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CHANGE AND ITS AGENCIES IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

REFLECTIONS FROM THE STUDY OF
A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
BLOCK IN GUJARAT

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R. S. MEHTA

THE paper embodies the results of an intensive field study of one of the blocks in Gujarat carried out during 1961-63. The purpose of the study was to examine the working of community development with a view to pinpointing the handicaps under which the programme operates and the conditions in which it is easily assimilated. The approach was more promotional than critical. The idea was to find out obstacles and achievements, with a view to suggesting ways and means to make it more effective and useful. For the intensive study of this nature, Padra taluka of the Baroda district was selected. Its choice was made in view of its nearness to Baroda and also on account of relatively progressive agricultural conditions in the area. It is also true that the sub-division carries a background and conditions which will enable an assessment of the programme through a variety of angles.

REGION AND PEOPLE

The region of our study presents a few broad agro-economic characteristics. Both the district as well as the taluka have a fertile stretch of land with a fair spread of rainfall which has over years never failed to an extent as to lead to acute scarcity conditions. There is thus a measure of assurance and stability of agricultural conditions about the region. The pattern of land use does not leave any very great possibility of extension of cultivation over new lands. The cropping practices have attained a stage which does not provide any regular provision of current fallows. This would mean a highly judicious and well maintained pattern of sustaining soil fertility or an excessive exploitation of land due to heavy pressure which has undermined progressively the size of holdings leaving very limited land per capita and per cultivator. The conditions would not correspond to the two

extremes, but could be regarded as model when we look at the crops and the soil fertility. In some areas, a high degree of systematic land utilisation has been attained; in others, but large parts, the latter conditions might more describe the situation than the former. It cannot be suggested that the underground water resources do not exist. Their exploitation seems to be the bottleneck conditioned largely by the limited resources of the farmers. The efforts of both the erstwhile Baroda State and the present government could not be adequate and systematic. The crops ranged from exclusive cash crops and irrigated fruits and vegetables to the combinations of medium cereals and pulses of lower grade, quality and productivity under conditions of not too satisfactory and systematic farming. The poverty in some of the villages is acute and unemployment and under-employment considerable. It is difficult to attempt to measure these quantitatively, but its quality is on the surface on view to even a casual observer. The other factors that contribute to these state of affairs have to be gauged. It is true that the agricultural classes are led by progressive communities of Patidars and the Rajputs, but the level of assimilation of change that could be imparted is handicapped by the sizeable numbers of the intermediate and backward agricultural population in particular and rural population in general. The district and the taluka again are inaccessible on two counts. The area has unsatisfactory net-work of roads and communications. This is partly due to its configuration and partly on account of the high cost of road construction. But more important than these seems to be the lack of regular or continuous urban contact for the bulk of the villages. The urban centres of trade or non-agricultural economic activities are few. The villages have limited communications as well as development of agriculture and a set of ancillary industries in the villages which would ensure regular and sustained urban-rural communications. Super-imposed on these, has been a sense of frustration among the people arising largely on account of the change in the administration. This has somehow left a feeling that they are being neglected under the new dispensation. The rapidly changing land laws that came in quick succession soon after the change over, the administration of the comprehensive developmental effort in the area subsequently and the sudden infusion of the relatively advanced administrative pattern and approach contrasted pointedly with the relatively informal relations in the past and method of understanding and knowing and of tackling the problems of the rural population in general but those of the farmers in particular. This frustration has primarily seized the progressive communities making them almost cynical to not merely the developmental effort but towards life generally. When this happens one would very easily realise that the true and live channels of communications of change are very nearly choked. The classes below the social ladder are merely the helpless onlooker to the psychology of those progressive groups and do not know what attitude to take and with what activities to co-operate or which change to assimilate. The atmosphere further suffered when the essentially untrained farming communities tried to emulate the example of their counter-part in the erstwhile British Gujarat who have become adept at the game to circumvent and prick holes in the agrarian legislation. Not being equally quick and alert at the tricks, they grew bitter and suspicious of the outside world so that even in the sphere of research and observations their resentment deepened to the point of violent psychological and verbal reactions. The elections to the village institutions and especially the panchayats further worsened conditions and have placed most of the villages, but especially where the progressive communities dominate, on virtual mutual feuds. Thus, by passage of

time and sequence of events the area has almost grown impregnable to not merely development ideas, but even to observation and the minimum of outside social contacts. The objective analysis of conditions is very often resented by the people.

