

102

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A VILLAGE IN SOUTH GUJARAT

by

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Some Impressions of Dharampur*

Girja Sharan

The Taluka

Located in Bulsar district of south Gujarat, Dharampur taluka is its southern most part bordering with Maharashtra, Dadar and Nagar Haveli. Taluka population - 194000 - is, in composition, predominantly tribal. People live in 34012 households distributed over 237 villages. Dharampur the only town in the taluka, headquarters the entire state machinery including panchayat, police, banks, forest departments, etc. It is located on the extreme north-west corner of the taluka. It is connected with outside by only two permanent roads - the highways - which are the only ones open year-round.

The region is densely wooded (teak, bamboo, mahua, khair, etc.) hilly and has high rainfall nearing 90" a year. The taluka headquarters is virtually cut-off (or accessible with only great difficulty) from the rest of the population at least during monsoon and from certain areas even beyond. During this period the schools are deserted by the teachers, health centres by the doctors and villages by village level functionaries like talati, gram-sevikas etc. unless they happen to belong to the village (which is rare) or be provided with residential facilities (which too is rare).

Among the state functionaries who do remain in the village all the time, one is Police Patel. He is actually a village man assigned police task, and paid for his services. We also learned that forest guards have been provided with one room cottages in the forests so they too remain. After the monsoon major roads are repaired temporary ones are made making it more easily accessible.

2. The Productive Assets

The productive assets of the taluka, at least those observable easily to a visitor are the people, 173000 acres of forest, 140614 acres of cultivated land and as mentioned earlier, good rainfall.

3. State of Development of Productive Forces

(a) The people:

People are the basic object of development. The transformation of forest or agriculture, or growth of industry are the indices reflecting the extent to which the people are actively involved in the process of development.

*I am grateful to Prof. Vyas who suggested that I visit the place and Prof. Moulik and Ranjit Gupta who facilitated the touring of the area and also for discussions.

Judging again from what is easily observable, the dominant impression one gets of the people is that they are poor and engage desperately in merely keeping body and soul together.

It is not easy to describe poverty, particularly so in case of people like that of Dharampur. Typically a family has enough of its own to eat only during a few months shortly after October-November. The only cropping season, kharif, ends then. Paddy, nangli etc. is harvested and eaten along with a variety of other forest products. The variety and the supply of food runs out quickly. The meals become more scarce. People look out for jobs with bigger land owners, PWD, forest department, or migrate across the taluka on grass cutting contracts. All these jobs put together are too few. Majority of the people scrounge the forest for whatever is available including plants, leaves, and roots which are even poisonous and have to be pre-processed before being edible. Ranjit Gupta* has given an excellent description of the people's living - food, health, schooling etc.

A passage in his write-up runs thus — "During summer and some parts of winter, when the larder is empty which is usually the case with varlis, koknas and other poorer groups, they eat whatever is readily available from the jungle: fruits such as 'bora' (zizypus jujuba), 'payer' (ficus cardifolia) and 'umber' (fices glomarata), wild roots such as 'kanda' (tacca pinnatifida), wild flowers and even grains of wild grass such as 'sava' (panicum miliacem). 'Kanda' is a kind of poisonous root. To eat it they first cut it into circular pieces and put them in a basket. The basket soaked with water is kept in store for a night. Next morning it is washed and boiled with fresh water. If chillies or 'chatni' are available so much the better. Otherwise the boiled stuff is eaten with no other ingredient except salt." The poverty, even in terms of the official index of hunger - per capita calorie consumption - of Dharampur people can be guessed, as suggested by Ranjit Gupta by comparison with Varlis of Maharashtra. There, it is reported to be 1350, about 900 units below even that prescribed by Planning Commission. The Varlis there are better off than the people of Dharampur.

Monsoon is the worst period in this process of meals becoming increasingly scarce. During monsoon there are no jobs either. The people then go to such families in the village who have more and borrow from them for surviving the monsoon. The borrowed grain is also used for seeds. The grain loan is called 'khauti' in which the interest rate is 50% to 100%. One does not know when a particular family got into this cycle but the majority of the people in the village take such loans year after year.

