spot talents during the impromptu cultural performances where local people were invited to join in. The yatra started with thirty members among whom were the local animateurs and cadres. At each stop it gathered more people, and there were over a hundred people by the time we reached the last village, Pudukuppam.

At each of the six villages, improvised cultural performances were conducted. These consisted of community singing sessions and speeches by either Jeyraj or Prabhu who was the most senior animateur with the ARP. The speeches dealt with the purpose of the workshops and emphasised that their objective was not to mobilise people for political or party ends, nor to provide entertainment. Their objective was to help form an effective popular theatre group at village level so that the people themselves could use this form of theatre as a tool in their strategy of development. It was also explained in simple and vivid ways that in order to form a strong counter-culture against the dominant culture, it was imperative that they learn techniques to resist the present cultural domination. They hoped that through the experience gained at the cultural workshop, local cadres and local people would be motivated to use the popular theatre both as a means of analysis and as a component of ongoing cultural struggles.

The major accent was on music and song. The songs had a liberatory content, and were revolutionary in nature. Two types of songs were used - the folk variety and songs to the tune of popular film hits. The themes reflected the environment of fishing and the lives of fisherfolk. The hardships of people and their exploitation by both the government and the rich employers were underlined. The songs stressed the need for unity and a strong fishermen's movement as a way of countering the forces of oppression. The audience was taught a few of the songs. After each song, its meaning was explained and the audience was asked if it was relevant to their situation. Responses were slow to come in the beginning, but during the latter half of the programme, more villagers came up with answers. There was a relaxed atmosphere, and individual answers were treated on their own merits. During the cultural performances, the audience was encouraged to sing popular songs they were familiar

with. While a number of people sang film songs, two members of the audience sang liberatory folk songs.

The yatra was an enlightening experience. Both during performances and in casual conversations with the people after the performances, a general idea of the most pressing problems confronting the villagers emerged. It was also possible to gauge the degree of consciousness of the audience.

During the return journey to Chettynagar, a number of folk games were organised by the team. This was again an opportunity for interaction with the local population. Later the same night, there was a general discussion among members of the team on the day's activities. It was decided that on the following day, the teams should explore the core problems in the six villages in greater depth. For instance at Nutchikuppam and at Mudaliarkuppam, the debt problem was acute.

On the 14th morning, the teams conducted a general survey of three villages each. The teams were accompanied by local cadres who introduced the members to the people. The teams went from hut to hut and interviewed a number of people. The presence of two female animateurs was a great help; they could interview women in various households.

During the survey it was found that the debt problem was a major one in most villages. But there were also village-specific problems; in Koonomedukuppam there was a caste rivalry, aggravated by the fact that the local leaders of the two political factions, the DMK and the AIDMK, belonged to different castes and many of them were indebted to these rich men. Although many of the fisherfolk were aware of the problems they faced, a good number of them attributed their condition to fate or destiny. To the many questions posed by the two teams, a variety of answers were given and differing levels of consciousness came to light. The following answers were typical: "Poverty is not caused by politicians or their policies. It is written in our destinies." "The owner might exploit us, but he also provides for us. He is part of fate as much as we are."

Later that evening, the two teams met for an informal discussion on the day's events. A number of villagers sat in during this discussion and at times clarified the teams' understanding of local issues. It was decided that since ARP was a relative newcomer

in the area, more general issues were to be taken up as the themes of the popular theatre performances.

The Time, Place and Environment of Production

Performances usually took place in the village square or near the local temple. In most villages, the performance took place at about 7 p.m. and continued till 10 p.m. At Mudaliarkuppam, the performance started late because the team had to wait till the last rites of a local festival were completed. The performance at Anachikuppam had to be cancelled because of a death in the village. Among the five villages, only one, Chettynagar, had a concrete stage. In other villages a makeshift stage was put up by local cadre people. Behind the makeshift stage a place was reserved for the "Pinpattu", i.e., for the singers and musicians and the actors and actresses. Petromax lamps were provided because electricity failures were common. Loudspeaker systems were provided in two of the villages. The audience sat literally next to the stage, on all three sides. Children sat in the front. Behind them sat the men; the women huddled together at a distance. There were no intervals, except for the short breaks between the performances. The audiences were used to longer performances because the local Therakoothu performances go on till the early hours of the morning.

The Process of Cultural Action

Five days were given to actual production, two days were devoted to training workshops on the techniques and purpose of the popular theatre, and the last day, the 22nd, was devoted to evaluating the total workshop. During the day the members of both teams were involved in structuring their approach in terms of content, characterisation and themes. The two teams rehearsed in separate places in the same village. Practice sessions usually took place in the open under a shady tree. At all times there were onlookers who were frequently asked to join in and comment on the "social reality" presented in the plays. In fact three of the onlookers joined in Jeyraj's group performance and were a part of the team till the very end of the workshop. Practice sessions were a learning experience for the teams because from the fisherfolk they learned the local ways of seeing things and the turns of local humour. In turn some of the onlookers picked up a few of the basic

techniques in acting. Participation was of the very essence of the workshop.

There were a number of differences in the approach of the two teams in terms of the content, styles of acting and the ethos of production. Guna's team had a more professional approach to the popular theatre. The members were well versed in the theory and practice of popular theatre theorists like Boal and Sircar. Guna's team was a full-time theatre team while Jeyraj's team consisted of amateurs who were involved in other developmental activities of the ARP. Guna's team was not strictly a part of the organisation of the ARP; while they contributed, during the workshop, to the overall popular theatre strategy of the ARP, they were actually independent of the ARP financially and otherwise.

During practice sessions it became clear that Guna had a more structured approach. His emphasis was on technique based on a mandatory script; there was little space for improvisation, and direction was to a large extent his responsibility. In terms of thematic treatment Guna's focus was on social situations and familiar problems like that of alcoholism. During the survey a number of women had spoken of drinking as a major problem affecting their families. Thus Guna's main play was about the life and experiences of a fishing family and its social, economic and political relationships. Although economic exploitation was an important sub-theme, the main emphasis was on self-induced exploitation. The message was that a strongly integrated family could fight the various injustices better than a divided family. Despite the ideological weaknesses inherent in Guna's thematic treatment, in consistency of characterisation, denouement and style of acting, it was much better structured than Jeyraj's. The concerns expressed were visible and tangible features of the fishing community - so much so that during practice sessions the onlookers had no criticism to offer regarding the plot structure and the direction of Guna's plays.

On the other hand, Jeyraj's approach was basically unstructured. There were no scripts, and improvisation was a key feature. During practice sessions, direction was a team effort. While Jeyraj and Prabhu were familiar with certain techniques of the popular theatre, others were uninitiated. As a result it took a few practice sessions extending over two days before his team achieved a semblance of consistency in its performances. Improvisation is in

itself an art, and in order to anticipate and verbalise a consistent dialogue, the team members must know one another well. It took some time for the three local boys to adapt themselves to this rough-and-ready theatre, but with each performance they gained confidence and at the end of the workshop they were just as good as some of the animateurs in the team. The team's lack of technique was made up by humour and the improvised dialogues especially between Jeyraj and Prabhu.

In terms of the themes Jeyraj's team had a more radical approach. The emphasis was on political conscientisation and the plays dealt with the historical and political reasons for the poverty of the villagers. The team organised a number of small skits dealing with topical issues. There was one on the meaning of "independence", which exposed the populist style of politicians and the alliance between the state fishing industry and foreign fishing industries and its impact on the lives of traditional fishermen. The skits evolved from discussions among the members of the group and most of the suggestions of the local people were incorporated.

Popular Theatre Performance

The programme in each village began with a community singing session. It was followed by speeches by the local animateurs and cadres and by Jeyraj. Music and song are essential elements in any grassroots conscientisation strategy. They act as mobilisers and get people involved in the programme. Apart from radical film and folk songs, traditional work songs of the fishermen were also sung. Many of these work songs in their traditional form echoed themes of dependence and the refrain often expressed the anxieties of the fishermen and their submission to a fore-ordained fate. One such refrain was: "We are poor, we are helpless, such is our fate." ARP took over many of these work songs and changed them round, as when the above refrain was changed to: "We are poor, but we can unite to change our lives."

The speeches, especially those by Jeyraj, were very political in tone. He introduced many of the themes of the plays that were to be performed and illustrated and explained how even national realities affected the ordinary fisherfolk. He attacked regional political parties which supported the cause of the oppressed on paper, but in reality worked against the interests of the poor. In simple language he explained the various ways in which

structures of dominance were imposed; he spoke of the realm of culture as a battle-ground where the struggle for the minds of the oppressed took place. The regional film was cited as a prime example of the way in which cultural domination was imposed over people. He emphasised how important it was to use culture in the struggle against dominant forces of oppression.

Jeyraj's speeches were effective in the villages where conscientisation programmes had taken place before the workshop. In villages like Koonomedukuppam and Mudaliarkuppam, where local cadres had not effectively conscientised the people, the speeches had a negative impact. Some branded them as communist sympathisers; others called them DMK sympathisers because Jeyraj had criticised the ruling AIDMK state government. Local people were clearly confused about ARP's objectives in the area of cultural action. The performance had to be temporarily suspended, and it was resumed only after Prabhu assured the crowd that they had no party affiliation.

The actual performances were of a varying quality. While Guna's socio-problem-oriented theatre was appreciated in all five villages, at times the structure of his plays was too sophisticated and not very easy to comprehend. In the case of both teams, there was no make-up, no sets and no costumes, none of the trappings associated with the conventional stage or the folk stage with which people were familiar. The accent was on low-cost production and techniques.

In one of Guna's plays, actors were used as stage props and they represented, at different times, chairs or trees swaying in the wind. It took some time for some of the fisherfolk to understand that the prostrate person on the stage was but part of the convention of the popular theatre. In Mudaliarkuppam, a woman from the audience loudly counted the people on the stage and wondered what the prostrate man was doing. "If he is not praying what is he up to?" she asked. At times like this Guna intervened and explained to the audience the nature of the conventions used.

There was crowd participation at all the performances. At Chettynagar, one of the spectators got up during one of Guna's plays and corrected the price of prawns quoted by one of the actors. While Jeyraj's plays were inconsistent at times, both Jeyraj and Prabhu used techniques through which they involved the audience in the performance. For example, Prabhu frequently "froze" scenes - as in a skit about a local politician who is elected by the people but then

forgets his rural base, where a scene presenting the haughty behaviour of the politician to a few petitioners was "frozen". The action was stopped and Prabhu asked the audience if the meek and submissive attitude of the petitioners was right in the circumstances. Some among the audience were defeatist in their answers; others were bolder. Gradually a dialogue between members of the audience ensued, and there was consensus that they should be more confident and positive in their dealings with politicians.

In another skit on the theme of bank loans, a similar scene between the bank officer and the petitioner for a loan was frozen. This time there was unanimous agreement that the petitioner was too meek. Prabhu changed the scene around. This time the petitioner refused to be cowed by authority. He demanded his loan and threatened to expose the officer if he did not comply with his request. There was a good deal of excitement during this scene, partly because the person acting as the petitioner was a local boy.