It is interesting to find that the district greatly resembles in the social class structure, soils and climatic conditions and the crops in many ways to the neighbouring Kaira district. The land classification and grouping, the cultural practices and the configuration of fields and farms and even the pattern of landholdings and livestock maintenance very nearly resemble. And yet one is surprised to find that it is very backward in all respects of activities and application to the tasks than the Charotar region. It is difficult to account for the consequence. One can only attempt to presume certain cause and effect relationship. The growth of the decentralised industrial nexus in Kaira and the emergence of well-spread urban markets both provide outlet for the products, reflect back a few economic activities and conduct urban-oriented social change in the rural areas. Superimposed on these is the sizeable migration from these areas both within the country as well as abroad which leads to an inflow of funds, ways of life and a reorientation of outlook. The most important of these phenomena is the growth of co-operative dairying which now covers over 200 villages. This builds up regular rural-urban contacts and provides for the growth of ancillary activities based on dairying as a subsidiary to agriculture. It is difficult to say which came first; the fine network of roads and communications or the developments described above. But both of them jointly transformed the face of the district and has brought to them fruits of techno-economic change. The explosion has infused people with optimism. Having known the benefits of development, they have grown more amenable, psychologically and socially, to reach new ideas and assimilate them by constructive approach and understanding. Baroda generally but Padra in particular has the disadvantage in comparison as well as of the absence of such a socio-economic explosion, though the region both in terms of endowment and social structure has all the potentialities for the rise and growth experienced by its neighbouring Kaira district. One would even hazard that the southern district of Baroda displays in some ways a better pattern of change and assimilation than Baroda or Padra. The difference in the soil, the one cash crop base and perhaps a greater predominance of progressive classes in the rural communities might be some of the factors at work.

VILLAGES—SALIENT FEATURES

Seven villages were selected for intensive study. They were fairly well spread and largely represent local conditions of the taluka. The average population of the selected village was 2,570 in 1961 as against the average of 1,656 for all villages of the taluka. The distance between the selected villages and the block headquarters varied from 2 to 18 miles. Almost all the selected villages are served by railway facilities though the distance from the village to the railway station varied from 1 furlong to 6 miles. The selected villages are connected with important marketing centres by roads. Most of these villages are not easily accessible during the monsoon. A study of the farm economy and structure of the seven villages brings out their representative character. Their collective analysis puts them above the average but their individual examination reflects the best and the worst in the taluka.

AGENCIES OF CHANGE

One of the aspects on which we could lay our hands and collect precise information was about the agencies which translate the activities under community development to the field and the farmer. A number of ideas prevail about these agencies. Studies relating to these agencies have also been done elsewhere. They all present not too happy a picture about their work and effectiveness, particularly in the field of production. Our data do not reflect entirely similar pattern. They offer a refreshingly new information of the working, effectiveness, and the problems that confront these agencies. We, therefore, thought that this data would provide some additional thinking on the subject and serve as guide-lines to reset them especially in the context of initiation of the *Panchayati Raj*.

Table I gives data regarding factors and agencies inducing farmers in various size groups to take to improved implements. Only 49 families could assign reasons for the adoption and use of the improved implements. Forty-two families or 86 per cent of them adopted them on their own initiative; 4 did not give specific reasons; 2 were induced by demonstration effect and only 1 reported to have adopted with the initiative of extension agency under community development. Of these, 10 were small farmers, 19 were medium, 12 were big farmers and 8 belonged to the large-sized group. Most of the small farmers (nearly 80 per cent) reported that they adopted improved implements on their own initiative; 10 per cent took to them by demonstration effect and the remaining 10 per cent could not assign any specific reasons for switching over to them. Similarly, 18 or 90 per cent of the medium farmers also adopted them on their own and 5 per cent were affected by demonstration. All the 12 big farmers adopted improved implements on their own initiative. About 50 per cent of the large farmers or 4 out of 8 adopted them on their own initiative, only 1 or 12.5 per cent was helped by the block development efforts and 3 did so without assigning any reason.

Of the 42 farmers who adopted change in this sphere, 71 per cent were Patidars and 17 per cent Barias. The Brahmins constituted 6 per cent, Rajputs 4 per cent and Muslims 2 per cent. The data indicate both a promising as well as disappointing trend. The majority of farmers came forward on their own to assimilate this technical change. The extension agencies, whose one of the important functions lay in this switch over, made little contribution in effecting it. Only one farmer and that too belonging to the largest size group reported some inducement from extension agency to effect this change. This is rather unusual as the large cultivator should have waited so long for the change for the extension agency to reach and advise him.

OTHER AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

In order to have an idea about the extent of technical change that occur in agriculture, it would be worthwhile examining the extent of the spread of improved agricultural practices. Table II analyses the adoption of these practices by the selected farmers.

