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PRELIMINARY DRAFT
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ISSUES IN LABOUR MOBILITY
IN ARID REGIONS :
A CASE ILLUSTRATION

OR

(WHY POOR CAN'T ORGANISE :
THE DEPENDENCY WEB)

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ABSTRACT

Arid and Semi Arid regions are characterised with extreme forms of resource heterogeneity. The diversity in space is converted into disparity between various social classes of farmers inhabiting these spaces through 'conscious' human 'developmental' interventions.

Investment in large irrigation projects to reduce rural poverty in traditional arid regions is one such type of instance whose benefits don't seem to trickle. The ensuing complexity for the marginal farmers of completely dry village who for work have to go to partly irrigated village wherefrom labourers go to completely irrigated village in a South Indian district is presented here. The credit, product and labour markets interpenetrate at small farmer's household level resulting into a highly constrained decision-making environment.

The deficit induced indebtedness and unfavourable exchange relations in dry villages are found to have a vital bearing on the mobility options of a marginal farmer and his sons in the case presented.

Implications for "access", 'bargaining power', mobilization or organization of rural poor for seeking better control over resource markets and institutions etc. are also discussed. How does one intervene? The inventory of issues providing a perspective for possible interventions is presented.

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(Case first written in 1980).

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ISSUES IN LABOUR MOBILITY

IN ARID REGIONS:

A CASE ILLUSTRATION

ANIL K. GUPTA 1980

This paper describes the processes of change in an arid district consequent to localised irrigation project effects. The process has been observed through the movement of one particular marginal farmer of a completely dry village. He goes for work to a partly irrigated village where farm labourers go to a completely irrigated village.

The credit product and labour market inter-penetrate at small farmer's household level and the implications are very complex. Interventions for his development will have to take care of the ensuing complexities. Do they (or, can they under present policy framework!) do so?

If not, why?

Several questions will emerge. Some will argue (as ILO studies repeatedly suggest) that information lag regarding job opportunities should be reduced, transportation made easy and labour market would perform better. Others assume that only the younger people migrate and cash absorb newer skills easily, thus training and education will take care of the problem. Yet, there are economists who believe that 'traditional analysis of market imperfection such as 'monopoly' collusions and restrictions of mobility can then be used to explain unequal or exploitative terms in regions or villages where the imperfection can be documented empirically'.

Detailed literature surveys are supposed to have convinced some that 'given the existing technology, structure of preferences, and stock of physical capital and land, no appreciable increment in aggregate economic welfare or its state of growth is to be had by such re-allocation of the labour force as a more perfect labour market could bring about'.

The case described here narrates real life experience of some marginal farmers and landless labourers who would be bewildered certainly at the 'certain' understandings of their life in the minds of economists and sociologists.

It is hoped that case shall provoke discussion on some of the developmental issues concerned with rural landless and small, marginal farmers in arid regions.

Some other issues that emerge for further explorations are :-

- i. The land holding distribution is generally more skewed in arid lands than irrigated ones. Introduction of irrigation through large projects in arid regions without redistribution of land widen the disparities almost surely.
- ii. From (i) it follows, the subsidies directed for arid and semi arid regions get concentrated in the irrigated pockets (enclaves).
- iii. The "trickle down" or "trickle-around" doesn't take place from irrigated to dry regions for reasons of technology resource endowment, tenurial relations and market terms.

iv. The farmers of irrigated village accumulate capital fast through cheap labour (available in arid and semi arid regions at less than half the rate compared to irrigated districts, generally) and soon mechanize to reduce dependence on labour and 'Human' factor. The displaced labour (of arid villages) on return (either after very long or comparatively shorter, absence) find links with earlier moneylender and employers hard to establish afresh, unless of course they had 'contracted' their young sons all this while with landlords in native dry village.

: The terms became more exploitative
(interest, collateral etc.)

: The skills acquired can't be used profitably

: The biorythm tuned to irrigated farm works takes time in getting adjusted to dry farming schedule.

: Often he never settles down;

v. It is almost an universal rule or 'law of e Expropriativ" through advance information and better purchasing power that whenever any new region is to be brought under irrigation the settlers from coastal or well developed district dispose of an acre or two there to purchase large tracts in future irrigated zone. The prices are low here, indebtedness/high,

purchasers few (locally) and transfers are many.

Soon, large and medium irrigation project are seen to be helping same 'old' developed clients grow higher and higher impoverishing the locals positively through exploitation of several sorts.