The traditional index of education—literacy rate - more precisely the ability to read and write - is today 9%. The state of people's physical health is poor and ill attended to.

*Ranjit Gupta, Rural Development for Rural Poor, Dharampur Project, Part I, The Setting, pp.103 (Vyas, Mouluk, Desai, Gupta).

(b) Industry, Forest and Agriculture:

By way of industry the only ones are a rice mill, a leather factory, a few small edible oil plants and a few weaving households - all in Dharampur. Forest which could normally be expected to provide base for a number of allied industries is largely untapped in this aspect. Again an excellent account of undeveloped nature of forest is given by B.M. Desai in the report "The Setting". In terms of employment too the forest contribution is dismal, 8% of the total taluka work force. The net revenue from the forest is about Rs.55 lakh per year.

The agricultural productivity per acre is low. Paddy yields are about 5-6 quintals per acre. Number of crops grown are very few and most of these are for consumption.

In short, majority of people are poor, trapped in debilitating cycle of-khauti - low production-more khauti. The schools have not succeeded in releasing the potential of the people for development. Forest and agriculture are undeveloped and there is almost no industry.

4. Past and Continuing Efforts

(a) Government efforts:

The efforts to develop the region - if these can be indicated by the money and men involved - stand briefly like this. The Tribal Development Project (TDP) which is supposed to share bulk of the responsibility is staffed by 740 men/women and its last year annual budget was Rs.80 lakhs. The forest department is staffed by people including Regional Forest Officer, circle guards, forest guards, beat guards etc. The entire taluka is covered by panchayat net work.

All but 42 villages have 'schools'. All together there are 11 Balwadis (pre-school), 240 primary, 8 Ashramshala (also primary school), 7 secondary schools, 28 Basic training centres and 2 industrial training schools. There are more than 600 teachers on the pay roll.

There are 63 fair price shops. In the area of medical care there are 4 primary health centres and 8-10 sub-centres for basic health facilities and family planning. There are about 35 cooperative societies, a land mortgage bank and a cooperative bank etc. These establishments are continually evolving new schemes and proposals.

(b) Non-government:

There are a number of individuals and agencies outside the government network, engaged in various kinds of activities. The Jungle Mandali is cooperative organisation of the forest workers. Their total number of members may be around 12000. A sarvodaya worker organises khadi work. There are about 8 ashramshalas which are residential primary-cum-vocational (agriculture) schools started by individuals. All ashramshalas are wholly supported by

government financially. Some are also supported by trust and one or two by panchayat.

Besides, there have been numerous scholars studying the various aspect of Dharampur people - reports, graduate dissertations etc. have been published. Quite a few no doubt concerned themselves with problem of development in someway or the other. So on the surface at least, it would seem that neither the concern nor the efforts have lacked entirely.

I took a brief visit out of curiosity. In the course of our visit we saw Dharampur town, a few villages, talked with village people, school teachers, government officials of taluka and district level and some non-government agencies.

5. (a) Narwad village:

Narwad a small village is about 42 kms., south-east of Dharampur town. It is located on one of the state highways (Dharampur-Nasik). The border of Maharashtra is only a short distance from there. According to the upto-date electoral roll there are 72 households in the village. It is possible the electoral roll excludes certain households. But these will not be many. According to talati records there are 104 khatedars (individuals on whose name land is registered)*. The talati stated that the number of households not owning land is about 15-20. Among khatedars the land distribution is as shown below:

Land holding (Acres)	No. of Khatedars in the category	Approximate acreage**	Proportion of area	Cumulative percentage
50 - 55	2	109	11.9	11.9
25 - 30	2	60	6.5	18.4
20 - 25	4	90	9.8	28.2
15 - 20	10	175	19.1	47.3
10 - 15	15	185	20.2	67.5
5 - 10	26	208	22.7	90.2
2 - 5	25	65	7.1	97.3
Less than 2	18	20	7.1	97.3
Landless household (approximate)	15 - 20	913		

** These are calculated on mid value of the group. The total (913) is from the records.

*Number of Khatedar exceeds that of total village households on electoral roll. Possible reasons: more than one khatedar belonging to same household; persons outside the village owning land here. Former is more likely as there are also some households not owning any land and this was subsequently supported by conversation with talati.