Only a few of the superior agricultural practices appear to have been known among the farmers in 1956. The three practices of cotton growing in rows, crop

TABLE I—DISTRIBUTION OF LANDHOLDINGS BY REASONS FOR ADOPTION OF IMPROVED IMPLEMENTS—1956 - 61

Total holding (in acres)	Reasons for adoption of improved implements							Total
	Own initiative	Plan effect	Community development block	Demonstra- tion effect	Other reasons	Total number of families ad- opted improv- ed implements	Rest	
1 — 10	8	—	—	1	1	10	118	128
10 — 25	18	—	—	1	—	19	49	68
25 — 50	12	—	—	—	—	12	11	23
50 & above	4	—	1	—	3	8	5	13
Total	42	—	1	2	4	49	183	232

TABLE II—ADOPTION OF AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES BY FARM SIZES—1956-1961

Size group (acres)	Total number in the group	Number of Farm Families Adopting the Practice and Year of Adoption																	
		Cotton sowing at wide spaces		Crop rotation		Crop combination		Crop changes		Deep ploughing		Green manuring		Seed mixing with cultivation		Mixed Farming		Other practices	
		1956	1961	1956	1961	1956	1961	1956	1961	1956	1961	1956	1961	1956	1961	1956	1961	1956	1961
1—10	128	—	33	1	37	2	28	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
10—25	68	—	34	2	32	1	28	—	12	—	3	1	1	—	1	—	1	—	—
25—50	23	—	16	—	12	—	14	1	3	—	4	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
50 & above	13	—	8	—	8	—	9	1	6	—	4	—	4	—	2	—	—	—	—
Total	232	—	91	3	89	3	79	2	25	—	11	1	6	—	3	—	2	—	1
Percentage to the total	—	39.22	1.29	38.36	1.29	34.05	0.86	10.78	—	4.74	0.45	2.59	—	1.29	—	0.86	—	0.43	—

rotation and better crop combination had been the most effective over the period. The practice of crop change had been accepted by about 10 per cent of the farmers. The remaining practices were not much known to the farmers before the programme was launched. Most of these practices were adopted after 1956. The most widely adopted practice of sowing cotton with wide spaces has been recently introduced and seems to have become popular amongst farmers.

Table II enables us to ascertain the relationship between the size of the holding and the adoption of these practices. Out of 91 farmers who reported the adoption of cotton sowing with wide spaces in 1961, 33 belonged to the size group of 1 to 10 acres, another 34 belonged to the size group of 10 to 25 acres, while 16 and 8 belonged to big and large farmers. Only three farmers reported having adopted better crop rotations in 1956. All of them belonged to the first two size groups of small and medium farmers. In 1961, the picture altered. Out of 89 farmers who reported the adoption of the practices, 37 were small farmers, 32 were in the medium group, 12 belonged to the big group and 8 fell in the category of large farmers.

Both families who reported adoption of crop changes in 1956 belong to the bigger size groups. Of the 25 who reported the adoption of this innovation in 1961, 4 were small, 12 were medium, 3 were big and 6 were large farmers. Deep ploughing became popular only after 1956. Of 11 such farmers none belonged to the size group of small cultivators, 3 were medium farmers and the remaining 8 were equally distributed over big and large-size groups. As for the remaining practices, the response does not seem to be impressive. These practices have been adopted to a greater extent by Patidars, Barias and Harijans more than the others like Rajputs, Banias, Brahmins, etc.

This brief study of adoption of improved practices highlights certain very encouraging trends. The short period of five years has meant a tremendous shift in this sphere. The rate at which new practices had been adopted is striking. It is also equally heartening to find a wider spread of the change among all strata of the farmers, though the social insulation obstructing change prevails here also. The short span in which the change occurred and its spread are attributable to none else than community development. Their attraction for the farmers might be on account of relatively little outlay and their superiority which might have been felt over a short period. The role of the village level worker in this performance cannot be minimized.

Mixed farming has a great stabilising influence on agriculture both from the point of view of income as well as employment. There was no family pursuing any subsidiary occupation like poultry raising and dairying in 1956. In 1961 only two families, one of them a small farmer and the other a medium cultivator practised mixed farming. This may probably be because the small farmers do not have necessary financial resources to buy and keep milch cattle, nor the capacity to bear loss in case the milch animals die. A small farmer would have also problems of fodder and grazing as he cannot afford to use a part of his limited land to raise fodder or grass. Development of dairying and adoption of new activity like poultry are time consuming. The latter, besides, carry religious prejudice. In the country's context though consumption of eggs and poultry is a fashion among the

high-ups, the pursuit of the occupation is regarded as given to the socially low in the hierarchy. But the relevant points are that these changes come but slowly. The extension agency will help only gradually because they have to cut across rigidities. Therefore, just as we tend to be cautious in complimenting community development for quick switch over by farmers to new innovations, we should be slow to ascribe failures to them in the field of farm diversification. All things should happen and extension work should cast its net as wide as possible to cover everything to push them towards greater aggregate change. But we should remember that the basic above all for community development is change in agriculture to lead to rapid increase in production. An evaluation with this realisation will lend us perspective and correct objectivity.