Frequently, the actor or actress directly addressed the crowd and asked them for their opinions. In Mudaliarkuppam, the audience was asked about the prevailing rates in the Minimum Wages Act. There were differences in the answers provided by the audience. It pointed to a confused understanding of the wage structure under this Act. Prabhu and Jeyraj immediately launched on an impromptu dialogue between themselves on the Minimum Wages Act, and this was appreciated by the audience. Both teams used elements of entertainment and comic relief. While Guna used stock characters, such as the drunkard as a comic figure, Jeyraj's team caricatured politicians and rich fishermen.

The Role of Cultural Workshops

Two cultural workshops were held by members of both teams, on the 17th and the 19th, at Chettynagar and Mudaliarkuppam. It was realised quite early on that the the conventions of the popular theatre were not known to people. Local cadres especially needed to learn about the various techniques used so that they could form popular theatre groups at village level. Without some knowledge of the conventions of the popular theatre, it was difficult for people to appreciate the performances and learn from them. During the cultural workshop, it was emphasised that the popular theatre was only a means to an end and not an end in itself. Its purpose was allied to the larger purpose of people's struggles and development.

On the 17th, Prabhu and Jeyraj conducted the training sessions. During the workshop, with the help of a blackboard, both Jeyraj and Prabhu explained the political, economic and social causes for the emergence of SAGs like the ARP. Jeyraj spoke of the historical emergence of a class society, the nature of classes and their role in contemporary Indian society. There were frequent references to the fishing industry and the role of the class structure within it in accentuating the divide between the rich and poor fishermen. Jeyraj explained that development and underdevelopment were two sides of the same coin. An elitist form of development resulted in underdevelopment for the majority of people. He also explained the international dimensions of the problem and the way in which even villages like Chettynagar were involved in a dependent relationship with both a national and an international economy.

The workshop provided time for discussion and members were asked to comment on the existing political and economic situation. Jeyraj and Prabhu organised role play sessions and simulation games, through which the members of the group learned the nature of concepts such as "power", "acquisitiveness" and "unity". The members of the group were asked if they had testimonies to offer regarding their experience of exploitation. Many of the local people came up with instances when they were cheated or threatened by richer fishermen, their middlemen and by officials at the bank. Jeyraj and Prabhu directed the discussion and stressed the importance of class struggle and the need to form a strong fishermen's movement.

The workshop held on the 19th at Mudaliarkuppam was conducted by Guna. It was primarily a cultural analysis workshop. Guna explained the role of culture in contemporary Tamil society, its caste basis and how this manifests itself in the dominant media of culture, especially in the cinema and the Tamil theatre. Popular stars from both the Tamil film and theatre were seen as playing a major role in reinforcing the dominant culture. So was the popular film song. Guna analysed one such song, and illustrated how it reflected and popularised the dominant ideology. He dealt with the relationship of culture to politics, economics and religion. It was important in organising a popular movement to form a strong counter-culture and to learn to use it to demythologise the dominant culture. He emphasised that the cultural struggle was related to the realisation of a larger struggle to secure the economic, political

and social development of people. Cultural struggle is only a means to a larger end. The purpose of cultural struggle is to heighten the understanding of issues, to make people aware, and to help them formulate practical strategies of action. Performance should lead to action and action to analysis through the use of the popular theatre.

Guna taught the group some essential techniques of the popular theatre - ways in which a popular theatre performance could be broken up into its constituent elements and analysed to see how it tallied with reality. The group was split into ten smaller groups and each of these groups was asked to present a five-minute play on a topic of their choice. Most of the plays were on local forms of exploitation and Guna conducted a joint evaluation of the plays and the solutions offered. He also dramatised alternative solutions to problems.

Evaluation

The workshop evaluation which was held on the 22nd was attended by members of both teams, local cadres and local people, and the director of ARP. Each play and its potential as a form of popular theatre were evaluated, especially in terms of their ability to relate to the audience. The chief criticism of Guna's main play was that it was not critical enough and that it confused effects with causes. Drunkenness was induced by problems that were societal in their origin. Guna countered this by stating that in order to start a strong rural movement it was important that changes start from below, in family relationships and responsibilities. Changes at the level of the family and in institutional structures must go hand in hand. The "ordered" nature of Guna's plays, it was felt, did not provide for adequate participation. There was no room for improvisation in his dialogues, and his plays were not flexible. At the same time many of the local people appreciated the quality of the performance and its consistency. Lack of consistency was seen as a major drawback in Jeyraj's group performances. Instances were cited when there was not continuity and there were gaps between scenes which could have confused the audience. Humour and quick improvisation were mentioned as positive features of the performances. It was also agreed that Jeyraj's group involved the audience much more than Guna's team.

Local cadres were blamed for not spending enough time on conscientisation classes at village level. A village that was

prepared beforehand would benefit far more from popular theatre performances than other villages. It was suggested that a training camp should be organised for local cadres and animateurs. The audience and animateurs.

The audience had learned from the workshops, but in order to heighten their involvement in the struggle the people themselves must use popular theatre as a tool for social analysis. Many of the local people requested the teams for a follow-up, but it was decided that the follow-up would take place only after the formation of popular theatre groups at grass-roots levels. Representatives of the fishermen's union in the Marakanom area had invited the popular theatre groups to perform in their area. Guna agreed to conduct a training workshop there.

CASE STUDY 2:

North Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, 25 Aug. - 2 Sept. 1984

Introduction

North Arcot District lies to the west of Madras. It is bounded in the north by Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh, in the east by Chinglepet District, in the north by South Arcot District, and in the west by Dharmapuri District, Tamil Nadu. It has a total area of 12148.2 sq. kms. Its population in 1971 was 3.7 million. The district is for administrative purposes subdivided into eleven taluks. The following study is set in one such taluk, Tiruvanamalai, situated about 60 km. south of Polur taluk, which is the headquarters of ARPED (see Figure 3), one of the related groups of the ARP.

North Arcot District is a moderately dry zone and gets an annual rainfall of only about 30-40 cms. It is dependent on both the South-West Monsoon and the retreating Monsoon rains between November and December. The soil is not very fertile and, while cereals and millets are grown extensively in the region, paddy is cultivated only in certain less arid parts. Most people are engaged in agriculture and related occupations.

North Arcot District has a very heterogeneous caste-base, a mixture of high and low castes. Reddiars are the dominant caste.

There is a large Harijan population in the district and many of them are landless labourers. In many ways, North Arcot District retains patterns of the feudal past. In the areas where ARPED works, there are still bonded labourers and many other forms of exploitative tenancy relationships.

Unlike in South Arcot District where the castes normally lived together in the same streets, in the villages in this region there was strict demarcation between high and low castes. They lived in the caste and the Harijan sections. The caste structure is rigid, and there are frequent clashes with the upper caste landlords. Harijans are served on different kinds of plates in some of the restaurants. Given the strong presence of a landless labour group, ARPED's work has focused on organising both micro-movements and a strong macro workers' movement in the region. The two main animateurs in this area are Prabhu and Murugesh and they co-ordinate most of ARPED's activities in the region. They are assisted by a number of local cadres and by a strong youth group. ARPED has been conducting regular conscientising activities in this region and the popular theatre is widely used to motivate communities for action. A number of the villages in which ARPED has worked have conducted successful wage strikes, and a number of bonded labourers have been released after demonstrations against landlords. ARPED was involved in getting land deeds for the landless and securing loans for them. ARPED also provided legal aid for the poor. Most of the local cadres working in this region had some knowledge of government legislation and were more committed to the cause of the oppressed than some of the cadres in South Arcot District. ARPED had a few female animateurs in this area and they were involved in health and conscientisation activities.

Popular Folk-Theatre

The major purpose of this popular theatre workshop was to introduce the folk theatre as a form of popular theatre. Unlike in South Arcot District, other forms of popular theatre had already been used in the cultural strategy employed in this area. Local youth and local cadres used role play to analyse situations, and there were frequent sessions where song, music and popular theatre were used in the cultural strategies adopted by village communities. While local people were familiar with folk forms, ARP had not so far tried to use the folk theatre for purposes of conscientisation.

As I have pointed out in Chapter 4, the folk theatre had played an important role in disseminating and reinforcing the ideology of Brahminism. Under the patronage of landlords, the folk theatre - like Terrakoothu in Tamil Nadu - played a part in legitimising the caste structure in the villages. The players themselves belonged to particular castes and the whole performance had religious overtones. The local priest officiated at the performance and, through the rites and rituals that began and closed it, he sacralised the performance. The themes too had religious moorings.

Although the folk theatre lacks the polish and finesse of its classical counterparts like Bharatanatyam, it nevertheless is closely related to the classical stage both in terms of its functions and its properties. For example, the folk form Terrakoothu, which is endemic in Tamil Nadu, shares many of the characteristics of the classical stage. The stage-manager, the buffoon, the pre-performance rites, the costumes, masks and headgear are common to both. The major difference between the two is that the classical theatre provides an aesthetic rendering of the Hindu epics and the folk form presents them as spectacles, and in the light of local realities, local deities and local happenings. In the classical form the distance between the mortals and the immortals is maintained. In the folk form the gods are humanised. Folk forms use local language, local wit and humour and express commonly shared attitudes and beliefs. It is this closeness to the people that is its strength, and it is not surprising that the folk theatre has been made use of by governments and political parties. But it has not been used as a two-way, participatory communication medium. This was what the ARP was hoping to achieve in North Arcot.

But the folk theatre, unlike the historical-political theatre, is a complex medium. Some forms of it, like Terrakoothu, are essentially operatic in form. While the folk form does permit a certain amount of improvisation, it follows strict conventions. The styles of acting and singing are difficult to learn and they can only be mastered after stringent practice.

People understand this theatre and are familiar with its nuances and styles. Members of the popular theatre team of ARP believed that the folk theatre could be used effectively for conscientisation purposes, provided the audience was gradually introduced to new versions of it, keeping the form while changing

the content. For example, female roles were to be played by women and not by men as was traditionally done in Terrakoothu.

The Process of Cultural Action

The actual performances of the popular theatre, which took place between 28 August and 1 September, were preceded by a two-day training camp, which was held at Sattanur. A number of animateurs from related groups of ARP, such as SRED, ARPED and ARW, attended the workshop.

Of the animateurs, only Perumal, Chinnathambi, Prabhu and Venketiah had some knowledge of the folk theatre. They took turns to teach others the techniques and the conventions related to folk-forms such as Terrakoothu, Swamiattam and Kathakalakshepam. On the 26th afternoon there was an informal discussion on the current practice of the folk theatre, the need to make it "popular" and the extent to which traditional forms and conventions may be altered without damaging their impact on the audience.

Perumal explained the origins of Terrakoothu in Tamil Nadu and its present status. A typical Terrakoothu performance was staged by the four animateurs right from the invocation to the closing rites. This was not a structured performance. After each stage of the performance, the animateurs explained its meaning and the various steps involved.

One of the significant sources of oppression in this area was religion, and landless labourers were exploited by the local temple priests who encouraged superstitious practices among the people. Despite the presence of a rationalist movement among some of the younger generation in this area, religious oppression was still strong. Since the folk theatre plays an essentially religious role in the life of the community, it was decided at the camp that one of the purposes of popular folk theatre should be to demythologise the myths and superstitions that had been built up through centuries of oppression.