- vi. The arid farmers by definition have deficit budget which induces them to indebtedness of several types (labour, mortgage of land and other assets, advance selling of crop, rearing of live stock on share basis, growing crops of lender's choice with his advice etc.) The credit relations so formed are qualitatively and quantitatively different from those of irrigated regions.
- vii. Some other studies by the author have shown that investment in resources tend to get concentrated in irrigated regions even with regard to social amenities.
- viii. Credit particularly seems to flow with water in a typical watershed pattern. In lower plains and valleys, much higher credit is disbursed by various institutions compared to uplands, uneven arid tracts.
- ix. The migrants from arid regions are not younger people in all the places, as demonstrated by the case.
- x. Technological interventions in arid regions often are designed with the objective of IADP approach i.e. concentrating on the best endowed farmers of best endowed sub region. It is well known that the skills and technologies suited for arid farming and irrigated farming are not the same.

xi. The competition between landlords of dry village and irrigated village for labour: Undoubtedly, the irrigation does lead to increase in the employment opportunities atleast in the short run (in long run, it depends upon the crop types that are grown, their processing requirements and scale of economy, market preference etc). This results in increase in the wage rate in irrigated villages and comparatively shorter working hours.

When incentives for mobility appear before labour, even though on seasonal basis only, the landlords in dry villages find labour supply at very cheap rates constrained. Instead of increasing wage rate correspondingly, they seem to prefer giving easy credit for consumption (ceremonial particularly) to the labourer and thereby ensure the regular supply of labour. There may be several other dimensions of this phenomenon.

xii. The marginal farmers cum labourers in dry villages often 'rationally' decide to keep their lands fallow and work for wages on others farms.

Thus the arguments that smaller holding are better managed and should therefore be more productive may be more intuitive than empirically sound.

xiii. The marginal farmers do employ labourers themselves, but with particular skills e.g. plough man with bullock pair. It is obviously not profitable for them to maintain a pair of bullocks often. Thus the conceptual understanding of a marginal farmer as one who doesn't employ outside labour at all needs questioning.

- xiv. The credit rating of casual workers by employers and the self, appears to be fairly close, as demonstrated in this case. This has implications for the risk and it's bearing in investment, consumption and mobility decision of the farmers/ labourers.
- xv. 'Theory of share tenancy' argues that different contractual arrangements do not imply different efficiencies of resources; and yet it is this, which seem to influence in no small measure, the access differential, technological adaptability and sub-optimal' enterprise mix at small farm level.

These are some of the issues that we could pause to reflect upon while perusing through the case. And yet the scenario is not complete.

How does one intervene in this system:

THE CASE

Dega Padu village is situated near Gargipuram around 15 kilometers from Kurnool. It is a completely dry village, with generally black cotton soils. The very first sight that strikes one on entering the village is that of imposing tall cemented buildings, as against the Kachcha structures supported by some moth eaten wooden pillars or muddy walls. Ayenna owns two acres dry land and supports his family of five children, wife and one aged father. He earns through work on other's farms and by contracting his children to big farmers of the village in consideration of varying amounts.

For more than 17 years he had been contracting his own labour (bonded!) to different landlords, for example three years he worked for Rami Reddy, two years for China Pulla Reddy, three years for Nega Reddy and for two years Bala Suba Reddy and some others. However, currently he is not contracting his own labour. He had begun working for the mother of Nega Reddy a long ago because his father also worked for him on their lands. His grand father had 16 acres of land out of which his father's share was only 4 acres. He inherited two acres. He could manage to get only four bags of Jawar from that land during previous season, the requirement of his family is about eleven bags in a year. He had also grown ground nut in these lands.

When his children 'grew up' and could work to earn some money, he started moving out of village in pursuit of better working opportunities leaving his sons to work in the village. He has often been going to Pratakota and

Pradyagayal village which are near K.C. Canal. These villages are about 15-20 kilometers away. The work opportunities within his village are qualitatively different from those available out side, since almost entire farming in his village is rainfed, the farm operations are highly seasonal and do not receive heavy input investment by the farmers. Further the land size distribution is extremely skewed. About 10 per cent farmers own 75 per cent of land of the village and their investment in crops is not same from year to year. Some of them are engaged in processing and trading also. Thus the labour requirement round the year for domestic and field work fluctuates and only occasionally during seasonal peak, they are employed more certainly. Practically for four months, the labourers and marginal farmers have to fend for themselves.

Regarding the employment of his children, his eldest son, 18 years old, works for Ragunath Reddy and comes home for food only. He spends day and night at the employer's place, who owns about 65 acres of land. Ragunath Reddy grows tobacco in large areas, Ayenna's son has been working with him for last 7 years. Earlier he (the son) got hundred rupees per annum, then five hundred, six hundred, seven hundred, nine hundred, eleven hundred and last year in September, Ayenna got fifteen hundred rupees for contracting his son to work with Ragunath Reddy for a year. In beginning his son could do much work. He could only give water to the

animals and attend on some domestic work. However, now he was working very hard and was happy to get this much amount from Ragunath Reddy. Ragunath Reddy also provided cloth and sometimes some food to his son. Ayenna had taken a loan of five hundred rupees from Ragunath Reddy for purchase of two bags of ground nut @ 120 per bag and for some land development work this year. He had to pay fifteen rupees per day to a labourer with bullock pair and cart for getting land development work.