In this context it is difficult to appreciate the farmers' views about the agencies associated with community development. Opinion on the efficiency, equipment and knowledge of the village level worker sharply differed. Both the block development officer and assistant agricultural officer have not been much effective in persuading farmers to adopt improved practices. Surprisingly enough, none of the respondents was able to say about the contribution of district agricultural officer. An analysis of the cause of non-adoption or difficulties experienced by the farmers in the adoption of improved agricultural practices again showed that the chief factor in non-adoption was indifference of the farmers. A few, however, stated lack of resources or costs as reasons for non-adoption. Quite a few indicated that an earnest and persuasive patient approach by community development personnel would have meant a much larger coverage by improved practices. Senior non-officials and officials felt that it would be enough if community development reaches only a section of the enlightened, progressive and responsive farmers and stabilise the change. The demonstration effect should be relied upon to lead to its further spread over the wider canvass. The significance of change lies in bringing into existence catalytic agents at strategic points which will continue to spark and light the paths of progress over wider regions.

In the maze of the results analysed and opinion expressed by farmers and others about community development, the reader will feel confused. The full facts are presented not so much to confuse as to show that numerous aspects, some of which criss-cross, are at work in the totality of the phenomenon of change. Besides numerous hands lend help both visibly and invisibly to bring about the change. They all contribute usefully; sometimes they fail; often they succeed in achieving the contrary, but if the total effect is favourable and lead to change for the better which progressively, may be slowly, cover more and more areas. The objective should be to treat the change as an outcome of many phenomena at work, one of which is community development.

EXTENSION AGENCIES

In the next few pages an attempt is made to discuss the staffing pattern under community development programme and the attitude of the people towards them. The opinion of the people about the officers and personnel connected with the programme and their background and equipment for work entrusted to them have also been attempted. This is done with a view to putting our fingers on facts of the matter as well as the qualitatively known popular attitude and the lack or otherwise of people's enthusiasm about the programme.

Block Development Officer

The block or the taluka development officer is the king-pin of the entire development programme in the taluka, around whom the gamut of activities in the block revolve. He not only inspires but also arbitrates over situations of frictions both between lower personnel and people and *inter-se*. He should know the area and the people and should be given time to acquire this experience. The stability of a single individual in the block for a fairly long period is vital. Since the inception of the programme in 1957, three officers have commanded Padra block. All the three officers belonged to the Revenue Department. It is quite natural, therefore, that the programme of community development received more of a slant of departmental organisation rather than a properly co-ordinated activity executed with a team spirit. The main points of contact of these block officers would be through visits to the villages and discussions with the people on their problems.

Table III gives information about the visits of the block development officer to the selected villages during 1961 and 1962.

TABLE III—VISITS BY BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER TO SELECTED VILLAGES

Name of the villages	1961	1962
Amla	6	1
Dabka	12	8
Karakhadi	4	6
Latipura	5	1
Masar	16	5
Mobha	6	3
Vanachhara	8	1

The data do not support the widely held feeling that villages situated away from the block headquarters are not properly attended to, and that villages around the headquarters are visited often by the block development officer and hence benefit relatively more from his attention and guidance. Direct contacts help him to understand the problems of the village relating to development and improving agricultural production. During his visits he meets the village leaders, farmers where necessary, and the village level workers. He also keeps an eye on the general activities under the programme in the villages in his charge. He guides the officers and workers under him and help them solve problems they have as well as to the farmers present. In the event of frictions between villagers themselves or people and the workers he tries to smoothen out the path. It will be useful to know the categories of farmers he meets. (Table IV).

Both at the headquarter and in the villages only 28 per cent of the farmers examined contacted the block development officer. Amongst those who met him,

TABLE IV—MEETINGS OF BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER—1961

Size group (acres)	Meeting of B.D.O.				
	At the headquarter		In the village		Total number of farmers in the group
	Number of farmers	Percentage to the group	Number of farmers	Percentage to the group	
1 — 10	16	12.5	15	11.7	128
10 — 25	26	38	27	39.7	68
25 — 50	15	65	14	60.9	23
50 & above	8	61.5	8	61.5	13
Total	65	28	64	27.6	232

the cultivators in the large-size groups predominated. We were not able to collect information about the purpose of the meetings, the nature of guidance available and the ultimate efficacy of the advice. The general experience is that farmers meet on administrative work and mainly get cleared difficulties about the programme activities relating to their villages. In view of the nature of such work it is but natural that the bigger farmers who take the lead meet him. The meetings do not, therefore, provide technical advantage to those who meet him.

Assistant Agricultural Officer

The duties of this officer are more technical and, therefore, germane to the problems of the farm and of production. That is all the reason why he should be stable at the job over a period to lend reality to his technical guidance in the field of production. The turnover of the assistant agricultural officer on the contrary seems to be more frequent than the block development officer as about four persons have been changed in the initial five years of the programme. The data collected from the tour register of this officer brings out the following picture (Table V).