On the second day of the training camp, an attempt was made to script an alternative Terrakoothu performance. Since this was a first attempt, a script was considered useful, but it was hoped that future performances would be without scripts. As the purpose of the camp was to enable grassroots people to use the theatre, it was decided to discard the paraphernalia of the traditional folk

theatre, including masks, elaborate make-up and costumes. It had to be a low-budget production.

Initially there was some opposition to this on the part of some of the animateurs - including Perumal - who felt that masks and costumes were an integral part of the spectacle of the folk theatre. There was a possibility that the audience might become confused by a theatre stripped of its traditional appurtenances. It was decided that make-up and costumes might be used if locally available but they should not be considered obligatory.

There were significant changes in the content and in the conventions. The story line was changed, and instead of dealing with traditional myths from the Hindu epics, the story was set in feudal India. It was about a king and the religious authorities of the state and their political, economic and cultural hold on their subjects. There was a clear analogy with contemporary times, especially the politics of Tamil Nadu. The story also related to local realities that the people were involved with - the alliance of dominant landlords with temple priests and their joint role in the subjugation of the people.

Some of the conventions too were changed. The traditional invocation, for example, was turned around. The traditional Terrakoothu performance starts with an invocation to Lord Ganesha. This is followed by the priest blessing the performance and the main actor. In the alternative version, the invocation was addressed to the members of the audience and they were asked to listen attentively to this new version of Terrakoothu. They alone could save themselves from the oppression to which they were subject, but in order to save themselves they must stand united in the face of religious tyranny and economic exploitation. This invocation was followed by the priest blessing himself. It was heavily satirical and the priest's double standards were exposed.

Perumal acts as the court-jester and Chinnathambi and Prabhu act as the king and the priest. Venketaiah acts as an ordinary labourer who is in the beginning cowed down by authority, but his wife, played by Rukmani, urges him to resist. She asks him to stop being a coward and to oppose the machinations of the state and religion. Rukmini, who is a health-worker, and two other women, all animateurs from SRED, also take part in the Terrakoothu performance. Perumal, the court-jester, has an important role in the the play. He is an informed jester, and with wit and humour he takes

liberties with both the king and the priest. His comments and re-interpretations of "high" Tamil are a focal point of the play. While the king and the priests use classical Tamil, the jester uses the language of the masses. He befriends Venketiah, a labourer, and they lead a revolt against the authority of the king and the priest. They organise the people and overthrow the feudal powers. Like traditional Terrakoothu plays, the story is essentially about the triumph of good over evil, here of the oppressed over their oppressors.

Sites, Time and Environment of Production

The performances were held in four villages - Mellsellipattu (28th), Kilsuripattinam (29th), Katchevapattu (30th) and Manjamundi (31st). All performances took place in the Harijan sector, usually at about 8 p.m., after the labourers returned from the fields. Stages in all the four villages were makeshift structures with thatched roofs. A substantial part of the stage was for the "Pinpattu", the background singers or chorus. In two of the villages electricity was available, in two others petromax lamps were used. The audience sat on three sides of the stage but quite frequently the action spilled into the crowd, much to their amusement. The animateurs who were not taking part in the performance sat among the spectators. Unlike in South Arcot District where the women sat at the back, here the women sat in groups closer to the stage. The children sat right in front.

In two of the villages local youths guarded the perimeters of the village square from interference by high-caste people. On one occasion at Katchevapattu, the caste people threw stones at the performers and the performance was temporarily suspended. Many of the members of the audience, including the women, helped chase back the caste villagers to their sector of the village. At Manjamundi, the caste people shut down the electricity to the Harijan section, and petromax lamps had to be used. Later that evening, the villagers decided to boycott the caste people until they apologised.

Production

As in South Arcot, the cultural performances were preceded by speeches both by local youth, local animateurs and by Prabhu and Jeyraj. They explained the purpose of the workshop. Most of the

villagers were already aware of the fact that the performances were not going to be strictly folk theatre.

The speeches were followed by the singing of liberation songs. Unlike in South Arcot, here the audience knew the songs and joined in the singing. The programme was as follows:

1. Speeches
2. Liberation songs
3. Popular theatre performance by local groups
4. Terrakoothu by the ARP team
5. Swamiattam by the ARP team
6. Silent-community theatre by the ARP team
7. Political-historical theatre by the ARP team
8. Liberation songs.

The popular theatre performances by local village groups dealt with issues that were of local relevance. At Mellsellipattu, four local young people performed a role-play based on an ongoing village struggle for higher wages. The oppressors were caricatured, and the solution offered at the end suggested a go-slow during harvest time as a strategy by which the landlords would be forced to comply with their demands. During an informal discussion with the audience after the play, it was also decided that if the landlords tried to bring labourers from elsewhere they should not be allowed into the field. There was general support for the plan, although some of the village leaders wanted them to be more conciliatory towards the landlords.

At Katchevapattu, the issue was the arrogance and indifference of local development bureaucracy. During the role-play, the youth asked the audience to be more self-confident in their relationships with the government and stand up to them. The audience reacted in an exuberant manner.

At Manjamundi, there was unanimous support to strengthen the struggle. The audience was involved in the plays. They knew the people who were being caricatured. During the performance, an old lady got up and asked the leaders who were still unsure to make a clear declaration of their allegiances. She stressed the fact that only through a united movement could they achieve freedom, not in her life-time perhaps, but at least in ten to fifteen years.

The performances of the folk theatre were well received by the audience. There were times when it was obvious that some of the

members of the audience knew more about the intricacies of Terrakoothu than some of the performers themselves. At Katchevapattu, a local man demonstrated some of the steps, and pointed out to Chinnathambi where he had gone wrong. At Manjamundi, this man took part in the actual Terrakoothu performance, and also demonstrated to the other members of the team different styles of Terrakoothu and ways of singing. Many in the audience knew some of the operatic styles of Terrakoothu and they sang along with the chorus.

It was obvious that this alternative Terrakoothu had a long way to go before it could become an authentically popular medium. At times, there was a lack of consistency, and it was Perumal who, with his humour, saved the play from degenerating into a farce. After the performance the local youth and cadres were asked whether they saw a potential in using it as a form of popular theatre. They were enthusiastic, and agreed to incorporate folk theatre in their popular theatre programmes.

The Swamiattam too was well received. It is basically a solo dance performed by the local priest or a devotee. The dance is performed as an offering to the deity so that the deity would effect a cure or grant a request. The dancer falls into a trance at the end of the dance and mediates the demands of the deity in return for the favour. This kind of dance is performed in most parts of Tamil Nadu, and it is believed that priests take advantage of common people and demand large amounts of money for supposed cures. In this alternative Swamiattam, Venketiah played the role of the priest. It was the story of a priest who pretends to cure the stomach problem of a young boy, but in the process the priest himself contracts the illness. It was a favourite in all the four villages, although some of the local priests were not amused.

The performance of the silent-community theatre demonstrated the potential of mime in popular theatre. The story was about the emergence of different systems of inequality culminating in the present structure of economic injustice. The various modes of production were mimed, including the primitive, feudal and capitalist modes, and it showed how the working classes suffered under each of these. Jeyraj and Prabhu provided the voice and sang liberation songs, and the contents of these songs were mimed by the actors and actresses. At certain stages, the action was frozen, and Jeyraj asked the crowd to explain the meaning of the scene and what

could be done to change the situation. One of the liberation songs was based on the plight of quarry workers, another on fishermen. Jeryraj and team performed a political play on the theme of the collusion between the industrial bourgeoisie and the government and how they cornered the profits that should accrue to the working classes.

During the evaluation held on 1st August, it was felt that although the workshop was a relative success, a systematic folk theatre workshop had to be conducted for the benefit of the local cadres and animateurs. (Later that year, a two-week folk theatre workshop was held at the ARP headquarters at Ambakkam and a number of local youth and cadres participated in it.) In terms of participation, the workshop elicited a good response. The cadres and youth were asked to intensify their efforts at conscientisation and hold weekly non-formal classes. It was felt that local leaders had to be brought into the movement. Their influence was considerable, but many felt that they worked in alliance with the caste landlords and acted as informers.

After the evaluation, a branch of the workers' movement was inaugurated in one of the villages. A flag was hoisted and this was followed by dinner at the village, provided by the villagers.

Table 24 Forms of Popular Theatre used by ARP

Form	Purpose	Organised By
1 <u>Socio-Problem-Oriented Theatre</u> Ordered, inflexible, based on script, clear styles of acting, characterisation.	to delineate socio-economic structures that enforce dependence, to strengthen individual understanding of issues, to expose internalised myths/beliefs that reinforce passivity and dependence.	Guna, director of <u>People's Theatre</u> , an organisation independent of ARP, both financially and otherwise-but works closely with the ARP. ARP does compensate them for their efforts. Professional group - well versed in techniques of both formal stage and popular theatre-fourteen member group.
2 <u>Political-Historical Theatre</u> Flexible, permits improvisation and variety of styles of acting, success based on ability to respond, follow, improvise.	to link struggle and the movement, to equip people with a knowledge of their historical past, the connections between history & politics, to help them see contemporary politics - both regional and national - and to analyse the historical/political roots of their dependence.	Jeyraj and Prabhu-senior animators with ARP. Prabhu, senior-most. Six members in the team- emphasis on improvisation- not much emphasis on knowledge of techniques; the most successful of the four types of theatre - invites genuine participation, dialogic in form.
3 <u>Folk-Theatre</u> Ordered in traditional forms, but in present form allows changes. Clear style of acting and characterisation.	to demythologise both "populist" culture and religious culture - to give back to people the base for a strong people's culture through the use of re-structured forms of theatre like <u>Swamiattam</u> and <u>Terrakoothu</u> which are traditional.	Perumal and Chinnathambi - senior animators with ARP - ten members. Only those in the team know techniques of folk theatre. Still not perfect as a form because it has been newly added on a viable form of popular theatre in the ARP strategy of cultural action.
4 <u>Silent - Community Theatre</u> Flexible, allows improvisation - emphasis on human body - its expressiveness.	to make people aware through "mime" the use of silent theatre - to show dependence and oppression of people through mime. To make aware of the potential of human body to express.	Anandan - senior animator. But both Guna and Jeyraj use this form. Includes puppet theatre, which is an underdeveloped form. All forms of popular theatres do to a certain extent deal with historical, political, economic cultural themes, exchange of contents.

An Evaluation of ARP's Approach to Communication and Development

In the course of my field study with the ARP, I attended six of their communication workshops, including the two I have described in the preceding sections. The other workshops included two on the popular theatre, one on cultural analysis and one for liberation song-writers. These workshops were all meant for local cadres and animateurs and, to an extent, for the local people themselves. It was hoped that through these workshops, they would come to an understanding of both the theory of cultural action and the techniques of liberatory communication.