He had taken a loan of Rs. 500/- from Bal Reddy owning twenty acres of land. Bal Reddy grows tobacco, ground-nut and jawar etc. He does not have to pay back five hundred rupees he took from Bal Reddy on loan to begin with because his son, sixteen years old had been working for last three years on annual basis. The son works with him and has his food there only. He preferred to work there.

The money he had taken in September, he was still spending. His daily expenditure was more than fifteen rupees with three kg. of rice, two kg. of jawar, half kg. dal and a little less than half kg. oil. Obviously all this money was not sufficient to meet his needs. Last year the crop was completely lost. This year also he planned to take fifteen hundred rupees in lieu of the annual labour of his eldest son. When he goes out for work his wife often accompanies but not the younger sons.

His third son is working with Ragunath Reddy and

he was to take four hundred rupees for committing the labour of his son for one year to him. Six months have already passed. He had already taken two hundred rupees from Ragunath Reddy on the occasion of Ugadi and he wanted to take two hundred rupees more at the festival time for food and cloth in April.

His younger son was standing besides when we were talking. He was wearing a torn Bushirt and a very small Nekar (half pent). He seemed interested in the discussions that we were having. He earned twenty rupees per month for taking twenty milch animal out of village for the grazing @ one rupee per cattle. His fifth child is going to school and is only in first class. When his fourth son was asked why he did not go to school, he replied that his father would beat him. Ayenna intervened to say, "who would feed us if he went to school".

The rains have failed this year. He may, get only three hundred rupees worth ground nut.

His wife had got sterilised. She got about two rupees a day and generally worked at the farm of middle class farmers for jobs like weeding, hoeing etc. For about ten days in a month she was able to get work.

Ayenna had got a loan from Gramina Bank* through

* Regional Rural Banks (Gramin Banks) were set up to expedite the process of credit flow which other existing channels of credit supposedly could not.

DPAP. He had applied four months back, but his application was sanctioned only two months later. He was told, whenever he enquired that his loan was being delayed because his application had been sent to Head Office of the Bank at Cuddapah (more than 100 Km. away). The form which he got from Bank was signed by Reddy first, he went then to Tehsildar, to get his signature. He had to go twice. After getting the signature, form was given back to bank. The son of surpanch was guaranter of his loan, and the other person who took guarantee owns twenty acres of land and had been employer of Ayenna earlier. He did not work much for him or others now because he often has a problem of pains in the joints during most of the months.

He had purchased fifteen pigs @ hundred rupees each. Within two months, they all expired. Two pigs expired within a week of bringing them. When they died he immediately went to a doctor in a nearby village but he could not come for checking them and others, only his compounder came to collect some sort of sample. All the pigs died soon. Doctor came only once for post-mortem of some pigs. He had got the pigs ensured earlier by taking them to Gargipuram village where the bank officer also lives. He got insurance done through an agent known to the Bank Officer. He had constructed, small enclosure for pig rearing. He used to trade in pigs long ago. He used to keep pigs only for two or three days at that time and then dispose them off. He never kept them on long term basis. Only this time he tried to do so.

He feels that his pigs died of the dysentery which is a serious disease in rain and winter month. Out of the three persons who got pigs in his village two completely failed like him and one had been able to make only marginal profit. Whenever a pig died he rushed to doctor and compounder to show that pig had died. He always feared that if he did not demonstrate the dead animals to the doctor he would not get the insurance benefit and also he would be suspected to have sold the animals. Doctor came only once, in case of all other animals he has stored the ear tags which were put at the time of purchase of animals by the purchase committee. He hopes that ear tags will help him claim insurance cover so as to close the one thousand rupee loan that he had got after applying for fifteen hundred rupees loan (supposed to be paid in three instalments). He had gone to the bank because this much amount of loan would not be given to him by anybody else. He felt, that he and his wife could get whenever urgent need arose, a loan of rupees hundred to two hundred only without any security from the big farmers and money lenders in the village. In return they had to work from 6.00 A.M. to 6.00 P.M. at the rate of hundred rupees for one month i.e. for two hundred rupees they will have to work for two months.

During summer months they don't get any work. Their capacity to manage without any work is only for three-four days. If they don't get any work for three-

four days they have to go out for borrowing from somebody. They get work for about ten days in a month.