TABLE V—VISITS BY ASSISTANT AGRICULTURAL OFFICER IN THE SELECTED VILLAGES—1961

Name of the village	1959	1960	1961	1962
Amla	2	7	6	9
Dabka	14	21	23	22
Karkhadi	3	10	17	10
Latipura	11	8	5	8
Masar	6	12	2	22
Mobha	19	18	11	22
Vanchhara	4	6	1	5

Like the Block Development Officer in the case of assistant agricultural officer also, the distance of the village from the block headquarter does not seem to be a hindrance or inducement to the visits. Even the high degree of public response does not seem to be a factor attracting these officers. This is so because Amla has the most enthusiastic group of youth actively looking after the developmental works in the village and yet the visits to Amla are comparatively less frequent. Vanchhara is inaccessible during monsoon and fewer visits to it can be explained on that account. Dabka has no redeeming features of agriculture or activities to attract the largest number of visits except its other attractions as an educational centre and a place for change. Similarly Mobha is a big trading junction. The concentration of effort on the substantial farmers is understandable in the case of a technical officer like this. Table VI gives his coverage of cultivators in 1961.

TABLE VI—ASSISTANT AGRICULTURAL OFFICER'S CONTACTS WITH CULTIVATORS—1961

Size group (acres)	Meeting by farmers				Total number of farmers in the group
	At the headquarter		In the village		
	Number of farmers	Percentage to the group	Number of farmers	Percentage to the group	
1 — 10	8	6.25	8	6.26	128
10 — 25	13	9.1	15	22.0	68
25 — 50	12	52.2	12	52.2	23
50 & above	8	61.5	8	61.5	13
Total	41	17.7	43	18.6	232

The figures give a still more positive relation than that of block development officer between the frequency of contacts of the officer and the resource base of farmers. Compared to the block development officer, however, assistant agricultural officer was less known to the cultivators in the region and fewer farmers contacted him. It is difficult to comprehend why such an important extension officer has not been able to attract the attention of the farmers. The probable reasons might be the officer's personality or the operational usefulness of the guidance he could render. In the absence of data about the motives of contract, the nature of discussions and advice tendered and the practical value of guidance, it is difficult to clearly suggest the absence of live contracts at this level.

Village Level Worker

There were 15 village level workers in Padra. In addition, there were three lady village level workers. The headquarters of the lady village level workers change every year. The main duties of the lady village level workers were to contact the women in the villages, explain development programmes, organise *mahua manduls* and *balamandirs*, arrange picnics, develop cottage industries and also organise competition amongst women in preparing recipes, etc. Male workers

on the other hand, concentrate on agricultural change and contribute in all possible ways towards quickening it. All of them seem to have been trained at one or the other training centres. A close look at the distribution of male village level workers' headquarters would show that they have been more concentrated in the southern part of the taluka. Village level workers being the extension agent at the primary level is the fulcrum of traffic both ways. It would be quite essential, therefore, to ensure continuity of their extension work. From this point of view, it will be useful to examine changes in their placement. The statement below attempts this.

TABLE VII—TURNOVER OF VILLAGE LEVEL WORKER IN THE SELECTED VILLAGES

Village	Number of turnover of village level worker over the period 1956—1961			
Amla	N.A.			
Dabka	3			
Karakhadi	3			
Latipura	N.A.			
Masar	4			
Mobha	4			
Vanchhara	2			

On an average, a village level worker settles in one village for less than two years. From the personal discussion with village level workers it was found that most of them were not happy about their latest placement. Those who came from the Revenue Department were very keen to return to their parent department. Practically all of them complained that they were overburdened. Some of them felt that they had no power and that their word did not carry much weight with the village people. Their contact with people and the people's knowledge and understanding of them and their functions are shown by the following facts.

TABLE VIII—KNOWLEDGE ABOUT VILLAGE LEVEL WORKER, 1962

	Yes	Per cent	No	Per cent	Total
Whether knowing Village Level Worker	165	71.12	67	28.88	232
Whether visited by Village Level Worker	125	53.88	107	46.12	232
Whether knowing how many villages were in his charge	75	32.33	157	67.67	232

Only 165 or 71 per cent of the total number of families examined reported that they knew the village level worker, of which only 125 or 54 per cent reported that

they were visited sometime or other by the latter during the year. Even among these, only 75 or 32 per cent of the total had an idea about the villages to be covered by the village level worker. A break-down of his visits with reference to the farmers would give an idea of the geographical compactness of his coverage and the scope for a systematic approach.

TABLE IX—FREQUENCY OF VISITS OF VILLAGE LEVEL WORKER, 1962

Frequency of visits in a year	Number of families	Percentage to total
Once	73	31.46
Twice	3	1.29
Thrice	8	3.46
More often	41	17.67
Not visited	107	46.12
Total	232	100.00

Only 73 or about 32 per cent reported that they were visited once a year; 52 families were visited more than once; 41 or 18 per cent reported that they were visited more often during the year while 107 or 46 per cent reported that he did not visit them at all. Detailed enquiries disclosed that the village level worker was more attracted towards the farmers with substantial resources and belonging to upper castes. One of the reasons for this might be relatively greater willingness of such cultivators to experiment and absorb superior techniques. An added factor is that such farmers will ensure comfortable stay of the village level worker in the villages in his charge and facilities for contact with other farmers and thus help make him more effective operationally.

