

A Case Study :

Rural information centres and viable technology transfer

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Interruption in the lot of easygoing rural life is the dire consequence of intensive agricultural practices emerged out of the green revolution. No doubt, we have to face challenges of post WTO regime but it would be inopportune to drag farmers in the inveigling trade of unrepresentative and purported modern technology. Instead, they must be provided with effective, fresh and easy on the pocket agricultural technology practicable in the social context. A huge sum of money has been spent on various agriculture and rural development schemes of central and state governments, but expected economic and social change is yet to be achieved. Scanty participation of people and their lack of knowledge of the development schemes implemented hitherto are the foremost reasons for the failure. People's participation should be secured in formulating, accomplishment and evaluation of success of development and technology transfer programmers, prudent policy, societal stirring. Technology transfer can bring the desired fruitful results in restructuring and strengthening of rural agro-economy. The process of development can be shifted by establishing interactive network among the base components of the system through self-help groups, rural information centers, operational groups, cooperative societies, voluntary organizations etc. We have modern IT at our disposal. This would definitely take on shared experiences; indigenous technologies that are proving beneficial even in the era of craze for modernization and especially, ensure the participation of even the passed over people. Then this process would embark on the both modern and conventional technologies in tandem, foster leadership qualities, stimulate rural agri-based entrepreneurship among rural masses and in turn, result in sustainable rural development.

In near future, increasing population

will result in heavily yoked agriculture and agri-business and mishandling of natural resources. The major alarming issues would be sustainable agriculture, ground water level, deforestation and hazard to environment, ever-increasing population and irregularity of rain. The main reason for this jeopardy is the quest for food production augmentation owing to growing population. Hon. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has also recently expressed a serious apprehension over sustainability of agriculture and augmentation of agricultural production pertaining to the food grain scarcity in future. Undoubtedly, the green revolution is vitally successful. It was, definitely, the indispensable desire after increasing food production. But the dire consequences of intensive agricultural practices on soil quality and environment are visible, which interrupt the rural life a lot. The farmers are not willingly involved in this process. It is bare fact that they became inevitable ingredient of this system largely because of lack of proper information and appropriate use of technology.

Call for second green revolution:

Scientists are conferring on a great deal for "Second Green Revolution" owing to changing global scenario in WTO regime. The major issue today is sustainability of agriculture and conservation of natural resources. We have up-to-the-minute IT at our disposal. Therefore, we can access information from all over the world through different institutes. Now, the most ardent need is to transfer effectively the improved technology to the farmer. Seed, fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides are being distributed under the illusive term 'Subsidy'. It is the felt need that farmers must be provided with modern and affordable agricultural technology in spite of such wheedling merchandise. At this backdrop, social

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awakening is necessary by forming voluntary organizations, cooperative societies and self-help groups.

Such essential problems pertaining to agriculture should be discussed in seminars and conferences for rural and agricultural development. We should switch on our efforts to uplift rural masses and build Rural India as dreamt by Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Vinoba Bhave. An attempt for effectual transfer of technology can play a decisive role to ameliorate and strengthen rural agro-economy.

Go-slow development schemes implemented hitherto:

After independence a huge sum of money has been spent on various agriculture and rural development schemes by central and state governments, but expected economic and social change is yet to be achieved. In 1950s the target was mass development, and in 1960s crop wise package schemes were implemented. During the decade of 1970 rural and agriculture development schemes on group-area were implemented, and in 1980s an integrated rural development scheme was formulated. World Bank had also supported these programmes. Nevertheless, we were not able to build dreamt rural India because of lack of peoples' participation in and their unawareness of development schemes and hence, failure of group development schemes. Some schemes made farmers dependent in spite of making them self-reliant. Policy makers also neglected farmers' thinking. Therefore, extension workers have to face tremendous challenge for the success of development programmes, and it is possible only through prudent policy, societal stirring and technology transfer.

Human resources development:

In India about 70% population depends directly or indirectly, on agriculture that demands education, owed training and back up for self-sufficiency. We should look upon the prospects to create responsible citizens aware of their rights and duties toward nation. Furthermore, IT and other technology transfer tactics can facilitate mutual interaction among them, which has become ardent need at the times when the concepts like contract farming are taking roots in Indian soils and that could help foster leadership qualities ultimately resulting into overall progress. In this process below poverty line population should be considered at first place.