During the summer, because of no rain, work availability in the village is very less. In his village the labour did not come generally from outside. In fact the village labour itself had to go out for work in lean months. He would get some two kg. grain for one day work in field. He has seen from a close quarter how new technology was applied and various farm operations were conducted in the village where he went for work. Yet on his own land he is not using a single practice. In fact the farm operations on his land have been performed in quite an indifferent manner and he seems to have valid reasons for them. He felt that there was not much use of investment and greater work in his own fields particularly when the domestic needs were so urgent, and deficit of foodgrains so large and expectation of returns from his field so low.

There are only two wells in the villages. The groundwater was not available generally even at the depth of hundred twenty feet. Somebody did spend his own funds to the extent of 15,000/- rupees but failed miserably. There is a bore well dug in the tank in village. Reddys have a well of their own. When I asked why does he think we had come? He replied, probably Government was thinking of providing some help to them such as bullock, camel cart, sheeps or something. He felt they were surviving only because of Government's efforts but he also added that

these efforts were not sufficient.

On reflection about the days when he was dependent upon his father, he said his father could work harder and longer than he himself.

Incidentally, while Ayenna and his sons appreciated the employers in the village, the landlords, when questioned separately informed that labourers of village were lethargic, didn't work and so on.

Discussions with Ayenna had provided certain interesting insights into the economy of rainfed village system. However, his dependence upon irrigated village for employment needed to be studied from the angle of inter market dependence and also from the point of view of understanding the implications of investments in irrigation as an answer to the problem of drought prone regions. We decided to pursue the lead provided Ayenna through a discussion with farmers in village Pradayagal. We thought of making enquires without informing them of our earlier visit to Degapadu. We wanted to know whether stable labour mobility links existed between these two villages and if so, how did they affect the labour relations within Pradayagal village. Next evening when we went to this village we decided to begin discussions first with the employers, i.e. the irrigated big farmers.

Anjanna owned more than fifty five acres dry land in addition to five acres wet land. When discussion began several other farmers also gathered around (our discussions with Ayenna earlier took place in his house in private).

It was explained that there was lot of work in that village and wherever from labour came it could be absorbed. They usually paid three rupees per day. The crops grown were jawar, chillies, paddy, ground nut etc. When discussions were going on, a lady from the house intervened and corrected the details being provided by Rangana (who was owner's cousin staying with them and managing their farms) to inform the correct area under ground nut. In Kharif they take paddy and in rabi ground nut crops. Ground nut required less labour than hybrid cotton and other cash crops. Lady felt that they did not get enough labour sometimes, in fact labour of this village even went out to another village Pratakota situated on the bank of K.C. Canal which was completely irrigated. The labour of this village went to the said village for work while labourers from other village came here. Rangana said that investments in crops did not pay enough. Lots of losses were caused because pesticides did not have sufficient effect. The village officials and block officials do often visit the village, the demonstrator also came frequently but these fellows discussed the problems with only few farmers. And all that demonstrator told, could not be taken seriously by the farmers. They felt that these officials were more successful in Pratakota.

Their condition, they added was much better earlier when they employed labour liberally and had to pay only in kind. When asked where from the labourers had been generally

coming. Old lady, who seemed to know a lot about agriculture replied, Degapadu, the name of same village which we had visited earlier. They informed that labourers came for specific work and than went back. Some times they came for only one week to earn and go back. The labour demand was highest during the summer months. They strongly resented that Anjapur village at the bank of K.C. Canal situated next to them attaracted lots of their own labour. Settlers from costal Andhra had come and settled there. They gave about four to five rupees a day for work between 10.00 A.M. to 6.00 P.M. While these villagers took work from 8.00 A.M. to 6.00 P.M. and paid three and half to four rupees only. For work from 10.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M., they paid only three rupees. However, since lot of labour came to this village from other area they were able to manage.

Perhaps the mobility of local labour prevented the continuation of the prolonged owner tenant or employer labour relations on the semi-feudal basis. At the same time inflow of labour from completely dry village to partially irrigated village easened the strain but worsend the wage prospects of local labour. Other considerations offered to casual labour were much lesser. This process resulted in such adjustments that a casual labour did not get other considerations much in form of kind, clothes, or facilities of temporary credit etc, because of the casual nature of employment.

Farmers in this village got loan from cooperative society at Nandikota for which they mortgaged part of their lands. When asked about the range and credit amount that they would be prepared to lend to casual labourers, they informed about 200-300/- only. This closely tallied with self credit rating by the labourers/farmers. Tractor were also hired in this village @ Rs. 42/- per day for thrashing and other works. The tractor driver who had come to work in Anjapuram informed that one Subba Reddy who lived in Kurnool (DISTRICT H.Q.) and owned some land in Anjapuram and Pratakota to the extent of about twenty acres wet land, used this tractor primarily for hiring out purposes. More than thirty persons have been able to get loans from DPAP for milch cattle. It seems that even on the irrigated farms, these farmers had not taken to the new technology that prevailed in adjoining completely irrigated village. They blamed labour problem, in effectivity of pesticides, restricted marketing facilities etc. for this. While the discussions were going on a truck full of goods was seen to be moving from Ajanpuram to Nandikota block side.