It would be interesting to ascertain to what extent the village level worker has impressed the farmers with his educational, technical and practical background and knowledge. The farmers who were generally sympathetic towards village level worker were inclined to ascribe to him the qualities probably more on humane grounds. This view appears to be a fair assessment when the same farmers precisely expressed that the village level worker was most unsuited to give advice to improve agriculture. An analysis of the relevant data would clearly highlight the position of this point.

TABLE X—EQUIPMENT OF THE VILLAGE LEVEL WORKER, 1961

	Farmers conceding	Percentage	Farmers not conceding	Percentage	Total
Technical qualification	38	16.38	194	83.62	232
Adequate agricultural background	24	10.34	208	89.66	232
Practical equipment	21	9.05	211	90.95	232

Only 38 or 16 per cent of the farmers approached suggested that the village level worker was technically qualified. Of these, 24 stated in affirmative about his agricultural background also. But only 21 or 9 per cent in the group expressed their faith in his practical equipment to understand problems and provide solutions. The rest were not quite happy about his equipment, agricultural background and experience. It is difficult to say how many farmers expressed after actual experience. Still more difficult is to ascertain whether they had occasions to test those qualities personally before coming to the judgement. The analysis would leave a lingering feeling that the replies were the reflection of general impressions rather than judgement based on objective evaluation. Some information on the concrete benefits farmers derived from the village level worker would crystallise our conclusion from the available data on the point.

TABLE XI—ACCEPTANCE OF VILLAGE LEVEL WORKER'S GUIDANCE BY FARM SIZE-GROUPS, 1961

Size-group (acres)	Guided and guidance accepted	Total in the group
1 — 10	6	128
10 — 25	6	68
25 — 50	3	23
50 & above	4	13

Only 8 per cent of the farmers accepted the advice of the village level worker. We do not know to how many the village level worker tendered advice and which was rejected by the farmers. On the basis of the replies, however, it can be surmised that such occasions of contact did not arise. The question of exchange of ideas as occurring between the village level worker and the small number of farmers indicated in the Table would obviously not arise in respect of the rest. Various reasons were assigned for non-adoption of village level worker's guidance, but the most plausible explanation related to the impracticability of his advice and lack of faith in him and his advice. About 5 per cent of the farmers reported lack of resources for non-adoption. Very few farmers acknowledged the contribution of the village level worker in the adoption of the improved agricultural practices like rotation of crops, crop combination, adoption of improved seeds, use of fertilizers, deep ploughing, improved implements, green manuring, etc. Both the big and large farmers did not have faith in village level worker's knowledge and equipment and held him at a discount in comparison with their own achievements in the field. According to some, village level worker worked like a third bullock destroying the furrows drawn by the pair. He was inexperienced, ill-equipped and ill-suited for agricultural extension work. Quite a large number of farmers agreed that the good offices of the village level worker were very useful in securing agricultural requisites like fertilizer, cement, sheets, etc.

The point that emerges from the analysis is that the village level agency of the programme has rendered useful service in the flow of information of needs and re-

quirements and in ensuring supplies. He was not much effective in technical change. For this he is not to be totally blamed. His background at the time of recruitment was known. He accepted employment as a last alternative. His love for village life and work was skin-deep and the prospect of his assimilation in the village stream was not bright even initially. These probably prevented him from acquiring qualities through training which was expected to be given to him subsequent to his recruitment. The socio-psychological field of his operations determined both his effectiveness and evaluation. The area of his jurisdiction and the numerous duties with which he was loaded should not be lost sight of before it is decided to write off his utility in the scheme of things. Probably what was envisaged, though not expressed, was that the village level worker would be a sort of an omnibus agency. There are leading progressive farmers in the village and the gap between their level and others below them is quite wide. If, therefore, this agency with all its limitations were to both learn and disseminate technical know-how from the highest levels to those lower on the ladder he will both learn and improve his equipment and impart them to others and in the process providing scope for change in a substantial measure.

Other Extension Officers

Another extension agency at work is the male social education organiser. He has been stable at his post since inception. But the lady Social Education Organiser had changed thrice in about five years. It was generally the experience that ladies in the villages do not receive the programme of community development with much enthusiasm. People, by and large, were conservative in sending girls on visits or to participate in common activities. The personality of the lady officer and her background and the way of life in that extremely small circle determine her effectiveness more than her education and experience. Entertainments were, however, well received in the villages. The officers visited distant villages also, but their activities were not well received in remoter parts. Additional duties in the shape of spreading knowledge, education and enlightenment were assigned to them to show their workload on paper. Table XII puts down the visits of Social Education Organiser to the seven villages under investigation.