While the popular theatre workshop organised by Guna at Ikkadu, Chinglepet District, between 11 and 13 september 1984, was primarily directed towards equipping cadres and animateurs with some knowledge of the theory and practice of popular theatre within a process of cultural action, the workshop held at Ambakkam from 16-18 October was both a training workshop and part of an ongoing process of cultural and social struggle. The Kolpalayam quarry workers' struggle was against local government officers. These workers were socially and economically discriminated against. During the workshop the popular theatre was used to devise ways of formulating a plan of action.

But it was during the liberation song-writers' workshop that the popular theatre was used in the context of a workers' struggle that had reached its peak. It was conducted from 18-20 February, 1985. In the area around Ambakkam, there were a large number of Harijan labourers who worked on the farms of rich Reddiars and Naidus. These caste landlords had appropriated for themselves large plots of the common land, or had donated plots to Venkateswara Temple Devasthanam, Tirupathi, and to other temples.

In January 1985 ARP, in consultation with the Harijan labourers, decided to "grab" the land land taken over by these temples. Landless families, 123 of them, occupied 200 acres of land and, although attempts were made by the police and the local administration to evict them, they stood united. A number of them were arrested but later released. Temporary huts were erected on the land. During the workshop, popular theatre was used to explore ways to deepen the struggle and consolidate the land-grabbing movement. It was illustrated through the popular theatre performance organised by the labourers and ARP animateurs that in order to strengthen the

struggle more landless labourers should be involved in it. Numerical strength was seen as an important asset.

The workshop on cultural analysis was similar in content and purpose but more comprehensive than the one organised by Guna in South Arcot. The liberation song-writers' workshop was conducted in order to impart skills and teach the techniques of composition to cadres and animateurs. They were in turn expected to teach local youth such techniques of song-writing. During the workshop, individuals presented poems and sang songs. These were evaluated by the group, both the structure of songs and poems and their content. The importance of using poems and songs in cultural action was emphasised. Unlike the popular theatre, songs are easier to teach and they are more enduring in their effect and influence.

In the Nilgiris the impact of communication could be measured in terms of the tangible benefits that have accrued to the community. In the case of the ARP's communication and development strategy the impact is more difficult to assess, primarily because the emphasis is on improving intangibles such as an increased awareness and a heightened consciousness. Nevertheless, in conversations with villagers in both South and North Arcot Districts, and during the time spent with the ARP, a picture did emerge of the extent to which the alternative communication strategy benefited the community.

The process of cultural action organised by the ARP had definitely led to an increased awareness among many of the villagers in both these districts. For example, members of the community, especially in North Arcot District, were conscious of their rights and well-informed as regards the government legislation affecting them. They could plan ways and strategies of translating objectives into concrete strategies of action. This is in strong contrast to the people in the Nilgiris, who were timid, unaware of their rights, and not united as a community. To a large extent, in South and North Arcot, liberatory communication through media like the popular theatre has played a role in uniting and conscientising the people. ARP's strategy was centred on local needs; it was sensitive to the basic values and attitudes of the people; it used a cultural approach that reflected in many ways the people's own culture; and it was based on a participatory form of both communication and development. During the workshops, decisions were often taken by the

main animateurs, but there was a process of discussion and consultation, and the community owned the decisions taken.

There were cases when the community decided on its own on a plan of action, as for instance in North Arcot, where local youth put up a popular theatre performance and decided on the course of action by themselves. Communication was created and directed by the people. It was not imposed from above but it grew out of the desires and needs of the people. Significantly, the popular theatre - and ARP's cultural strategy in general - has been able to build upon the collective spirit of the community and to channel it in productive ways. It has contributed to demythologise the assumptions and dominant beliefs that the community had internalised and, to an extent, to provide people with an alternative view of reality, of a future that the people themselves can shape through their own efforts.

In terms, therefore, of the educational impact of the popular theatre, its influence has been quite positive. It has helped people develop a sense of identity and build up their self-confidence. It has mediated to them the possibility of changing their existing reality. The practice of the popular theatre has also provided the people with a form of communication that they can call their own. They can use it to counter the dominant media of communications. ARP's communication strategy is to a large extent dialogic, and has been instrumental in forming the basis of a counter-culture of the oppressed. As the Ambakkam workshops illustrate, ARP's communication strategy is not haphazard in its planning or execution; it is purposeful, and part of a continuous and ongoing programme of development.

But it does have its weak points. Media like the popular theatre and songs are part of a larger cultural strategy which include non-formal educational classes and training camps. Local cadres have to be trained to take the cultural strategy to the grassroots. There were instances, as in South Arcot, where local cadres had not been trained, and they had not conscientised the community to which they were attached. Both in Koonomedukuppam and Mudaliarkuppam, the people were not prepared for the cultural performance put up by the ARP, and it is doubtful whether it motivated them in any substantial way.

ARP as an organisation has its own weaknesses that stem from its ideology and mode of operation, and the communication

strategy reflects these weaknesses. For example, in its strategy of development, it does not adequately emphasise the importance of tangible economic development as a vital part of its overall strategy. ARP has indeed conducted a number of wage-strikes and land-grabbing activities, and these activities have contributed to the economic well-being of the community. But it has not complemented these by community projects for income generation like small-scale cottage industries, collective farms, co-operatives, marketing structures, etc. It is important for any worthwhile alternative development process to incorporate and emphasise both material and mental development; consciousness-raising cannot be attempted in isolation. It has to be synthesised with a strategy for improving the economic base of the oppressed.

During the last two years, ARP has been forced to incorporate programmes of economic development in its overall developmental strategy. This has come about in an indirect way, and not through any change in the ideology of ARP. Because of the government's gathering disapproval of the SAG involvement in rural development and the adverse measures that are being taken to curb their activities, (see Chapter 5), ARP has been forced to take up "visible" projects, like the health project and collective farm which have been started at Ambakkam.

Over the last two years, attempts have been made to expand ARP's rural base and the emphasis is on networking a macro-movement under its auspices. This has resulted in an erosion of ARP's activities at micro-levels, as illustrated by the example from South Arcot, where local cadres had not been properly trained.

Nevertheless, the state's communication and development bodies can learn much from the example of SAGs like the ARP. They have demonstrated that a communication and development strategy based on local needs and using local resources can have a greater impact than projects conceived and executed by people from above who have no idea of the needs of local communities, especially the most disadvantaged among them. ARP's strategy is based on a commitment to the eventual liberation of the oppressed, and on faith in the capabilities of the oppressed and their ability to create a strong movement to bring about their own economic, cultural, social and political development. It is this commitment to the cause of the poor and oppressed and the faith in their capabilities that the state lacks. And this is reflected in their ideology and their practice of communication and development.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Review of Findings

My study with the Doordarshan on the one hand and the Horticultural Department on the other confirmed (1) that the benefits of the official strategies of development accrue mainly to a minority belonging to the dominant castes and classes; (2) that the development communication practised under government auspices has only limited impact on people in general; and (3) that the reason for its relative failure is the unwillingness of media planners and developmentalists to design and implement programmes which are based on the aspirations of people and involve them in the process of execution. Progressive communication projects like the Kheda project were experimental in nature and their impact on mainstream television production has been minimal.

With no clear policy, the process of development communication has become routinised and standardised, and its objectives are short-term and incremental. There is an evident lack of commitment to, and understanding of, the long-term goals of development, judging by the attitudes, values and beliefs of the professional media men and women employed by Doordarshan and the officials at the Department of Horticulture; they would not go beyond "the dishing out of information".

The media are overtly politicised. Highly centralised as they are, the media tend to be inflexible, and are influenced by political considerations rather than developmental imperatives. Those who have the ability and the opportunity to create programmes based on real situations tend to dilute the content because they are afraid of the political implications and possible personal consequences. Such internalisation of organisational values makes them fatalistic and resigned.

Belief in the trickle-down effect still holds sway. Being target-oriented, extension workers are seen to take the easy way out; they give assistance to the big farmer. Information and material resources find their way to those who count and those who have political clout.

Centralisation militates against participation. There is an immense gap between theory and practice, with theory advocating participation and the way theory is implemented making participation impossible. Also, centralisation does not leave room for any significant contextualisation. Regional and specific programmes do not receive sufficient encouragement. Agricultural programmes are too technical for the average farmer and the use of technology that is advocated is beyond his reach.

A highly centralised media system, a professional ideology that lacks commitment to the basic ideals of development, an overarching political framework and a system of extreme bureaucracy have together rendered ineffective much of development communication in the country. With the Doordarshan unit, the portrayal of the "real" situation was not a priority. There was a double deception involved: (1) the portrayal of only part of the problem and the bypassing of the real problem of government inefficiency, corruption and exploitation, and (2) the presenting of this problem to the urban audience as the whole problem. Inevitably, therefore, the media product is being legitimised through deception. There was also the tendency to apply the canons of film production to TV film production, as was evident in the inordinately long time spent on song and dance sequences and in the unrealistic solution of the poor palmyra worker marrying the rich landlord's daughter. Without personal commitment to people or sociological understanding of their environment, the development message is bound to be at best specious and at worst spurious.

In the work of the Horticulture Department, information on technology, seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and production techniques is generally seen as an end in itself. Those who benefit from this avalanche of information are the contact farmers, who are generally well-to-do, with a good house, a few acres accounted for and a few "hidden". Ideally, the extension worker has to look after the agricultural needs of five hundred families, but he usually ends up with the ten contact farmers in each village. The marginal farmers are therefore unable, because they are poor, to get any help from the extension agent. Corruption is endemic and scarce seeds that are supposed to be distributed to everyone usually end up with the rich farmers.

The persistence of poverty and inequality is not due to lack of information; it is due to lack of land, an arbitrary marketing system, inadequate storage facility and no price control. It is not the farmer's attitude change, but structural

constraints over which he has no control. The survey I conducted revealed some interesting facts like the following:

- In spite of official claims, there was little evidence of the effective functioning of radio rural forums.

- Although extension workers are provided with audio-visual equipment, they rarely use these in the field. The people had seen a film on rice cultivation, which was of no relevance in a predominantly horticultural area.

- Agricultural extension systems like the Training and Visit system - which is fast becoming the model of agricultural extension in India - merely replicate old models of extension which are based on the idea of selective change.

- People rely more on traditionally imparted information than on change agents and the media.

- Communication, at best, is only a secondary input in development; the ownership of tangible economic assets and access to financial resources determine the use to which information is put.

During the time I spent with the Association for the Rural Poor and with People's Education for Action and Liberation, I observed their use of the popular theatre in their attempts to conscientise the people. I was interested in finding out the scope of the popular theatre, its contribution towards individual growth and collective solidarity, and its viability as an alternative mode of communication for development. Among my findings are the following:

- People and people's participation are fundamental. Participation involves the people in a process of action and reflection, and that process is crucial. Where reflection really takes place, people are seen to control the contours and the logic of action. The popular theatre is rooted in the experiences of people, their transactions with others and their hopes for themselves. The themes are thus based on local situations - a predatory money-lender, an erring Panchayat president, a corrupt government official, bonded labour in the fishing community, etc. The issue is broken up into its constituent parts and a plot constructed in and through the course of analysis.

- It is a highly unconventional medium, with no stage and no costumes, and relatively inexpensive.