It was informed that though average size of holding was much lesser in Pratakota, the villager joined hands there to hire truck and transport their produce to bigger mandis to fetch better prices.

Hussain is landless labourer in this village (Pradagayal). He enquired, why had we really come. It

was learned during the discussions that the farming operations in summer in near by village Ajanapur, Kotal etc., began one month in advance as compared to their own partly irrigated village. In three months when there was not enough work in the village, they preferred to work out due to lesser hours of work involved there (it seemed, even in other months, Preference for work in other irrigated village was quite high). They said it was not that they work was not sufficient, instead the seasonal demand of labour availability and their inability to store much food made their conditions worse off. During harvesting and sowing time of paddy, labour demand was highest. They said when more labour came from out side the village, the employers of this village paid only three rupees and if this did not happen, the wages could be about four rupees even. The work has to be done from 8.00 A.M. to 6.00 P.M. Regarding loans they said that only sometimes, big farmers gave small loan @ Rs. 2/- per cent interest per month. During peak labour seasons wages sometime rise up to rupees five. Even for Government loans, it was insisted that applicant should have some land with them. They used to get three measures of paddy and never three measures of Jawar which in fact would help them to fill their belly better.

For their day to day needs they borrowed from a local shop/keeper to the extent of 10 to 15 rupees at a time. They would have to pay the entire earnings (he

and his wife's) to pay back the credit and start borrowing again till the amount rose to 15 rupees. Beyond ~~this~~ this amount the trader did not give them provisions on credit. They used to store part of the grain which they got daily to maintain some reserves for the days when they did not get any work. They tried to maintain some such stock of grain which they touched only when either they didn't get any work or trader didn't give them credit. Often it happens that eight to ten days at a stretch they don't get any work. At such times, reserves helped somewhat. Hussain continued that there was no scope for helping them. The opportunities of small business, trading in garlic etc. could perhaps provide employment to many of the land-less labourers like him. Perhaps support through enough cash or credit to do such business might help improve their condition.

Their children never went to school after second class. Around May to June most of the diseases occurred which took toll of '20-30' children every year.

He added, "The labour was free to choose their masters". They could work for anybody and this on the one hand helped them to shift from one place to another while on the other hand prevented them from availing much of the credit unless of course they agreed to work for longer time for particular person. Before we started back, question was raised what if they thought or organising for better wages. Immediate came reply, "K.C. Canal would be

full of bodies and other implications were obvious". They felt within this arrangement, some help to their employers and some help to them directly could improve the situation. They were being pragmatic or idealistic, one couldn't really say.

One thing which Hussain frankly told after we heard him patiently, was that he and other of his type did not like our going to landlords first for discussion. This, it seemed, was the general rule for whosoever came, for whatever purpose to their village. The visitors always were short of time, when question of detailed discussion in the mohalla of landless came. However, the transparent desperation writ large on their faces, expressed quite poignantly, why people could not organize. And this inability perhaps was shared by Ayenna and Hussain on the one hand, and exploited by Anjanna and Raghunath Reddy on the other. How does one account for these relationships, while designing strategies for developing regions, societies, classes and countries !

DISCUSSION

Perspective for Intervention

Contractual agreements between landlords and labourers passed on from one generation to other, are not necessarily heritage of indebtedness. They are more of tradition, perhaps this tradition is a cultural expressions of economic dependency that gets woven into the fabric of peasant relations. These links are acquiring different forms subsequent to intra regional differences in investment, employment and ecological conditions.

The diversity in space, a horizontal characteristic leads to vertical disparities between different classes of farmers as a consequence of human intervention.

The deficit economy permeates the household budget of most of marginal farmers. The differences between production and consumption needs are thus significantly narrowed down. Farmer operates in several markets to distribute his risks and reduce the uncertainty.

The fact that farmer sometimes finds contractual arrangement an insurance against uncertainty of production and employment is revealed through contract of Ayanna's third son. Though, he didn't need cash immediately, he contracted his son. A sort of cash credit limit was availed by the farmer instead of borrowing in open credit market.

Even long gestation period projects like land development find favour with the employer lender.