The total cultivated area in this village according to the records is 913 acres. Four largest land owners have 18.4% of the total land and top 8 about 28%. About 25% of the households in this village do not own land. The proportion of landless households in the entire taluka is higher. The total number of landless household in taluka is 17070, which is 50% of the total.*

Land concentration gives only partial picture of the concentration of power in the village. Narwad village forms panchayat with another adjacent village. We proceeded to meet the sarpanch. We were led to the house of one Mr. Dhakal. Mr. Dhakal is the Panch. Talati's record showed that Mr. Dhakal is one of the top two khatedars, owning 55 acres of land in the village.

Mr. Dhakal's house is a two storey brick and wood building with tiled roofing. The main building is surrounded by 3 others. One houses his cattle, the other looked like a store house and the third a place where ladies of his household were busy pounding rice. There is vegetable yard around the house. They also keep poultry.

The main building housed a provision shop from where the villagers purchase their grocery. It was stated earlier that the taluka has 63 fair price shops covering all the 237 villages. Out of these 40 are run by cooperatives and 23 by private traders who have been given agency by the government civil supplies department. I am not sure if Mr. Dhakal comes in the latter category but at any rate his was the only grocery shop we observed in the village.** Out on the varandah were two, a small and a large, steel weigh balances - part of the provision store. Mr. Dhakal is one of the major families giving regular khanti loan to the people in village.

We were met at Mr. Dhakal's house by a gentleman who - though looked uneasy - received us and offered us water. We stated the purpose of our visit and enquired if he could tell us something about the village. He said that Mr. Dhakal is away and he himself knew very little. But he could tell whatever is known to him. We then asked who he was. It turned out that the gentleman is a government employee stationed in the village to teach tailoring to the adivasi youth. The training programme is a government scheme where the equipment, material, and instructor's wages are paid by government. The first floor above the grocery shop of Mr. Dhakal's house was the training centre. The instructor also lived there. We saw about half a dozen tribal youth there, though the sewing machine looked unused and possibly out of order.

*Source: "The Setting".

**Mr. Dhakal was away on that day to Dharampur in connection with the election of directors of Land Mortgage Bank.

In addition to his panchayat duties, Mr. Dhakal, we were told looks after the police function. He is the Police Patel of the village. As stated earlier, a Police Patel is the village man entrusted with the task of policeman and paid a small amount (Rs.50 - 60 per month) for it. During the course of our stop-over at Mr. Dhakal's house, 3 - 4 officials of the forest department too stopped by, chatted for a while, drank water and departed.

Thus, in the case of Narwad the largest land owner is the panchayat head, police functionary, trader and a major source of khauti loans. The official developmental and welfare schemes too seem to be channelled through him. He is the man with frequent contact with the state officials.

The person who showed us around the village was a peasant having 4 acres of land. In addition he worked at the nearby PWD guesthouse as labourer. He had a family of five. I asked him how he lived. He told us that every one in the area grows only one crop in a year. It is generally paddy and nangli. Both of these were being harvested now. A part of the produce from the fields will be returned to the khauti man. There has been no year in which, he said, he has not taken khauti. Most of the villagers do. Khauti is taken from Mr. Dhakal and a few other families of the village who have surplus. This must be returned to the khauti at the interest rate of 50% - 100% after the harvest.

The grain at home lasts only a short while. His other common needs were tobacco, salt, gud, spices, kerosene, cooking oil and clothes. He, like other villagers, bought these in Mr. Dhakal's shop. Many villagers, though, cannot afford kerosene for lighting or much oil for cooking. He made his own bidis out of purchased tobacco and leaves procured from the forest. He also had an improvised lighter - a hollow bamboo piece about 3" long, stuffed with shyamal cotton which is lit by sparks produced from striking a steel piece against a piece of stone. At night we observed very few lights. The villagers slept around a log fire out side their huts.