- It is the people's medium, and they can own it as their own. In turn it reinforces their awareness, as much of the root causes of their situation as of their own potential for redressing it.

-It is used to demythify the dominant belief system and becomes a tool in creating an alternative belief system.

-Its success depends on the extent of ground work that has been done. In this sense the role of the animateur, identifying and involved with the people, is supremely important. Without genuine commitment on the part of the animateur the popular theatre cannot succeed.

With clear organizational goals, and a commitment to the mobilization of the rural masses against a system which perpetuates inequality and injustice, and employing a medium that actively involves and supports the people, organizations like the ARP have a great deal to offer to the cause of genuine communication for development in India.

In contrast to the official approach, which is basically pro-status quo oriented, the approach of the SAG's such as ARP and PEAL is oriented towards sections of the Indian population who have traditionally been outside the official framework of development. As my study shows, this alternative approach has benefited certain marginalised sections of the population in several ways. Specific acts such as land-grabbing (see p.314), wage strikes (see p.305), bold confrontation with local government departments and struggles for the liberation of bonded labourers (see pp.288,305) have led to tangible results and qualitative changes in the lives of these people. Far more important from a long-term perspective is the fact that through people-based development programmes, the people have become aware of their rights and the need for united action and common strategies of mobilisation and struggle. Compared to the many conscientised workers that I had come across in North and South Arcot Districts, the horticultural workers in the Nilgiris were not even aware of their basic rights, such as the state's legal provision for minimum wages. In a situation where ignorance is an oppressive force in itself, and is exploited by rural landlords, a knowledge of one's basic rights and actions towards fulfilling those rights are significant in themselves.

It should be remembered that the SAGs have been in existence only for less than two decades, and it is premature to evaluate their achievements in the area of structural changes. Evolutionary structural change necessarily involves long-term organization and persistent struggle. What is important is that SAGs have initiated a movement towards bringing about structural change. Some SAGs and rural movements have already brought about significant changes that have affected the lives of people for the better. In an earlier phase of ARP's activities it was instrumental in initiating a self-reliant rural

movement in Chitamor, Tamil Nadu. Similarly groups such as the Bhoomi Sena (see Development Dialogue, 1977) and the Chipko Movement (see The State of India's Environment, 1985) have initiated self-reliant, people-based development projects that have contributed towards structural change - both in terms of bringing about new structures and of qualitatively changing the relationship of people to existing structures.

The SAGs' approach to the use of communications too, like their use of the popular theatre, is based on the principle of participation and dialogue. Communication within the ARP, for example, is part of a larger process of human development and, as my study shows, neither the medium of the popular theatre nor its content is imposed from above. Rather, both medium and content evolve from within a participatory process of learning. It is this process which is primary. For example, the land-grabbing incident mentioned in the study was a part of this process, and the popular theatre merely clarified and deepened its contours.

It would be unwise to assume that SAGs have contributed towards the formation of a single alternative model of development. What is important is that they are clear about ends and follow different means to achieve these ends. The development approach of SAGs is local-specific and therefore their models are micro-based. In order for the state to benefit from the development approach of SAGs it would have to recover the Gandhian vision of the Panchayati Raj or local self-government based on a decentralised village development strategy. The extensive development approach of the state, like for example the T & V System, will not be able to benefit from the example of SAGs because they deal with large population groups rather than with specific minorities.

There are hundreds of SAGs in India, working with marginalised people, but they have different objectives and faith commitments, and often they are ideologically divided. It is not a people's movement, but various people's movements. Attempts to bring a number of groups under one umbrella, as was made by the currently Delhi-based CISRS (Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society) have not been conspicuously successful. In the case of the CISRS it led to serious conflict with another network, the Urban Rural Mission. In fact personality clashes are not infrequent among social action groups, and some of them tend to reflect the aims of the funding agencies. Among the more effective groups, a good many are officially suspect and have problems with hostile state and central governments.

In the circumstances it is unrealistic to hope that these groups will produce a national impact in the near future.

Success Stories of People's Communication

Perhaps it may be useful to take a look at a few of the success stories of people's communication outside India. An obvious instance is the Zimbabwe story. A copiously documented book by Julie Frederikse (1982), None but Ourselves, has the sub-title "Masses vs. Media in the Making of Zimbabwe". The book was born "in the aftermath of the landslide election win that brought guerilla leader Robert Mugabe's party to power (p.ii). Rhodesians were stunned by the victory of the terrorists, but black Zimbabweans were not surprised. How could the blacks and the whites form such "radically different perceptions of a supposedly shared reality"? The book is an attempt to answer that question. The blurb does not exaggerate when it says:

Rhodesia's rulers had more than political power. They controlled the mass media. And with the press, radio, TV, books, pamphlets, posters, films and advertisements - backed up by laws that censored and suppressed - they aimed to control the minds of the people. Yet, with grassroots resources and guerilla tactics, the people defeated the technologically superior mass media. Their Chimurenga songs and clandestine mass meetings had a power and a relevance that the mass media never matched. It was through this psychological war of liberation that Rhodesia became Zimbabwe. Through the words of the combatants in this propaganda war, and illustrated with the media weapons used by both sides, this book shows why the people of Zimbabwe could say that, 'None but ourselves have freed our minds'.

The people had "a means of communication of their own which they had never conceived of as 'media', yet the message they received and communicated had a power that the mass media never matched...As in the military struggle, it was the total involvement of the people that proved decisive in this psychological war of liberation" (pp vii).

But the differences between India and Zimbabwe are all too obvious. Zimbabwe is a much smaller country. What obtained was a crisis situation in an immediate sense; the issues were sharp and clear; the enemy could be identified and named; the aspiration for liberation and not development in the broader sense made up the context. Development could not take place without liberation, and controlled media were rendered ineffective by people's media in the strategy of a struggle for liberation.

This was also what happened in the Philippines more recently. The February (1986) revolution was indeed a triumph of "people's power". Jovito Salonga, who has been Chairman of the Presidential

Commission on Good Government in the Philippines, said in a speech delivered at the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, on 8 October 1986: "Perhaps no other revolution in recent history has captured the imagination and stirred the hopes of oppressed peoples throughout the world than the unique, peaceful revolution that occurred in the Philippines last February (mimeo, p.2) On the process of that revolution Carino writes(1986):

The shattering of the Marcos regime brought into the surface of political life the marvellous expression of "people's power". At no other time have so many people gone to the streets and asserted even if only in a fleeting way their right and power to indicate their desires, to express their protest and their grievance against the former regime, and to impose their will upon the established powers and processes of political life. They confronted tanks. They intervened into what was clearly a split in the military ranks. They barricaded the streets. They put their bodies, their belongings, their precious properties on the line. They defied "law and order". They said no to existing legal and constitutional sanctions. A dusk to dawn curfew, for example, was declared. They laughed at it. In a marvellous expression of numbers and persistence, they asserted and showed that "people" are a power to contend with in political life. People cannot be ignored for ever. People are subjects. People are not always and forever afraid. (p.85).

Behind this lay, no doubt, the long, patient and risky efforts of a great many grass-roots movements. They published clandestine newspapers; they made use of the people's theatre and other forms of indigenous communication. Their strategies of conscientisation were similar to those of SAGs in India. But what has now emerged from all these is "a centrist government devoted so far to some mild reforms but caught in the uneasy tangle of balancing popular aspirations with very traditional economic and political forces that restrict its capacity to really be a government 'of the people, by the people, for the people'" (Carino, 1986, p.83)

There has indeed been political liberation. The dominant Catholic church supported it; the army defected, and isolated the dictator; the United States approved. But the problems remain, including, in the words of Salonga, the grinding poverty of the masses, "the dismantling of the structures of dictatorship, among them an army which had paid little regard for human rights and a controlled media which still operate with little regard for truth, the

reorganisation of a corrupt government bureaucracy, and an excessive dependence on external forces (op.cit.p.7).

The political situation of the Philippines too is very different from that of India where religious pluralism and the deep cultural differences pose almost insurmountable problems to forge a unified strategy to counter what is not so much a dictatorship as pervasive underdevelopment.

In some respects the Latin American phenomenon of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs)¹ presents a much closer parallel to the SAGs in India. The BECs began to be formed in the sixties. They are basic in the sense that they are mostly formed and they function at the grass-roots, in poor rural areas and impoverished urban suburbs, among the people who are the basis of society. They are basic also because they are organised at the base, with their own resources and through their own efforts. They are ecclesial because, as frequently pointed out, they are a new form of being the church. They are a community in the sense that there is a strong solidarity among them, and they share resources, material and spiritual, with one another.

There are over 100,000 such communities in Brazil alone, and Santa Ana points out that their impact on society is out of all proportion to their number. (p.384). The major popular movements in Brazil during the last ten years either originated in or were supported by the basic communities - the movement for human rights and political amnesty, the movement against consumerism and expensive life-styles, the attempts to renew the trade union movement, the movement for direct elections for the presidency, and several others. Some of them were not successful, but they have all left a legacy of social mobilisation. Political parties can no longer reckon without them.

The BECs are a Christian phenomenon in a Catholic continent and, less extensively, in a few other places. There is no shared faith or common ideology in India, and religious pluralism is a reality and often a source of conflict. In one sense the SEGs are basic human communities but they must function within a milieu of religious divisions and communal rivalries.

¹ See Julio de Santa Ana, "Schools of Sharing: Basic Ecclesial Communities" in The Ecumenical Review, WCC, Geneva, Vol.38, No.4 (Oct.1986), p.31; Kuncheria Pathil, "Basic Christian Communities: A New Ecclesial Model" in Jeevadhara, Kottayam, Vol.XV, No.88 (July 1985), p.326; and T.K.Thomas, "How Basic Communities are changing Latin America," in One World, Geneva, No.98 (July 1984), p.17.

A Similar Study

At a number of points the findings of my study agree with the conclusions reached by a five-year Inter-cultural Programme (ICP) undertaken by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). The final report of the programme entitled Experiences in People's Communication, was presented at the WACC Central Committee meeting in May 1987. The unstated assumptions of the study were the following:

- that mass media did not seem to bring about social change in a direction or of a quality that WACC thought desirable.
- that in certain Third World societies there are still extant, modes of communication that are capable of producing social changes of a different quality and at a faster pace.
- that these modes of communication
 1. are indigenous
 2. use minimum or appropriate technology
 3. are low cost
 4. are accessible to people
 5. are capable of being managed by them
 6. are participatory
 7. are capable of influencing consciousness and raising awareness more effectively than mass media, and
 8. can produce change that is self-generated and endogenous rather than change that is induced from outside or exogenous(pp.5f).

The ICP, started in 1981, was carried out in several villages in Mexico, the Philippines, and the states of Bengal and Tamil Nadu² in India. As it proceeded its focus shifted from "the cognitive and the academic to the conative and the pragmatic"(p.8). The "transformation of the original vision" is described thus.

Instead of searching for new communication skills that we might use for realising our goals, we identified ourselves with the groups with whom we were working and learnt along with them how they achieved their own goals. In the process we acquired a new understanding of our own goals.