The investment choices regarding production on own farm are severely restricted because of

- a) labour demand precisely during the season when work needed on own farm is highest
- b) deficit induced indebtedness compromises farmer's position considerably. His needs for immediate liquidity (solvency) through work on other's farms gains precedence over the prospects of gaining income after several months through investment in crops or Animal Husbandry also sometimes.
- c) The cash flow characteristics of projects that are supposed to help him often ignores these finer aspects of resource constraints at small farm level.
- d) the productivity of lands cultivated by poorer farmers also appears to be low. Through a historical process, the better lands have been passed on to those, who were already better endowed and were stronger, economically and politically.
- e) technological inadequacy: the input responsive short duration dwarf varieties appear to be the scientists' preference for arid regions. The live stock programmes also concentrate on exotic or cross bred cows requiring higher amount of green fodder, better ventilation, cleanliness, managerial skills and maintenance etc.

The implications of this for poorly endowed farmers can be well anticipated.

Farmer doesn't attempt achievement of viability in any single enterprise for market, as said earlier. He continues with some of the seemingly less incurring

because he is interested at household (or farm firm) level viability. The cashflow characteristics of each enterprise (including labour sellings etc.) individually may be/and are different from the cashflow of farmer household as a whole. This has serious bearing on designing appropriate interventions.

Enterprise failure (inform of animal death, crop loss etc.) is a frequent sight in drought prone regions. The experiences of such failures, consequent deficit, expectation of future return from labour investment on own farm/firm or other's farm etc. will further determine the risk taking capacity of marginal farmer.

Thus failure of last year's crop or other enterprises signifies the losses that have to be absorbed in the already deficit economy of farmer by either.

- a) reducing the current consumption
- b) contracting children to landlords on seasonal/ animal basis.
- c) disposal of some assets/animals etc.
- d) moving out singly, with wife or with family for work on others farm, or brick kilns or other farmer, off-farm avenues etc.
- e) employment of wife in on works available all through the year like hoeing, weeding etc. at very low wages singly, (Inter culture operations in irrigated village don't generally require male labour, while some other operation require male and female both types of labour. Women often

don't go alone for work outside. Male go obviously depending upon work opportunities. Thus female work potential is not fully exploited due to such constraints. Availability of male migrants depresses wage rate for females for the operations that are done by both).

- f) adoption of sub-optimal enterprise mixes which give 'certain' though much less pay off. (The variance in output is preferred to be kept as low as possible. Here output is, again discussed at household level).
- g) Specific tenorial relations (e.g. instances are found when three party contracts take place. One, who owns land, one who has source of irrigation and can lend water and one who has labour to sell. Thus the arid marginal farmer in such contingencies may try to operate in more certain agricultural condition, with more intensive managerial input (often of his entire family) neglecting his own farm situation.)

One finds that that condition in case of labour in irrigated villages are complicated, though not so constrained, on arrival of labourers from arid villages. The preference for outside labour is distinct. Their visit for short term and specific jobs might lead one to view the labour market as highly efficient. However, this employer's perception who is faced with competition from employers of completely dry village.

The credit limits that Hussain enjoyed with shop-

keeper reflect a specific food reserve mechanism adopted to keep risk and uncertainty under a manageable limit. Its bearing on nutrition, bargaining capacity and mobility freedom are obvious.

The apparent efficiency of wage market in irrigated village reflected on one hand the excellent estimate of supply position by the employers and on other, it also might signify collusion among the landlords. The seasonality of employment opportunities, preference of paddy over jawar for payment by employers, short term minimal credit limit with shopkeeper, dependence on landlords for large credit requirement, high infant mortality rate, etc., were some ways which made landless labourers shudder at the thought of 'organizing'.

The visits of government official and extension agents to village Pradyagal was so strikingly perceived by landlords and landless that one could anticipate the dimension of nexus between bureaucracy and a position of rural elite, (that can help extension agents in achieving their performance targets), the effectivity of technological message for differently endowed farmers within partly irrigated village. etc. Also the role of settlers in adjoining village in making labour supply costlier was resented.

It appeared that while farmers (the progressive ones!) from the completely irrigated village presumably on cooperative basis (informally) achieved access to markets offering better prices, the farmers in partly irrigated village hadn't caught up as yet. It was acknowledged that Anjapur farmers

paid more, took less work, produced more and had higher increase, probably because of higher entrepreneurial and managerial skills acquired over a long history of irrigated agriculture (because in coastal districts, where from the settlers came, these skills were in use for long).

The commercialization process in Anjapur had led to higher cropping intensity, growing of cash crops particularly vegetables which were quite labour intensive but at the same time, whose market fluctuated heavily. The mechanization which was following had implications for labour reduction and still more skewed demand pattern for labour seasonally. Already labourers found hard to save for lean months despite more wages in peak months. Unlike camel, humans headed water and food daily. The capacity of landless or near landless to store cash or produce was really very limited. The patronalistic credit relations seemed to be disappearing in irrigated villages while they were acquiring qualitatively more difficult and unfavourable forms in dry village. (it needed to be explored more deeply).