Soon after harvest, our guide continued, his family and others in village start looking for work with PWD, forest, anywhere it is available. But the work available is very little and enough for only a small number. As the grain supply reduces the meals become scarce. He said, some times the family ate only once in two days. Monsoon is the worst period. During that period, people dig-up kand from the forest for eating. He said the kand cannot be eaten raw. It is first cut into pieces and burried under wet soil or soaked in water for a night or so. It is then boiled and the water drained. The kand is then consumed with salt and chatney. Even so, he said, having once eaten it, it has strong toxic effect and frequently make one sick for a day or two. There are also other wild vegetation in forest which they have gotten used to eating over a period of time.

It took good bit of effort to break the reserve and reluctance of our guide. Language was not the only problem.

At first he would not even sit on the chair along with us and insist on sitting on the ground or remain standing. I persuaded him finally to sit on the chair and even have a cup of coffee (which we had taken along) with us. This effected some change in his attitude towards us. He became more friendly and frank.

The khuti system seems to be the dominant part of every ones life here, I remarked. Our friend agreed. I then asked what happens if you are unable to repay the khauti?

Our friend narrated that over a period of time through default more people have gotten deeper into debt. The produce from the land never seems to be enough to fulfil family needs and liquidate the Khauti. Khauti combined with fragmented holding, low productivity usually forces them to either sell part of their land to the bigger land lords or pledge themselves to labour at no or nominal wages. People who were indebted worked at the creditor's place for 2 kgs. of nangli per day and a mid-day meal. Nangli sells for about Re.1 per kg. and thus it would mean about Re.2.50 per day. It would thus appear that Khauti system not only puts severe pressure on the small holding but reduces bulk of the peasants to virtual bondage. Bulk of the produce goes to the creditor and when that is not enough the land and the labour. Some families are thus pledged for a number of years.

One would normally expect that the holdings or assets of khauti givers have increased over time. I enquired about this with the talati. I asked talati if the big khatedars have increased their holding in the past. He said no, and showed me the records in proof.

I expressed my surprise and asked him how to explain what my guide friend has told me? At this the talati gave part of the answer. He said many of these khata walas are actually the same family; more so among larger land owners. They have worked it out so as to keep the records legally straight. Another part of the answer came from our friend. He said some of these land lords own property in towns, even in Bombay. He cited the example of a parsi land lord whose family lived in Bombay.

The village had no electricity. Water supply was from the streamlet nearby. In the whole taluka there are now about 700 dug wells spread over 237 villages. I did not see one in this village. In any case the supply in dug wells does not last beyond March.

(b) Chat with Taluka Officials

We came back to Dharampur taluka and had informal talks with some taluka officials. We enquired about the general problems in the area. The officials described a number of them related to low level of productivity, lack of education and ambition among the tribals. We asked them if there are problems with implementation of the new law abolishing bonded labour and the land ceiling laws. They replied briefly - "there does not exist bonded labour in the taluka and the land holdings are not above the land ceiling at all. There is thus no longer a question of implementing these laws. It has already been done". Noticing the uneasiness in his listeners they tried to re-assure-- "you are unnecessarily worried, the advasis are happy and contented. There is no such problem".

Similar response was given to us by one or two other taluka officials. One of them said, "these adivasis are strange people; they do not want to work hard. If one gives them food, they eat it up in one day even if there is none for tomorrow. They are capable of eating enough for days together in one go."

Subsequently we asked what kind of development and welfare efforts are made by the taluka. They enumerated a number of these and recommended that we visit one such, probably the newest, where a number of landless people have been given housing sites. We made a trip. Eighteen households have been given free land and wood to build huts at the periphery of Dharampur, by the national high way. The people had to build their own huts and we saw them busy doing it. Since there are about 70000 - 80000 landless in the taluka, we asked the people how have they been selected and how many more will get this. They did not know (or tell) anything beyond the fact that they were landless and very happy to get the housing site. Subsequently they told us that though there is more room in the scheme the "people are not coming forward to use it".

(c) Meeting with District Level Official in Bulsar:

Next day we moved to Bulsar district headquarters for a meeting with all the district level officials including DDO, Forest Officer and other personnel connected with irrigation, health, education and family planning. The meeting was convened to discuss the problems of development of the taluka and identify the major problems, in their respective areas of concern like health, education, irrigation, agriculture, forest etc. There was plenty of discussion and some of it quite useful. But again I was astonished to note that none of them mentioned khauti, concentration of land and power as the problems. These just do not exist among officials.