The emphasis shifted from research to participation, from knowledge to action. We were not concerned so much with carrying away with us a new store of knowledge, as with identifying ourselves with those who were trying to improve the quality of their lives. And the question of acquiring new communication skills, and using them for realising our corporate goals, became secondary. Our objectives ceased to be fragmentary. They became holistic(p.8).

²In Tamil Nadu, the ICP worked with ARP, the group with which I was myself working during my field study.

Thus the methodology changed from the quantitative, through participant observation, to what may be called participant activism or total identification. That is to say, those in charge of the programme became involved with people in their struggle to change reality. The team summarises its findings thus:

- there is nothing sacrosanct about indigenous traditional or culture-based communication.

- they acquire significance only in the context of a developed and motivated consciousness.

- in the struggle to emerge from oppression, powerless people turn to tools or forms of communication which are available to them, which they can understand and manage and which will not in turn become tools of another dominance. Traditional or indigenous forms of communication are valuable in that they lend themselves to that purpose.

- but the emphasis is not on "traditional or on "indigenous" or on "culture". The emphasis is on "participation" and "access". Therefore the use of audio-visual aids, even audio and video technology, is not excluded, if they can be accessed and if the people can participate in them.

- the central communication reality is not the medium or the message but the consciousness of the people. The development of consciousness of oppressed people is not a function of communication or of technology. It is a product of animation, interaction, dialogue, participation, trial and error and networking. Tools and forms of communication are aids to this process, never a substitute. Without the social process, communication, whether technological or traditional, cannot achieve much in the way of radical social change(pp.55f).

My own studies on the "official" media of communication demonstrated the elitist orientation of the official approach to communication and development. The study on alternative communication for development, exemplified in the communications approach of the ARP, revealed the existence of an approach to communication and development that is unashamedly oriented towards the most disadvantaged in society - including landless agricultural labourers. The emphasis in this approach is not merely to use communication for the purpose of information transfer but to use the media of communications as tools by which the oppressed can direct their own development. Communication is not directed towards facilitating purely economic goals but also to bring about a conscientised community, capable of being actively involved in their own development. Communication is used to build an authentic people's culture, a culture that is a basis for the formation of strong grass-roots communities. The two studies agree in their assessment, but the WACC study seems to suggest that the alternative

model must become the standard. But is that possible, given the Indian situation with all its structural constraints and pluralist complexities? And, in any case, can it be assumed that SAGs like the ARP will merge and grow into one sustained people's movement? At present there are no signs of that: they remain pockets of creativity in a largely arid and unimaginative communication context.

The State, SAGs, and the Future of Development Communication.

Will it be possible for the state and central governments to learn from such creative, alternative strategies of development communication? In the official documents on development, especially in the Five Year Plan documents, emphasis is laid on people's participation. In the Seventh Plan, a whole section is devoted to the possible role the voluntary sector can play in complementing the official strategies of national development. But at the same time the government has tightened its hold on voluntary agencies by restricting their access to funding.

As I have pointed out in Chapter 3, one of the depressing features of the communication and development situation in India is the general lack of an enlightened policy. There is not a single blueprint of the state's overall approach to communication and development, let alone an enlightened policy of communication. Rather, the strategies of communication and development and the overall planning of communication in India have occurred in fits and starts - not as a rational response to the needs of an existing situation, but as a response to short-term political goals. The introduction of colour TV coincided with the ASIAD games in 1982; the number of TV stations went up from 50 to 180 immediately before the 1984 elections. Political expediency, rather than a realistic appraisal of the needs of people, dictates communication strategies which consist mainly in expansion - or experiments. The expansion caters mainly to the urban masses. Two-thirds of the three million TV sets are owned by people in the four metropolitan cities. The vast rural population remains largely unreached. Radio, a much less expensive medium than TV, is increasingly neglected. The experiments like SITE and the Kheda project had little follow-up. They were expensive experiments and cannot be easily replicated, but the experience was important and could have influenced communication policies.

From time to time, commissions have been set by the government to look into the possibility of evolving a new policy of communication in India in the context of the ambitious plans for national development. In 1964, the Chanda Commission was set up by the Shastri

government. It recommended a restructuring of broadcasting under an autonomous corporation and argued that this was a prerequisite for any enlightened use of communication in national development. Similarly, in 1977, the Verghese Commission set up by the Janata government emphasised the need to provide for statutory autonomy for radio and television in India. In 1982 the Joshi Commission emphasised the need for the functional autonomy of television, and recommended a decentralised system of television and a grass-roots approach to communication and development in India. These various commissions have from time to time provided a much-needed critique of the existing system of centralised media operations and have recommended far-reaching structural changes in the organisation and working of the official media.

A number of communication experts have written about the need for a new communication policy in India. Such writings include Sondhi's Communication Growth and Public Policy (1983), Verghese's Philosophy of Development Communications (UNESCO Doc.44), Desai's Communication Policy in India (1977), Ghorpade's The Information Environment and Policy in India (1986) and various other articles by the late Iqbal Malik and others in the pages of the Indian Express, Seminar, India Today and other newspapers and magazines. The articles have dealt with the need for a new policy of communication in India which would pay sufficient attention to the developmental needs of the state and will take a middle-ground stance on the question of ownership and control - somewhere between the public and private sectors - and will strike a balance between the needs of the urban and rural people, and between the claims of education and information. But there is a rather naive assumption in some of the articles and in the Joshi report that such a policy would come about through an act of Gandhian voluntarism on the part of the state and the elites in the country. There is no attempt to deal with the issue as to how the existing power relationships can be changed or structural changes may be brought about.

Signs of Hope

But there are signs of hope. An article in a recent issue of The Overseas Hindustan Times (16 May 1987) contrasts the conventional health care and related communication activities in rural health centres around Aurangabad with the more participatory methods that are now being adopted. The posters used earlier did not make sense to local women. They could not identify the symbols of another culture.

"A picture of a child in a cot was interpreted as a dog or, alternatively, as a cockroach...a black and white drawing of an eye (was taken for) a fish or a vagina with the head of a baby in the centre!" Then the volunteer health workers began learning from the village women themselves, and they were asked to draw the symbols - of a pregnant woman, a woman being examined by a dai (midwife) and similar situations. The drawings were crude but the women could recognise themselves in them, and in a simplified form the symbols are now used in the villages. Similar innovations involving people's participation, the article says, have made perceptible difference in the health situation.

What prevents a major breakthrough is the intractable predicament of rural poverty. That too is beginning to be tackled by committed health workers through the starting of small projects which make it possible for the communities to earn extra income. The structural problem is not addressed, but there is the growing awareness of the inter-relation between ill-health and poverty. The article concludes:

Many of these projects, run with government and foreign funds, act as indicators to the official health scheme, which is based on a pyramidal structure, with the district hospital at the apex and the primary health centre or sub-centre at the bottom. In these alternative schemes, the emphasis is at the grass-roots, which makes the slogan not just "Health For All" but "Health By All" a living reality. At the same time, they are small in scope and are all run by persons of immense drive and charisma, which makes their replicability somewhat of a dilemma. Nevertheless, they show what can be achieved without spending more money - simply, by beginning with those who need it the most: mothers and children from the poorest families in villages.

Another sign of hope is the role of the press in India. Some of the newspapers, journals and magazines have played an important part in restoring the issue of development to the agenda of national debate. They have from time to time held up the example of SAGs, and defended them against government criticism and harassment. In the columns of newspapers like The Indian Express and The Statesman, and of magazines like India Today, The Illustrated Weekly, Sunday, and The Week, and Journals like Lokayan, Seminar, The Economic and Political Weekly, and Mainstream there has emerged a qualitatively balanced critique of the communication and development policies of the government.

There is little likelihood of a reform from within. In fact the policies of the present government are widening the already

enormous gap between the rich and the poor, in communication as in other things. Given the present political environment in the country, a communication policy based on a decentralised media system and a commitment to grass-roots participation will not happen as a matter of course. Nor, for that matter, is there a widespread demand for it. Gandhi had envisaged a decentralised system, the Panchayati Raj, but it was not taken up seriously. Jaya Prakash Narayan, with the slogan of Jan Sakti or people's power, hoped to democratise the political process in the mid-seventies. But both Gandhi and Narayan failed to influence the policies of the government and it is unrealistic to hope that the government will voluntarily decentralise the communication system. Without actually dismantling the present structures it should be possible for the state to exploit the unrealised potential of the rural theatre and the community radio station. There is, however, no move in that direction either. It is of the utmost importance in this context to create a demand for participatory communication. And this is precisely what the SAGs are doing. They use communication in the task of conscientisation, and use it in such a way that the process liberates people from cultural captivities and fatalistic resignation.

To conclude, while the concern of the government is to provide information, the SAGs are committed to the total transformation of individuals and communities. Their understanding of development involves social justice and economic growth. For them people are far more than the passive recipients of information; they are the subjects and not merely the objects of development. While the SAGs are not affiliated to political parties, their strategy of conscientisation and mobilisation of people have deep political implications, and sooner or later they come into confrontation and conflict with entrenched structures of oppression.

By empowering the powerless the SAGs enable people to play an intelligent and effective role in the democratic process. Both in their composition and their programmes they rise above religious and linguistic communalism, and such upholding of the secular ideal is of the utmost importance in a context where the political process is increasingly taking place along narrow communal lines. The SAGs are in this sense a corrective, but many of them are also committed to work for an alternative to the present political and economic order.

Much of what the SAGs have achieved is in the area of values and attitudes, and of awareness and vision, and it cannot be quantified. What can be justifiably claimed is that they provide a corrective to the official approach to development and development

communication; they set an example to the voluntary agencies which are still preoccupied with charity and relief; they instil hope and bring courage to marginalised sections of people who learn to stand on their own legs and wage their own struggles.

Communication for conscientisation, thanks to social action groups like ARP, is increasingly becoming conscientisation for participatory communication. If the process continues and becomes more widespread, a demand is bound to be created and articulated which the government will have to respect and respond to. But there is always the possibility that a people, emerging as subjects of their own destiny after centuries of suffering, may not have the patience to wait for such a response.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Observation: Dates and Places

DATES:

- (1) I was on location with Doordarshan from 20 September to 4 October, 1984, and on various other occasions for studio sessions.
- (2) I was with the Horticulture Department, Nilgiris, during the last two weeks of November, 1984, and during the last three weeks of January 1985.
- (3) I was in Madurai with the People's Education for Action and Liberation from 7 to 14 November.
- (4) With the Association for the Rural Poor, I spent time throughout my stay in Tamil Nadu, sometimes for 7 to 10 days at a stretch. I took part in various seminars, conferences, training camps, etc. with them.

PLACES:

The study is based on observations in:

North Arcot District
South Arcot District
Chingleput District
Kanyakumari Dist.
Nilgiris Dist.
Madurai Dist.
Madras (in Tamil Nadu) and
Satyavedu Taluk(in Andhra Pradesh)

II - Doordarshan: Facts and Figures

FACTS AT A GLANCE

(Source: Doordarshan - Television India- Audience Research Unit, Directorate General, Doordarshan, New Delhi).