TABLE XII—SOCIAL EDUCATION ORGANISER'S TOUR REGISTER, 1962

Name of the village	1959	1960	1961	1962
Amla	4	9	5	9
Dabka	9	16	15	10
Karakhadi	3	8	6	12
Latipura	2	3	3	8
Masar	14	5	6	14
Mobha	19	20	24	23
Vanchhara	1	1	3	6

Here also, it would be seen that the distance from the headquarter does not seem to be a discouraging factor in the visits to the villages and the proximity does not seem to be an important factor, weighing in favour of frequent visits to nearby villages. The pattern of visits in which the two villages predominate compare with the pattern set by other officers to these villages. One would not agree that the pattern of all the functions and problems would be identical and, therefore, concentrated visits to some villages as against others. There is, therefore, some attraction other than the programme duties in favour of some villages as against others.

There are, besides the above, other extension officers for co-operation, veterinary service, overseers, trained midwives and *gram-sevikas*. They more or less create a maze of effort at development in varied directions. The farmers are common field of the work for all of them. They, therefore, feel confused in fitting into the pattern of the requirements of all the officers. We should hasten to add that this is neither the fault of the functions nor the functionaries. Nor is it suggested that these activities could be discharged by a single agency. It only highlights the need for better co-ordination.

These observations are confirmed by the experience of the farmers. They conveyed that most of these agencies pay routine visits to the villages, but are not available either locally or at headquarters for consultation when needs arise. About 45 per cent of the families reported that veterinary assistant was not available at the headquarters whenever attempt was made to avail of his services. The proportion of families reporting non-availability of co-operative officer and overseer was 85, while in case of *gram-sevika* and mid-wife the proportion was 93 and 70 respectively. A look at Table XIII will give an idea of the movements of the other extension officers.

Out of 36 families or 16 per cent who reported visits of the co-operative officer, 18 or 8 per cent reported that they were visited irregularly; the remaining reported monthly, quarterly, six-monthly or annual visits. As compared to this, the veterinary assistant visited them more frequently. 126 or 54 per cent of the families reported his visits. Of these about 50 per cent reported weekly, fortnightly or monthly visits. Similarly, the visits of the mid-wife were reported by a good number of families though, of course 71 per cent of the families did not give any response to her work. Of those who expressed on their experience with her, 45 or 19 per cent reported that she paid weekly visits. In contrast the reactions about the visits of the veterinary assistant and mid-wife, the overseer or *gram-sevika* were not reported paying any visits to the families. Of the total families investigated only 68 families or 29 per cent reported that the frequency of the visits of these extension agencies had increased after 1956. Regarding the usefulness of these officers only 47 families or 20 per cent reported in the affirmative. It is difficult to talk on the usefulness of these agencies with these families. Their expressions do not appear to be considered opinions. They reflected either the overall general impression or casual reaction not borne of contact for specific work or was a reply just to clear the question during interrogations.

CONCLUSION

One of the important findings of the study goes counter to the other finding of some of the other projects that the location of the villages with reference to the

block headquarters made considerable difference in the benefits and impact. Both in the sphere of technical change that has been translated and the visits of the various extension and administrative agencies under the programme to the villages under investigation belie this impression. The other thesis which the results negative to a large extent, if not completely, is that relating to by-passing of large sections of the population by the programme. There is no difference of opinion about the spread of the benefits of social overheads. The question of the landless would also not arise as we have specifically confined our examination to agriculture and, therefore, the inclusion in the scope of study required, as a precondition, some land and resource base. Once these are granted and a look taken at the results of the study, even a casual glance will show that the small farmer has been a beneficiary of the programme, though not always as much as the substantial farmer. In the case of some results it has been shown that where certain basic agricultural overheads were available, the small farmer has responded in greater measure than the big farmer. Similarly the degree of technical change assimilated by the small farmer has been significant. This has occurred even with the own resources of the farmer and the programme has only acted as a catalytic agent either to acquaint or initiate. Further the rate of technical and economic change during the five years of community development has been faster than that ever occurred in the area at any time in the past. The fact that the change was financed from the farmers' owned resources is a measure of ploughing in of the economic surplus and the capital formation in agriculture.

In the matter of contact with the various extension agencies also, the small farmer had his share of the contact and benefit of guidance from them. The fact that he has clearly expressed on the equipment and usefulness of most of the agencies shows the degree of relationship between the agencies and the small farmers. The various agencies have been found to be effective and are making genuine effort to be useful in the tasks set to them are shown by their visits, their frequencies and their direction in relation to the villages.

The much-maligned village level worker with all his limitations of workload, equipment and education has not entirely been grafted as a foreign element to the programme. At least in the field of the flow of information between the programme organisation and the farmers both ways he has performed a valuable service. Especially as contact man and an agency of transmitting knowledge of requirements and relating these needs to the points of supply he has speeded such needed supplies and thus contributed to the developmental effort. There are serious limitations of the agency which are partly inherent in his equipment, aptitude, inclination and background and partly basic to the areas he is required to serve. It may partly also be the fault of the preparatory training which he should receive before posting. The village level worker is an evolving institution. It can be reinforced, and strengthened and its training readjusted in the light of experience over time. His work and living may also be made more attractive. Both these depend upon how effective he grows gradually and to what extent he is able to assert his utility. In these spheres more than the specialised training, what would prove more useful to him would be the group of progressive and enlightened farmers who have achieved technical and productive superiority over the rest in the villages through experimentation and acquisition over long periods. Instead of expecting the village level worker to transplant fresh techniques and ideas from