The problems which seems to overwhelm one in the village and seem fundamental somehow disappear as one moves away from village to taluka and the district at least in the official circles.

There are reasons for this and not too hard to identify either. But one thing can be stated. These officials form part of the total village structure and they must be reckoned with. If change is sought to be brought without them, one must prepare for the fact that it will generate resentment, even hostility. Alternatively if one wants to bring it about through them, and if past is any guide, the change may not remain much of a change by the time it reaches a village.

6. Some non-Government Efforts

Later on we met some of the non-government individuals operating in the area in a variety of ways seeking to help in the process of development. In this connection we met Nanubhai Desai, President of Jangal Mandali who as stated earlier runs a number of co-operatives of forest laborers and allied activities like coal making transport etc. We also met Mr. Kantibai Chandrana who runs a khadi bhandar at Dharampur town.

Nanubhai Desai, not an adivasi, but a local man, has been operating there ever since early 40s. He joined national movement and decided to work for the forest laborers and adivasis. He started with setting up a cooperative society which took up timber felling and transport contracts from the government. With several ups and downs Mr. Desai has built strong organisations and is now Head of most of the cooperatives in the area. The total number of members in all the cooperatives under Mr. Desai will now run to about 12000 to 15000 with the smallest being 400 and the biggest 1400 members and there are about 20 such. It is a sizeable number, though the total number of landless would easily be about a lakh.

Mr. Desai was busy studying a work of Shri Kajnish when we reached his ashram in the evening. He welcomed us, closed the book and put it aside with the remark - 'it is a good book'.

He then described the process by which his activities evolved. He described the tough competition he faced early in his contract cooperatives with private contractors. While latter could win contract through bribes etc., he could not do all this. There was also the problem of adivasis not being accustomed to managing their own business - decision making etc. His efforts were however subsequently more encouraging and now he has built substantial assets under his various societies. There are a fleet of trucks, buildings, schools and an Ashram.

He encourages entrepreneurship among adivasis which he says is hard as these people do not seem to have these attributes. He also stated that they have recently started advancing khauti loans to society members in order to reduce the exploitation by land lords. The total of such loan is yet a negligible fraction of the total khauti transaction in the taluka.

As he mentioned khauti I interrupted to ask if khauti system could be considered the back-bone of exploitative set-up in the taluka. He agreed that it was. He added, however, that very little can be done about it. He cited a case of a land lord who owns nearly 3000 acres. They do not mean business; I tell you said Mr. Desai, probably referring to the government.

In response to our questions about organisation he stated that it is very difficult to organise the landless and smaller peasants as these adivasis are too timid. He suggested that first these people should be given some sustenance and some alternative and then only can an organization be formed which will protest against the system of exploitation.

In absence of a strong independent organisation of the people, it is inevitable that the person working for the poor, no matter how well intentioned will seek support of the state machinery even if it is totally alienated from people. The jungle mandli, therefore, not surprisingly is politically part of the Congress (the so-called old) set up. It appears to me, a set up closest to Mandall in organisation and philosophy will be Majoor Mahajan.

Kantiphai, the Sarvodaya worker, has spent several years in the area. At the moment he runs a khadi bhandar at Dharampur which is fed, in part,

by about 80 weavers spread in a few villages in the taluka. The store, imports bulk of its merchandise from other Khadi Bandar Centres. Kantibhai possesses detailed knowledge of the taluka officials, important individuals, the developmental organisation and the condition of the people. In the course of an informal conversation we asked him, what needs to be done to improve things, there does not seem to be any impact of developmental efforts either of the government or others here.

Kantibhai with considerable patience told us some of the important reasons. First, he said, is that there is no co-ordination among the individual organisations engaged in the development work. Every agency tries to do every thing with its limited organisational and financial resources. There should be, he suggested, a co-ordination committee at least at taluka level which will discuss and supervise the implementation of all projects. But he also added that it will be difficult to bring it about as the motivations of organisations and leaders are varied. Effort, however, could be made he stated.