(i) Number of TV Transmitters

Total TV Transmitters	183
Main Centres	11
Relay Centres	5
Post-SITE/INSAT Centres	10
LPTs/HPTs linked with Delhi	157

Coverage

	<u>Number in Lakhs</u>	<u>%</u>
a. Total Population	4,385	64
Urban Population	1,402	20 (85)
Rural Population	2,983	44 (56)
b. Total Area	(.000 sq.kms) 1335.00 (41%)	

(ii) Number of TV Sets

Sets upto December 31, 1984 (excluding yearly increase in 5 circles for which figures of 1983 have been taken into account)	36,32,328 (Prov).
Estimated sets as on December 31, 1985 (.000)	6750
Estimated sets manufactured during 1985 (in lakhs)	
Black & White	14.8
Colour	5.5

Licence Fee: Yearly fee abolished since March, 1985. Only one time fee of Rs 100 per TV set is paid at the time of purchase.

Figures in brackets indicate percentages with total urban and rural population respectively.

Source: P & T Department
Ogilvy Benson & Mather Media Bulletin
Issue 17, January 1986
Department of Electronics.

Main Doordarshan Kendras and Relay Centres

1. Delhi
2. Bombay - Pune - Panaji
3. Srinagar
4. Calcutta
5. Madras
6. Lucknow - Kanpur
7. Jalandhar - Amristsar
8. Bangalore
9. Trivandrum
10. Guwahati
11. Ahmedabad

Post-SITE/INSAT Centres

12. Jaipur/ Raipur / Muzaffarpur *
13. Hyderabad/ Gulbarga**
14. Sambalpur ***
15. Nagpur
16. Gorakhpur
17. Rajkot
18. Ranchi

* Base production centre at Delhi
** Base production centre at Hyderabad
*** Base production centre at Cuttack.

TRANSMISSION TIMINGS ON MAIN KENDRAS

Kendra	Monday - Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
			Morning	Evening
	pm	pm	am	pm
Delhi*	6.00-11.30	1.45-4.00 6.00-12.00	9.30-2.00	2.00-11.30
Bombay*	5.45-11.30	1.45-4.00 6.00-12.00	9.00-2.00	2.00-11.30
Calcutta	6.00-11.45 Thursday 5.30-11.15	1.45-4.00 5.25-12.00	10.00-2.00	2.00-11.15
Madras	5.30-11.15 Thursday 5.00-11.15	1.45-4.00 5.00-12.00	9.30-2.00 (1) 9.00-2.00 (2) 8.30-2.00 (3.5) 8.50-2.00 (4)	2.00-11.15
Jalandhar	5.00-11.15	1.45-4.00 5.00-12.00	8.30-2.00	2.00-11.15
Lucknow	6.00-11.15	1.45-4.00 5.30-12.00	9.30-2.00	2.00-11.15
Srinagar	5.30-11.15	1.45-4.00 5.30-12.00	10.00-2.00	2.00-11.15
Bangalore	7.00-11.30	1.45-4.00 5.30-11.45	9.00-2.00	2.00-11.30
Trivandrum	6.30-11.15	1.45-4.00 6.00-12.00	9.00-2.00	2.00-11.15
Guwahati	6.00-11.15	1.45-4.00 6.00-12.00	9.15-2.00	2.00-11.15
Ahmedabad	7.00-11.15	1.45-4.00 7.00-12.00	9.30-2.00	2.00-11.15

* In addition, facility of Channel II is available between 6.30-8.30 p.m.

Table No. 1.1

Programme Composition by Language
(May 1986)

Language	<u>Average duration in percentage</u>	
	Main Kendras	INSAT Kendras
Hindi	38	46
English	29	32
Other Indian Languages	24	13
Instrumental Music/dance	4	5
Misc. items like Slides/Fillers Highlights/Commercials/ Announcements	5	4
Total	100	100

Note: Main Kendras include Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras
Jalandhar and Lucknow.

INSAT Kendras include UDK Delhi, Nagpur, Gorakhpur
Cuttack and Gulbarga.

Table No. 1.2

Programme Composition by Format
(May 1986)

Format	<u>Average duration in percentage</u>	
	Main Kendras	INSAT kendras
Spoken word	19	14
Serial/Play/Skit	21	21
Feature Film/Chitrahaar	14	14
Sports	8	8
News	11	10
Music	7	6
Documentary	8	14
Dance	2	4
TV Report	1	1
Cartoon/Puppet/Muppet	1	1
Quiz	1	1
Recitation	1	1
Demonstration	1	1
Misc. like Slides/Fillers/ Highlights/Commercials/ Announcements	5	4
Total	100	100

Note: Main Kendras include Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta,
Madras, Jalandhar, Lucknow
INSAT Kendras include UDK Delhi, Nagpur, Gorakhpur,
Cuttack and Gulbarga.

Table No. 1.3

Programme Composition by Production Kendra/Agency
(May 1986)

Production Kendra/Agency	<u>Average duration in perc.</u>	
	Main Kendras	INSAT Kendras
Delhi	27	31
Bombay	7	*
Calcutta	4	2
Madras	6	2
Lucknow	4	*
Jalandhar	6	*
Srinagar	*	*
Bangalore	1	1
Trivandrum	*	-
UDK Delhi	*	4
Cuttack	-	4
Hyderabad	1	2
Nagpur	-	2
Rajkot	*	*
Ranchi	*	*
Ahmedabad	*	*
Gorakhpur	-	1
	56	50.5
<u>Production from other Indian sources</u>		
Sponsored	15	17
Feature film/Chittrahaar	12	14
Film division	2	1
Other Indian sources	*	*
	29	32.5
<u>Production from foreign Sources</u>		
Misc. Items	5	4
Total:	100	100

Note: Star indicates less than .5%

Table No. 2.1

Programme Composition by Language

National Programme
(January-June 86)

Language	Average duration in percentage
Hindi	47
English	45
Other Indian Languages	3
Instrumental Music/Dance	5
Misc. Items like Slides/Fillers/ Highlights/Commercial/ Announcements	*
Total:	100

* Indicates less than 0.5%

Table No. 2.2

Programme Composition by Format

National Programme
(January-June '86)

Format	Average duration in Percentage
Spoken word	12
Serial/Play/Skit	25
Feature film/Chitrahaar	3
Sports	3
News	27
Music	6
Documentary	13
Dance	2
TV Report	4
Cartoon/Puppet/Muppet	*
Quiz	3
Recitation	2
Demonstration	-
Misc. Items like Slides/ Fillers/Highlights/ Commericals/Announcements	*
Total	100

* Indicates less than 0.5 %

Table No. 2.3

PROGRAMME COMPOSITION BY PRODUCTION KENDRA/AGENCY

National Programme

(January-June '86)

Production Kendra/Agency	Average duration in percentage
Delhi	51
Bombay	4
Calcutta	3
Madras	1
Lucknow	*
Jalandhar	1
Srinagar	*
Bangalore	1
Trivandrum	*
UDK Delhi	1
Cuttack	1
Hyderabad	1
Nagpur	*
Rajkot	*
Ranchi	*
Ahmedabad	*
Gorakhpur	-
	<hr/> 65 <hr/>
<u>Production from other Indian sources</u>	
Sponsored	26
Feature film/Chitrahaar	2
Film division	1
Other Indian sources	1
	<hr/> 30 <hr/>
Production from foreign sources	5
Misc. Items	*
Total:	<hr/> 100 <hr/>

* Indicates less than 0.5 %

Community TV Sets * As on April 1986

Centre		Location			Total
		School	Panchayat Ghars	Others	
1.	Delhi	318	--	136	454
2.	Bombay	225	1,617	272	2,114
3.	Calcutta	23	3	263	289
4.	Madras	140	578	20	738
5.	Jalandhar	4	187	9	200
6.	Amritsar	--	--	--	125
7.	Lucknow	248	--	571	819
8.	Srinagar	236	205	138	576
9.	Ahmedabad	740	--	--	740
10.	Jaipur	649	--	385	1,034
11.	Raipur	--	--	--	240
12.	Muzaffarpur	193	24	31	248
13.	Gorakhpur	816	--	--	816
14.	Cuttack	614	--	3	617
15.	Hyderabad	540	365	--	905
16.	Gulbarga	240	--	--	240
17.	Nagpur	867	--	--	867
18.	Rajkot	500	--	--	500
19.	Ranchi	639	--	--	639
Total:					12,164

* Provisional

Future Projections

	1981	1983	1985	1990
No. of Transmitters	18	41	173	190
No. of TV sets (Lakhs)	19	32	80	300
Audience Build Up (Million)	27	38	80	260
<u>% Urban Population Covered</u>				
Potential	38	46	80	90
Actual	5	10	32	50

