

CHAPTER-X

INTRODUCTION

People are slowly but steadily withdrawing themselves from the execution of development programmes. The warmth with which National Extension Services programmes had been received during the beginning of the first and second Five Year Plans had begun eroding. Planning Commission had then rightly thought of bringing concept of District Plans in Annual Plans of the state. Unfortunately preparation of district plan actually never saw the light of the day. It was to be prepared taking into consideration all available resources of the District as well as the economic necessities for its development. It was an attempt of enlist people in the planning process.

Regional imbalances became reality in the country. Iniquitous distribution of fruits of development appeared on the national scene. Implementation of programmes of poverty alleviations become imperative. The gulf between the richest and poorest state in the country kept on widening despite implementation of five year plans. Situation has arrived when there is nothing like participation of people in execution of development programmes. Almost complete alienation of people from implementation of schemes of development has resulted in large scale erosion of effect of implementation of development programmes. For average people planning appears to be super imposed upon them from above. People seldom consider development plans as programmes meant for them. They consider them as government plan and do not look upon completed works as matters arousing concern and involvement in their maintenance and their upkeep. Planning process now involves government officials, contractors and such local mafiosis who appropriate the investment to their individual interest and gain. General people has no place in this combination of forces.

It is not that Planning Commission was ignorant of such situation. Planning Commission in the context of formulation of Draft Fourth Five Year PLAN (1966-71) had appointed a study group to identify areas with high density of population, low level of income, employment and living status etc in the country. This study group had indicated 15 indicators to locate such area. Again it had set up Pande Committee with the intention to ultimately suggest a strategy whereby regional imbalances could be minimised or eliminated. This committee submitted its report in 1968 and had identified 9 criteria to meet the required strategy. Again National Development Council appointed a second working group known as Wanchoo Committee in 1968 to make a careful study of the issue on removal of regional imbalances. Another Committee on Backward areas was constituted under the Chairmanship of Professor Sukhmay Chakravorty in October 1972. This Committee had suggested District as an unit for formulation and implementation of plans. It identified 12 variables based on which backward areas could be located. However, B.Shivaraman Committee popularly known as National Committee on the Development of Backward Areas (N.C.D.B.A.) appointed by Planning Commission in November 1978, recommended Block as the primary unit for identification of backward areas. This Committee recommended six types of fundamental backwardness.

These peripheral attempts did not, however, help process of planning in either to minimise economic disparities among areas situated within a state or in attracting peoples participation in planning process. The inter and intra disparities among states kept on creating islands of prosperity and deprivation.

However, most concrete step had been initiated through constitutional amendment in 1992 which envisaged enlistment of people in development programmes. The Constitution (seventy third) Amendment Act 1992 introduced part IX on Panchayats in the Constitution. Articles 243 to 243-0

have been added to the Constitution. This amendment provided for the legal existence of Gram Sabha and constitution of Panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels. Thus for the first time villagers through Gram Sabhas have been made arbiters of their development and responsible for exploitation of local resources to their development needs and have been given powers for raising financial resources for augmenting the finances required for development of the village.

Unfortunately Bihar had not the political will to implement this sacred constitutional amendments empowering villagers/people to form the basic groundroot layer of administrative and development structure of governance. Though the amendment of the Constitution became effective from 24th April, 1993 no election to Panchayat Raj Institutions in Bihar could take place for full eight years i.e. until April 2001.

Empowerment of Gram Sabha can be really effective and development oriented if each village has its own plan for development. Similarly each Panchayats, intermediate level units and district level units should have their own development action plans based upon local requirements of development through exploitation of available resources coupled with initiation of steps for augmentation of financial resources.

Thus preparation of model development plans for villages are steps to help the Gram Sabhas. Such plans are vital tools for the actual establishment of grassroot democracy in the country. Village plans help secure people's participation.