

**The Dilemma of Development
-Learning from People**

October, 1997

--J.C.Pant.

1. The modern day living processes leave the individual at the mercy of a host of specialists who seldom agree on how to deal with the individual.
2. The individual is safe today only to the extent he or she is able to survive autonomously outside the prying scrutiny of the specialists.
3. How does one create that autonomous self-sustaining life-style in a scenario of fast depleting natural endowments of clean air, clean water and clean food?
4. Present day scientific research is reductionist in nature i.e. from the library, the storehouse of existing knowledge, to the lab.
5. The library, however modern and up-to-date, is bound to be lagging behind in storing contemporary data and knowledge.
6. The very process of modern scientific research i.e. its reductionist character has to be reversed in order to solve problems which are multidimensional in their scope.

7. Research, in order to become pain relieving, ought to be addressing specific problems as they are experienced by people. This requires learning from people.
8. The manner in which various social and other forces are interacting in a given environment, have to be highlighted and analyzed to understand the specific problem.
9. Scientific Research, to be useful must not be "library to laboratory" and top-down, but "Specific problem to lab" and bottom up.
10. Bureaucratic systems are discipline-wise departments, which proliferate as disciplines proliferate into specialties, rendering co-ordinated action progressively more and more difficult.
11. Funding and manning of Govt. schemes tend to be vertical, top down, in consonance with the top-down research system. These schemes, therefore have no relevance to people's problems.
12. It should not surprise any one if peoples' problems are not understood and remain unsolved, merely by bureaucratic interventions.

13. The obvious remedy is that people should organize themselves into self-governing, self-regulating communities which may accept external assistance according to their needs.
14. What the external system wants to thrust on people as a welfare measure is, at best, bound to be on the basis of judgment derived from some library of stale knowledge or a research finding of relative antiquity.
15. Can external systems become sensitive to what people need, now when they are facing a problem? Can external systems assess peoples' needs? If the external system cannot do this, what it gives to the people will pass on to wrong hands.
16. How do people organize themselves into self-governing, self-regulating communities when they have so far been used to receiving from the in-sensitive external system, what they do not need.
17. This is where it is important to trace back the history of autonomous village communities, and traditions of local self-governance, in order to build on them with the active assistance of the people.

18. In the Indian context, the Panchayat is made up of a number of revenue villages, each made up of a number of hamlets where-in reside families pursuing similar vocations.
19. It is the hamlet which is still a functioning and vibrant community, not the Panchayat. Reaching out to each family is impossible but reaching out to each hamlet is feasible.
20. Helping the community in each hamlet to stand on its own feet, to become self-sustaining, is the task to be addressed by the revenue village as an administrative unit with the help of social activist groups emerging out of the hamlets comprising the revenue village.
21. Once this begins to happen, the hamlet community would become capable of receiving only what it wants from the external system. Can the external system be organized to enable this to happen?
22. Sustainable agriculture is the most appropriate people's activity and vocation for ensuring rain water and soil conservation to generate all that is required for a healthy, autonomous and self-sustaining life-style.

23. Traditional Indian agriculture had integrated the use of animal power and cattle-care into the management of each farm to make it autonomous and self-reliant.
24. Bullock power is fundamental to Indian agriculture. Research for breed-improvement to increase bullock power is still not being addressed in India. Bullock power is meeting more than 50% of the total energy demand in the country.
25. Soil health damaged due to excessive application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides can now be restored only by cow-dung based manures and bio-fertilizers.
26. Moisture bearing capacity of the soil can only increase by natural manures in order to improve sub-surface and ground water re-charge.
27. Import bill of petroleum crude and allied products has risen from Rs. 7000 crores in 1960-61, to Rs. 10870 crore in 1990-91, to Rs. 24095 crore in 1995-96, to likely Rs.33420 crore in 1996-97. This is the tip of the iceberg of the energy crisis.
28. Appropriate technology to utilize bullock-power and human energy needs to

be evolved to reduce drudgery. Dung cakes are the only reliable source of fuel for the rural hearths. Dung smoke repels insects, mosquitoes and bacteria and keeps the rural homes clean.

29. Restoring the sacred groves, the grazing lands known as Gauchars, and reviving the village pond and the village well with improved appropriate technology would restore the autonomy of the life-style of the rural poor, and prevent the village common lands from vanishing.
30. This alone is likely to generate reverse migration of the rural poor living miserably in urban slums, so essential to revive Indian agriculture, which in turn, is so essential to conserve every drop of rainwater, the only source of pure water.
31. This process of reverse migration will halt the on-going accelerated rural-urban migration caused due to the phenomenon of the "Vanishing Commons".
32. De-congesting the urban slums is also important to prevent the "population bomb" from exploding. This will improve the quality of urban life in India.
33. Sustainable agriculture coupled with cottage and village industries to add

value would revive the rural economy, without which the urban arts and culture as well as the urban life-style cannot survive the on-slaught of the rural-urban migration.

34. Need-based village-level planning involving the hamlets in the revenue village, and implementation of these plans by social activist groups emerging out of the hamlets, under the overall supervision of the panchayats can enable the state to provide necessary inputs for meaningful development.