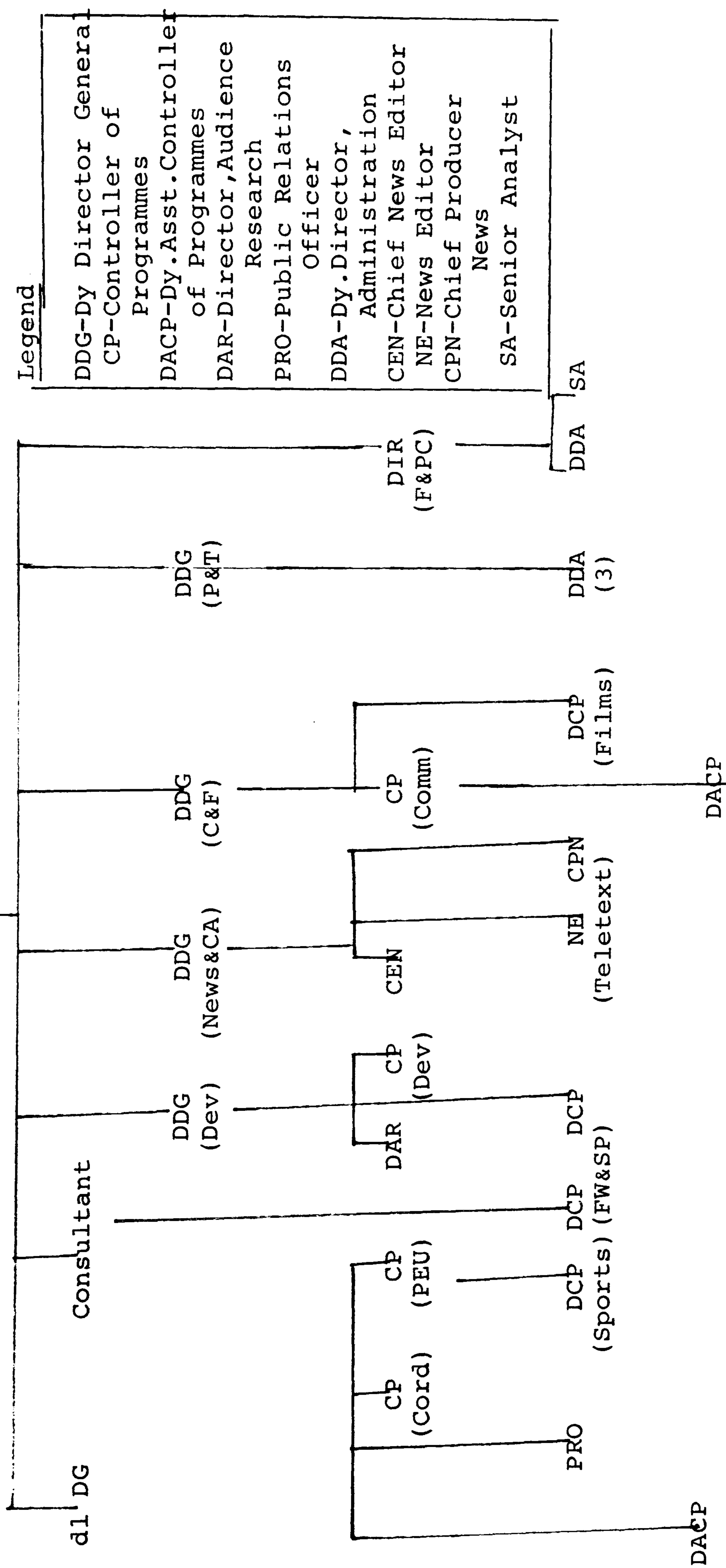
Source: INTAM; Pathfinders: Mediasearch

Landmarks in Doordarshan

1. TV Experimental Service Inaugurated by the President of India :Sept.15,1959
2. School Television Project launched :Oct.24,1961
3. Daily one-hour general service began:Aug.15,1965
4. Krishi Darshan - the first rural programme started in Delhi :Jan.26, 1967
5. The second TV Station inaugurated at Bombay :Oct.2,1972
6. Satellite Instructional TV Experiment(SITE) introduced in six states in 2,400 villages :August 1, 1975
7. Introduction of Commercials on TV :Jan.1, 1976
8. TV separated from All India Radio :April 1,1976
9. Satellite Instruction Television Experiment (SITE) completed :July 31,1976
10. First Post-SITE Centre Commissioned at Jaipur :March 1,1977
11. Launching of INSAT-1A :April 10,1982
12. Operationalisation of INSAT-1A and inauguration of National Programme and Colour Telecasts (INSAT-1A abandoned on Sept.6,'82 :August 15,1982
13. Commissioning of 20 Low Power Transmitters & coverage of IX Asiad through TV network :Nov.19,1982
14. Coverage of Non-Aligned meet through TV network :March 7-12,1983
15. Launching of INSAT-1B :August 30,1983
16. Operationalisation of INSAT-1B :Oct.15,1983
17. Coverage of CHOGM through TV network:Nov.22-28,1983
18. Programme of Higher Education :Aug.15,1984
19. Silver Jubilee of Doordarshan :Sept.15,1984
20. Inauguration of 2nd Channel in Delhi:Sept.17,1984
21. Inauguration of 2nd Channel in Bombay :May1,1985
22. Inauguration of INTEXT Service :Nov.19,1985
23. Terrestrial Transmitters in Maharashtra are linked with Bombay :Aug.9,1986

Organisational Chart : Directorate General Doordarshan

Programme & Administration





(ii) Base Production unit of Japur, Raipur and Muzaffarpur is at Delhi

AUGUST

APPENDIX III - Questionnaire used for survey

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1

1. Name
2. Age
3. Sex M F
4. Caste/Religion
5. Occupation - Farmer/non-farmer
6. Landholding - 0-1 hectare
 1-2 "
 2 and above hectare
7. Ownership of house -
 non-ownership
 Single-storeyed house
 Double-storeyed house
8. Ownership of Business
9. " Plantations
10. " Agricultural technology (eg., tractor)
11. " Farm animals
12. " Irrigation facilities (eg., pump sets)
13. " Vehicles (eg., lorry, jeep etc.)
14. " Storage facilities
15. " Radio/radio-cassettes
16. Access to Credit facilities
17. " Agricultural technology
18. " Irrigation facilities
19. Subscription to newspapers, magazines or both
20. Literacy level- Primary
 Secondary
 University
21. Contact/non-contact farmer

Section 2 - Sources of Information and Obstacles to Translation, if any

1. Where have you got the most information on agricultural practices from?

Vew

Traditional knowledge

Neighbours

Radio

Contact with outside

Contact farmers

2. How useful has this information been?

Very

Somewhat

Not at all

3. Has the information received been -

Easily understood

Difficult?

4. What are the major obstacles in the translation of information into productive practice?

	Primary	Secondary
Expensive inputs	-	-
Small landholdings	-	-
Non-availability of fertilisers/pesticides	-	-
Non-availability of credit	-	-
Non-availability of seeds	-	-
Marketing structures	-	-

Section 3 - Farm Broadcasts

1. What do you use the radio for?

	Primary	Secondary
Entertainment	-	-
Political Information	-	-
General news	-	-
Farm broadcasts	-	-
Weather report	-	-

2. What time do you usually tune in?
Morning
Mid-morning
Afternoon
Mid-afternoon
Evening
Night
3. Do you feel that farm broadcasts are on the air at a suitable time?
4. How often do you listen to the farm broadcasts?
Everyday
Once/twice a week
" " Fortnight
" " month
Never
5. In what way have these broadcasts helped you?
6. How do you rate farm broadcasts?
Good
Very good
Not relevant
7. Do you like the format of farm broadcasts as it is or would you like changes in the format?

Section 4. Extension Workers

1. What are your opinions on VEWs?
Helpful
Biased
Too technical
2. Have you been directly influenced by the VEW to adopt innovations?
Adoption of new technology
" cropping
" seeds (HYV)
" fertilisers
" pesticides
" new methods of sowing
" " tilling

3. Have you seen audio-visual displays (slides) put up by the VEW? If yes, how useful have they been?

Section 5 - General

1. Have you seen films on horticultural practices, crop protection, use of fertilisers, pesticides?

Yes/No

2. If yes, how often have you seen them?

Once a month

" in six months

" a year

3. How useful have these been?

Very useful

Useful

Not useful at all

4. Do you feel that contact farmers are helpful?

Yes/No

APPENDIX IV

Notes on Observation with the ARP

I had corresponded with the director of ARP in early 1984, prior to my field visit to India. I had to go through a period of familiarising myself with the ARP before they accepted me as an observer. In the beginning, the director of ARP, Dr Felix Sugirtharaj, was quite wary about letting me observe their activities. This was partly due to the fact that the state had been "spying" on their activities and therefore all newcomers were suspect.

I was fortunate in being an observer with the ARP because the groups were involved in the sort of alternative communication strategies I was keen to observe; and they conducted during the period a series of workshops a good many of which I was able to attend. I could not attend some of their workshops organised in late September and in January 1986, because the dates clashed with my work with the Doordarshan and with the Horticultural Department, Nilgiris.

I met Prabhu, their main animateur, at the Royapuram headquarters in July 1984 and he did prove a source of valuable information during my stint with the ARP. I had no problems in being accepted by the animateurs. Initially I had some difficulty with the villagers and they mistook me at various times for a government officer, an agricultural expert and a medical doctor. But in most cases I did strike a rapport with them in two to three days' time. My knowledge of Tamil was an advantage in the field. Although I did not join in any of the performances, I was at times called upon to speak after the performance was over. These were embarrassing moments. There was one occasion when I refused to speak, but on learning that it would be taken as an insult I quickly changed my mind and spoke. At times I actively participated in the evaluation sessions; at other times I remained an observer. I conducted a number of interviews with members of ARP, including local cadres, animateurs and the director, and took part in a number of their discussion groups.

In many ways my stint with the ARP was the most rewarding experience. It gave me an opportunity to experience how "the other half" lived. It gave me an idea of the odds they were fighting against, and I learned to admire their fortitude, courage and strength in the face of a daily experience of oppression and deprivation.

APPENDIX V

A Sample of ARP's Liberation Songs

Translated from the Original Tamil

Let us unite and fight

Emaciated workers,
Toiling for years,
Whose world is this -
Created by your sweat and tears?

Chorus

Brothers and Sisters
Let us think for ourselves,
Let us unite and fight
And find liberation

Saviours and governments,
Have come and gone,
Oppression is their main aim,
How long will we remain tame?

Chorus

The landlord treats you like cattle,
Like puppets you remain
Dancing to their tune,
While they delight and fatten

Chorus

You are the salt of the earth,
Let us save its savour,
Let us unite
And ignite the fire of unity

Chorus

Government

Chorus

Our central and state governments
Are for the rich,
Not for us,
Yes, that is the truth.

If a poor man makes ten rupees
He is called a thief
When a minister makes a crore of rupees
And supports the black economy
He is called a saviour.

Chorus

Our rules are always building
statues to their leaders
They do not see,
That people are dying,
This democracy is a sham
It is for the rich and not for us

Chorus

While we do not have food and shelter,
Our corrupt rulers revel,
We have no jobs,
But let us fight
And create a new state

Chorus

Change

Chorus

Let us change this world
Let us change this world
Let us fight and we will win
And we will change the world

Some priests say that we suffer
Because of our sins,
They say that Fate is strong
But do not believe their words

Chorus

Our land and our money
Is in the hands of the rich
While we live by the sweat of our brow
They take away all our rights

Chorus

There is no justice in this world
And corruption is everywhere
And there is no justice for the poor,
Let us unite and fight

Chorus

We need to win our rights,
We need to fight our fight
Through new knowledge and the struggle,
We will win our fight

Chorus

APPENDIX VI

Communication in the development strategy of PEAL,
Madurai, Tamil Nadu, 7-12 November 1984

People's Education for Action and Liberation (PEAL) was formed in 1974 and its ideology and approach to development are similar to the ARP's. But unlike the ARP, PEAL has a very strong emphasis on women's liberation. Its activities are organised and conducted by an affiliated body called The Tamil Nadu Women's Progressive Organisation (TNWPO).

PEAL's major communication activities are pursued through the print media. They make use of posters, hand-bills and rural newspapers in their alternative communication strategy. They have not used the theatre much, and the popular theatre workshop that I attended was the first such exercise organised by PEAL. While the organisers of PEAL described it as a form of popular theatre, in reality it had more affinities with the conventions of the proscenium stage. It was not intended as an educational tool for the oppressed, only for production during a regional conference of grassroots activists. Also, it did not include local people and was not a very flexible form. It was based on a script and did not permit improvisation of any kind.

But PEAL's main concern is with the print-media. They have a widespread clientele; their rural newspapers are meant for both middle-class and lower-class sections. For example, their women's newspaper has a wide readership; among the readers are women in the judiciary, the police forces and the local administration. The accent is on making women in high places aware of the problems that women in general face in a male-dominated and gender-conscious society. Posters and hand-bills are used to mobilise people.

During the workshop, I visited one of the areas where PEAL was involved in organising people displaced by a dam. The people of Vandal Karrutupatti had been displaced in the early sixties because of the construction of the Vaigai hydro-electric project, and for many years they were denied the compensation that was rightly

theirs. In organising these people, PEAL made use of hand-bills which they distributed to both the victims of development and the representatives of the state. PEAL was also involved in educational activities among other oppressed sections of society including quarry workers, landless agricultural labourers, weavers and salt workers. Although they had used audio-visual aids in their programmes, it was a comparatively expensive medium, and its use had now been curtailed.

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