Action for Intervention

The technological answers to the problems, that were institutional were bound to go astray. We come back thus to the old question.

How does one intervene?

Judith Heyer poignantly placed this question in a perspective when she observed,

"Rural development is our highest priority because the rural areas are where the majority of the poor live".

There is an assumption that development that raises the income in an area raises the income of every one in the area, certainly the incomes of the majority, and usually the incomes of the poor. Rural Development projects are located in areas where there is widespread poverty in the belief that they will benefit large numbers of poor people simply by virtue of the fact that they are located in areas where large number of poor live...." She added that various interventions patterned on green Revolution thesis assuming efficient trickle down were proving ineffective and yet newer interventions being designed had similar assumptions.¹

Investment in large irrigation projects against minor (either simultaneously or progressively), investment leading to individual increase in bargaining capacities against that of a community or class, routing subsidies and benefits through market system to which access of certain social forces is always better at the cost of others, designing developmental institutions and their portfolio preferences with market process of commodity and labour exchange, etc. are some of the ways in which imperfections and interpenetration of credit, product and labour market institutionalise such interventions that put the weaker section at definite disadvantage.²

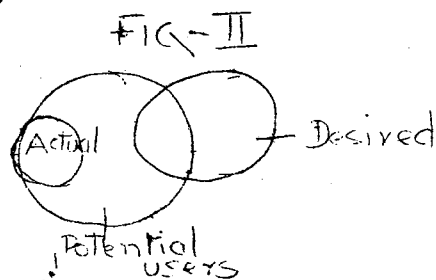
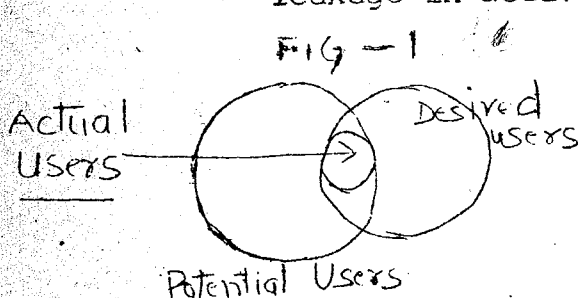
'Market participation becomes necessary both for extraction of the surplus and to generate the cash flows that will enable loan finance to be repaid.'³ It has not to be mentioned that interests that shall always control 'regulate' and guide market preferences will conflict with these who can't do so. The incapacity of the excluded

ones doesn't progressively decrease as is often hypothesized, because the scale of economy is arrived at a particular mode of access which to maintain the scale of economy has to be strengthened instead of being diluted.

'Delivery System' (the name for implementing machinery) is made to shoulder much greater blame for ineffectiveness of market interventions than is due. Like the access of market, even delivery systems are assumed to improve as time pass by.⁴ The extension, credit and input supplying channels and bureaucratic methods are designed with above mode of access. Capital intensive market linked inputs and production technologies are aimed at reaching a particular sections of society. And yet, interestingly, when the services reach them, leakage effect, siphoning off, pilferages and several other attributes are prefixed to the delivery system.

Rural people are seen as object of change and not precursor of change.⁵ The rhetoric of people's participation plays down the critical issues regarding

- a) the project/scheme design in which participation is sought
- b) Internal conflicts of the potential, desired and actual participants. Fig 1 + 2 illustrate the dilemma regarding this. Fig 2 conveys the total leakage in delivery.



- c) the cost of participation vis-a-vis ability to bear the cost and necessary trade offs.
- d) the skills and risk bearing capacity required for participation
- e) the individual and collective possibilities of participation (e.g. credit to individual borrower- without collateral or guaranter, with collateral- without guaranter; without collateral but with guaranter; with collateral and guaranter both etc., the interest of the guaranter play crucial role regarding eligibility or otherwise of the intending borrower)
- f) the cash flow requirement of the project and the one obtained by the intending participant at household (firm) level instead of enterprise level.
- g) the consequences of participation in one set of market relations or institutional arrangements over the other set (e.g. labour mobility is severly modified by said sets of alternatives, the employment prospects today or tomorrow, here or at a distance, using acquired skills or newer skills to be learned, with wife or without wife, for children and/or self or otherwise, for short term or long term, possible with roots intact in present habitat or requiring delinking the roots etc. influence the participation positively).

May, we still are not very near the answer to the

question: How does one decide the interventions that develop rural regions and its poorest inhabitants?

How can we intervene in one market so as to create desirable effects in other markets or on poor's exchanges with other markets (by improving his bargaining capacity that may or may not require restructuring of all the markets in which he is operating). Can intervention in any market sustain themselves!