Lack of co-ordination in developmental or welfare projects, at least some times, should result in a particular thing being over-done or duplication. In our visits in the area, at no point it looked as if the education, or health, or family planning, or land reform etc. was being over done or duplicated. The taluka officials and others, even though not coordinated, do not end up visiting the villages too frequently or simultaneously. So the lack of co-ordination to me seems more like a near perfect coordination in not doing anything substantial.

Lack of organisation among the people, Kantibhai suggested is another and more important reason for the state of things. He cited the case of Thana district, Maharashtra, where dedicated work and leadership have organised the Varlis. Such effort, he said, was lacking here.

(b) Efforts by the people themselves:

My visit was too brief and method too crude to gain any knowledge of efforts of the poor themselves to advance and free themselves.

7. What is to be done

The question revolved in my mind continuously during the visit. It still does. I reached no conclusions that can be readily put down. But the following can be said.

Narwad is only one of the 237 villages of the taluka. But by now, so much has been written about Indian villages, talked on and investigated upon, that one detects the reflection of same story everywhere. The concentration of land holding and along with it the concentration of state power i.e. the dominant say in the implementation and formulation of developmental and welfare projects. The variation is only in the fact that at one place it may be fewer dominant families than the other. And it is invariably, these dominant families which have developed in the past. Therefore to say merely that a particular region is 'under-developed' is to conceal the true nature of the problem. Even

in the case of Dharampur, where general level of living and production is low, this will be at least, incomplete statement of the problem. The case in fact is that the process of development in the country is terribly slow and biased in favour of a minority of people. The task of development, therefore, must aim at speeding up the process, correcting and eventually eliminating the bias. The task of true development also is to restore the people's place in the mainstream of social advance. And this defines a whole range of things concepts and method - the choice of projects, the method of formulation and implementation etc. Putting in more resources in an area may have a temporary effect of quickening the pace of development but it can never change the second aspect of the problem i.e., bias in favour of minority. In fact attempt to quicken the pace by injecting external resources is also doomed to failure - and by now there is enough indication of it. This is because the pace of development too is determined by the same factor which determines its biased nature. The two cannot be separated. This makes the problem of development a political problem.

In case of agriculture the real development would mean that first all the parasitical agrarian relations must be destroyed. In Dharampur, it would mean elimination of grain usury, crop-sharing and insecurity in cultivation among peasants. Considering the magnitude of the poverty and unemployment it will also mean that the land should be re-distributed so as to enable more people to get land (and job) and more importantly to break the hold of minority on the village scene. Only then can technology and science play its fuller role in the area.

How can this be done? Who will do it? The most organised organ is the state. But this assumes that the existing state machinery is interested in bringing about qualitative change in the process of development. Or it is politically neutral and open to suggestion about correcting the distortions in the pattern of beneficiaries of its institutions.

The former is untrue and latter a myth. And this is not a matter of any dogma but what is plainly observable. The state machinery (or officials) is considered bureaucratic-rigid, sluggish, rule-bound, and consequently inefficient. But if one measures either the rigidity, inertia or pig-headedness in relation to the nature of project the picture would be clearer. The bureaucracy is more rigid, more slow and more conservative in relation to welfare projects and projects aiming at developing the weaker. The budgets of weaker section programmes is frequently underutilized or the programme itself not implemented and delayed. All this somehow improves as one moves to projects aiming at release of credit, spread of technology etc., among larger land lords. Can this be because the bureaucracy is neutral? If it were, one would expect randomness (or at least not an unambiguous bias) in the pattern of the beneficiary of its schemes. Take any scheme or institution no matter what its professed aims, its impact is the same. This is anything but neutrality.

What then is to be done? The most important contribution that can be made to the development of India today, is to discover a workable answer to this.

TECHNOLOGY: A SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

(Girja Sharan)

A village is an assembly of people engaged primarily in activities related to their existence - production and distribution of food and goods etc. Naturally there have come to be organised institutions - Panchayats, Banks, Police, etc., whose functioning is primarily determined by the aspirations of various classes of people in the region and are subject to internal pushes and pulls. Such pushes and pulls drive every organised activity, institution in the resultant social course. It also is natural that in the course of this advance continual re-organisation of society takes place, the institutions become obsolete, are discarded, new ones come into being and so on.