outside, if he were to attempt to learn from these local progressive cultivators and carry the message of better agriculture to the rest of the peasantry in the village he would have achieved substantially without much cost and fear of failure in terms of the outcome of the innovations which has been the bane to bring about transformation in the under-developed situation like ours. One of the essential conditions for this might be a reduction in his coverage and possibly a proper demarcation of activities to relieve him from the existing situation under which he tends to be much of a village official burdened with essentially paper work. We are conscious that the paper work again is a function of the useful activity he is able to contribute and how progressively he becomes indispensable to the agricultural part of life in the village.

We should exercise considerable caution in evaluating our developmental or welfare agency. An evaluation carries a great moral and therefore it either tones up or demoralises. The agricultural change is a must but resources for it are limited. Under these circumstances a hasty judgement about the efficacy or otherwise of an agency like the community development has a highly damaging effect. Particularly when we look at the agencies that are at work and think of the alternatives that are open to us to substitute them, the realisation would be staggering. Both the community development and the agencies implementing it are evolutionary. We have to envisage to perfect them over time. This is not mere opinion. It has been the experience of the rest of the world. We have been experimenting with community development for a little over a decade. The results of its working in a block over five years which we have examined in details have been quite encouraging in some fields, not quite discouraging in others, and indifferent over a small region, the last partly because of the difficulty of measurement and the limitations of the standards of measurement. Adjustments might be necessary as we go along and they would be done. Some of them would be, for instance, the size of the block which quite a few feel should be much smaller for effective action and assessment to relate results to effort. The highly pertinent question here, however, would be what is that convenient administrative unit below the taluka that could be thought of for the purpose and how it could be achieved by suitable adjustments in personnel and organisation. There will also be a question of change of administering unit for community development along or for all other government purposes. For if it is only for community development then again the already intricate question of co-ordination might present as a major limiting factor. If the administrative unit were to shrink for all purposes community development, developmental effort generally, and for revenue purposes, we might have also to look at the problems of costs and personnel that will be posed embarking upon such an idea of reorganisation.

In this context the other view is to look at the question for making community development, but more especially extension work under it more effective by streamlining the existing block organisation and rationalizing administration and the assignment of functions and duties, rather than thinking in terms of altering the layout basically. The other suggestion is to limit the activities under community development to agricultural production and to relieve it of the responsibility of creating social overheads. Even within agricultural production the suggestion is that the concentration should be on certain set of activities which have been tried and proved efficacious and there is certainty about the outcome of their applica-

tion. This approach makes the question more manageable and the results more or less certain. It is even argued that if only an attempt is made to level up the lowest in productivity and effort amongst the agriculturists in the villages with the few at the top in these spheres through the medium of community development, our agriculture could be transformed within a measurable time.

There is also a section of opinion which feels that the community development should not worry about the social motivation which we have set to ourselves. Its task is to see that change takes place in agriculture irrespective of its location. This may mean that the more resourceful march ahead more rapidly and the gap between the marginal and the substantial would increase. What is important from the point of view of the country is the aggregate more than the points of its occurrence in parts at different spots. The problems of spread and the social motivation will look after themselves in due course. They rightly say that we often do not attach the importance to a phenomenon known as percolation by demonstration. What some achieve and what they progress would spark others who are either less responsive or indifferent and the small in the village, and once this cycle begins the much-needed equity in the spread of the effort or the progress would automatically come. What is thus required is to determine the priority not on the basis of putting everything first or the wrong thing first but that which responds most to the change first and the rest will follow like night after day.

We should also not be disappointed at the determination of felt needs and the popular participation and to determine them on the basis of what the people would decide or would enthusiastically receive. In these matters, it is argued, there does not exist in the village or among farmers even of the most homogeneous groups anything like a consensus. This may probably be due to the fault of the situation or of time. It is necessary that the agencies charged with the responsibility of thrusting change take it upon themselves to decide some of these for some time to come at least if not always. Only results would clear the chaos in this sphere also and what appears to be a highly frustrating situation now would in due course show clear way. We have to distinguish the necessary from the expedient and progress on the basis of what we think to be most urgent in the larger interests.

These thoughts are relevant both for the present and the future. We should proceed on the presumption that the *Panchayati Raj* experiment in the field of decision-making and execution in agricultural development will succeed. We should be prepared to accept its evolution to perfection by stages even after initial period of pitfalls. But we should be ready for a contingency when for want of popular participation in decision-making and production programming, the project might begin to wobble. It is for this probability that we should have agencies or personnel at strategic points who will not allow the experiment to founder by taking initiative and decisions as objectively as possible, realising fully that such a contingency would only be in the passing and the stream of underlying objectives in the new dispensation would re-assemble to reinforce and strengthen themselves.