Can anybody check the law of gravitation that moves water? if not, how does one decide whether to follow cheap alternative (i.e. minimum cost to state) of canal layout and thereby reduce costs of some (the better off ones infact) disproportionatily to that of others or resort to a costlier alternative with less absolute pay off but higher returns to the weak most.

How to avoid concentration of all types of even social amenities in irrigated enclaves?

Whether increase of 'X' units of output at a small farmer's farm should be considered same as 'X' units at bigger farmer's farm! Will such increase be of equal importance to both the types of farmers!

Whether development of technology for food for self consumptions and grains crops for market has similar pay off to the society or to various sections in it.

What should be breeder's choices:

:breeding varieties that are short term, capital input responsive, less fodder content, requiring sowing at particular time etc. or

the varieties that can withstand delays in sowing period, can be inter culture responsive or can have higher drought tolerance capacity at tillering or germination stage depending upon rainfall pattern of an ecological regions.

:breeding adaptable varieties of arid crop or cash crops suitable only for irrigated areas

:one shouldn't presume that choices of direction in breeding is not amenable to human preferences and is only guided by 'identified' genetic potentialities. In fact recent report of TASK FORCE for development of semi Arid Agriculture, (Submitted to government of India-1979) states explicitly that IADP-type approach for rainfed development would be the essence of new strategy with emphasis on 'Hybrids' and 'Machinery' as the inalienable components of the efforts.

- What implication Production technology has for designing credit and input institutions and delivery channels.
- Whether 'Contact Farmer' approach suitable for irrigated high population density regions (e.g. training and visit or Benor system) will make any impact in arid regions with the type of production constraints and habitat pattern as described!
- Whether 'cooperative' is the right model for intervention cooperatives of unequals. Will it not be naive to

presume that small and big farmers could cooperate for a commodity/input like irrigation that has all the other inputs associated with it! In other words, cooperation for water would imply sharing of advantages that stronger porteners have in form of access to other markets! Will it happen or should this be the direction for concentrating efforts!

- Whether interventions in form of higher outlays for rural credit, or share of agriculture or small farmer's share would be able to take care of Ayennas and Hussains!
(it may be pertinent to mention here that Reserve Bank of India under instruction from Government set following objectives before the commercial banks!

- a) raising rural credit/deposit ratio to 60%
- b) raising agricultural share to 16%
- c) raising priority sector's share to 33½%
- d) raising small farmer's share to 50%
- e) in rural credit all small farmer loan @ 11% interest

(studies by author have shown that all these objectives could be met without infact making any dent on the poverty- that has different contours in different ecological condition)

Next stage of analysis should be

- When should intervention be made?
- How does seasonality⁶ influence the vulnerability of various classes of farmers market, climatic, institutional, bureaucratic uncertainties? What

What bearing it has on rural health, nutrition, labour capacity etc. (the pain in the joints of Ayenna reflected a frequently observed nutrition related inadequacy affecting work and employment potential of rural labourer : The child death in Pradyagyal, even if estimates appeared inflated, did have something to say about above issues. The increase in contract amount corresponding to the work discharge capacity of Ayenna's son also conveyed similar relationship....)

- Whether intervention are synchronised with the cash flow, timetable and need variabilities! Can any organizational framework provide for such micro-level turning of institutional adaptability and regional and class of farmer specific need mix!

This is the most serious deterrent to the development of any strategy for decentralised development that enables the poorest to chalkout their own method and mode of development.

Perhaps, the finer aspects of exact interventions that can be effective and meaningful for those whom they are intended to serve can be deliberated only once we have even tentative answers to the issues raised above. May be many more issues could be added, may be some have been repeated, yet the effort in these pages has been to present the 'inventory of issues' that one is confronted with, while dealing with problem of rural labour mobility and development.

The choices are difficult if trickle down doesn't improve the access of weaker section whose physical distance from the amenities may even be zero, if investment in one region, sector or

enterprise has bearing on those engaged in others, if true character of dependencies is not revealed in any short term appraisal, if labour force has to stay in agriculture, if potential irrigable area by source irrigation or normal groundwater excavation has not to exceed 15-20% in most of semi-arid regions, if the organizations designed to serve irrigated regions are made to adapt to arid uncertainties and if policies design and implementation machinery for small farmer development can be appraised, monitored and evaluated without bringing any or most of the issues listed here into focus.

Thus, it is suggested that interventions for developing arid regions, amongst them, the marginal farmer and labourers require a serious and urgent attention from the angles mentioned, if irrigation input interest subsidies, machinery, hybrids etc. have to be the vehicle for injecting resources for rural development.

One should not look for any unqualified distrust in irrigation as means of arid regions development in this note. Submission is, are we simultaneously planning for fast, slow and moderately moving regions/subregions so that disparities between different classes of farmers and labourers are reduced.

NOTES

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