Peoples' partaking in various development programmes:

Indian constitution has given due rights to people for implementation of development programmes. More

than 107 development programmes have been implemented on Gram-Panchayat level only. In this perspective only a few programmes are moderately fruitful only because of peoples' ignorance, and meager sharing. Motivation for lively involvement of people will enhance sustainable move ahead; generation of socially acceptable, agro-climatically feasible and low cost and easily affordable technology and convincing people for its result would be taken on predominantly. Step by step participation of people ought to be secured in formulating, accomplishment and evaluation of success of the technology transfer programmes and their share in this network could certainly give a fillip to the process of development. This could make programmes more and more people oriented and help cultivate their attachment. The process will bring into play various resources which were neglected before even by the science and technology and people would be able to run these programmes even after withdrawal of the schemes provided if any.

Rural information centers:

Central Government embarked on the era of IT establishing Agricultural Technology Information Centers (ATIC) at all the agricultural universities in India. ATICs are transferring generated technology effectively as well as supplying products useful for agriculture. Some mobile companies provided free of cost information regarding market. Establishment of Information Centers on village level has become need of the hour. Government has to implement schemes on computer literacy in rural areas. The efforts of Rajasthan and Andhra governments in the use of the mainframe are appreciable. Attempts in this respect at Warna (Dist. – Kolhapur) and Prawaranagar (Dist. – Ahmednagar) are fruitful. In future, newspapers will also cover global state of affairs that could help the rural India in achieving expected development. In Philippines, *regional radio centers* provide information to rural farmers on agriculture, animal husbandry, rural development and environment. Rural libraries through information centers would speed-up rural development programme in future.

21st century is distinguished with IT. Global focus is on the use of IT for advancement of the society. Significant progress is apparent in various fields like defence, biotechnology, medical science etc. Similarly, IT can be used in effectually for the improvement of assorted aspects related to rural masses and agriculture by making our mind up on explicit "strategy". Socio-economic revolution is expected on global stage making the most of

the advantages of IT. According to the numerous scientists IT is a divine weapon that can be used effectively for rural development and the exercise of which has become need of the hour.

Self-help groups:

Making an allowance for the constructive work through rural self-help groups in the past, the process of development can be accelerated through them, and established network would greatly help people go through co-operative groundwork. NABARD has seen the success, importance and necessity of various self-help groups. Functioning of women's self-help groups found to be more effectual. These groups have paved way to sustainable rural economic development. The network could not only make them good entrepreneurs but also they can be trained in their routine works viz. making applications, entries in registers, proceedings of group activities and decisions, credit and debit, maintenance of accounts, group discussions and reports etc. These groups can prove to be guiding stars to the society in the development processes. Such activities help in fostering co-operation and individual qualities of decision-making and leadership.

Traditional wisdom and indigenous technologies:

We should always bear in mind that every new and improved technology is founded on traditional wisdom, which is often deliberately forgotten vis-à-vis the glamour of new concepts and the new technology generated that is yoked on the shoulders of rural people. For example, excessive use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides cause health hazards. On the contrary, organic inputs are safe as well as the products earn comparatively more prices in the market. The time has come to adopt it again. This traditional wisdom should also be transmitted to next generation along with indigenous technologies that are proving beneficial even in the era of craze for modernization.

Entrepreneurship development:

During the last two decades, rural people are rushing to urban areas. The reason is shrinking sources of income and unsatisfactory wages in rural areas. Therefore, it is pre-requisite to develop entrepreneurship among the rural people mostly based on agriculture, which is the major source of raw material. Agro-based enterprises like dairying, poultry, mushroom production, honeybee, pig and goat farming, fruit-flower-vegetable production etc. will generate sustainable income and additional employment, and there lies the prospect of making farming community

self-reliant. Stimulating rural entrepreneurship may result in sustainable rural development. In this process, every ingredient will share experiences of others and will be able to uplift himself socio-economically establishing intimate relations that will accelerate the development process.

Conclusion:

Intensive agricultural practices emerged out of the green revolution put forth dire consequences in the forbearing rural life. It would be unfortunate to drag farmers in the tricky trade of illusory and self-styled modern technology. Instead, they must be provided with effective and fresh agricultural technology within their means and prolific development schemes. People's contribution should be sought in planning, execution and evaluation of success of development and technology transfer programmes. Discreet policy, social awakening, apposite technology transfer, establishment of interactive network among the base components of the system through self-help groups, rural information centers, operational groups, cooperative societies, voluntary organizations can bring the desired fruitful results in restructuring and strengthening of rural agro-economy. Rural information centers could play a decisive role in this respect. This would definitely take on shared experiences, indigenous technologies that are proving beneficial even in the era of craze for modernization and especially, ensure the participation of even the passed over people. Then this process would embark on the both modern and conventional technologies in tandem, foster leadership qualities, stimulate agro-based entrepreneurship among rural masses and in turn, result in sustainable rural development.

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