The process of development is accelerated, retarded, distorted in favour of a few and against the majority, etc., depending solely on the nature of the organised institutions and the dominant force inside these. When the organised institutions come to be so dominated, many other things result. One such is the "technological sickness" (for lack of better term) that is the process of generation of better methods of production, slows down or stagnates, under-utilization and ill-utilization of productive assets, results etc. In fact even the diffusion of new 'technology' and new ideas becomes harder and gets restricted by the will and wishes of the dominant class.

Even at the risk of over-simplification take the case of village mentioned in the Dharampur Note*. The 'Khauti' system seems to have become widespread and so deep that almost entire agricultural population is involved in this system. Bulk of the peasants are either working on the field of Khauti-man or producing on their own fields for Khauti-man, (though not all the produce goes to the Khauti-man). In this setting, if agricultural production is to be improved, there must be greater utilization of water, fertilizer, better seed and eventually mechanical equipment. All these are proven and better - i.e., yield raising and crop expanding technologies. But are these appropriate?

The question - which is better technology? - which will enhance the productivity - of factors of production - say land and labour - can be settled easily. But the question of 'appropriateness' cannot be settled so easily. One reason is that this enquiry - what is appropriate? - must raise the question from whose point of view? The peasants who have no land and work for others and peasants who have land whose produce in greater measure is not going to be theirs will look at this better technology - seed, water, fertilizer, machine - in different way than the land-lord who owns large piece of land and has full control over his produce. The latter will adopt all this readily if available and be on the continuous look out for better. The former will require enormous prodding to do so and will not be on a continuous look out for this package of technology even though they will most likely well understand its 'betterness'. For these people the first and the necessary requirement is change in the agrarian relationship - the ownership of their land and control over their production. Unless this is done,

* Some Impressions of Dharampur. Girja Sharan

the technology will never get adopted in substantial scale. For them the immediate need is reform of agrarian structure.

This will release the bulk of peasants from the enslavement of Khauti and insecurity and restore their enthusiasm for production. This will release their creativity and energy to enhance production and allied rural reconstruction. But this naturally will threaten the 'Khauti-land-lord', though he too is interested in increasing production. But increasing in such a way as to be able to appropriate the bulk of produce. Agrarian reform therefore is resisted and sabotaged by this class in order to conserve the existing system of production and distribution. Therefore, this class continuously seeks to get hold of every rural institution - bank, panchayat, health, education, police etc. And it has so far succeeded. This control, which is the biggest bottleneck to continuous enhancement of production must be removed.

This control is maintained not only by means of physical strength and repression, but also by generation of ideas, concepts, which obscure real issues, i.e., agrarian reforms.

Among many such concepts, one is that big land holdings are needed to keep the production high and use high technology. This is true. But 'land lordism' and big land-lords are not necessary for enhancing the production - in fact they are positive hindrance in further increase in production and adoption of better technology in greater parts.

Another similar deceptive concept is that of 'Appropriate' technology. It is a concept which is intended to conserve the existing agrarian system. It seeks to promote the notion that land-lordism and parasitical agrarian relations need not be removed. Instead technology can be changed to suit the agrarian structure i.e., creation of small holding technology, creation of risk reducing system of credit, etc., - which will motivate every section of peasants to produce as much as possible. This disregards the logic of agrarian relations. The society creates technology and not the other way round. Though, the technology once created interacts with society and in turn, influences its future growth. And as such a vast majority is desiring and organising to effect agrarian reform, a small minority is busy popularising 'appropriate' technology to buttress its subversion of land reform.

If rural India is to be transformed, one of the things, which must happen is increase in production. If production is to be increased, there must be agrarian reform. And if there is any such thing as 'appropriate technology' it must be to create solid organisation of peasants to effect land reform which is capable of defending itself from those who are arrayed against it. After such reforms, way will be cleared for the technology which is known to be scientifically better to be beneficially employed. But then, it is redundant, rather artificial to express it in the language of technology.