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17 Communication, Innovation, and Planned Change in India

Although the administrative structure of British India was geared largely to law and order, it did include a number of nation-building departments. Some of these departments rendered useful service to the people, but their programmes were rarely pursued with any urgency or vigour. The general administrator, wielding vast powers for the maintenance of law and order, was unmistakably the central figure in the administrative set-up; the specialists and the technicians were relegated to secondary positions. Officials, both general administrators and technical experts, constituted a special class and functioned as a subcultural segment of the society. Those on the higher echelons of the bureaucracy consciously tried to maintain a distance from the masses. The life of the officials was one of relative ease, and the tempo of their activities was generally slow. Free from political pressures and economic compulsions, they continued practising the prescribed routines in their respective spheres.

Attainment of freedom changed all this. The emphasis in state activity shifted from maintenance of law and order to planned development. For the new tasks, both the politician and the bureaucrat were not quite prepared. The former came to positions of power with a rich background of agitational politics and of solidarity-building, but with little experience of problem solving; the latter, used to a sheltered existence and stereotyped ways, was by temperament and training inadequately

fitted to assume the vastly enlarged role expected of him. Radical and purposeful changes in the norms of political as well as bureaucratic behaviour were indicated.

Two types of communication networks were well developed in India: the network of administrative communication and the network of political communication. The first consisted largely of an organization for gathering administrative intelligence—mainly information relating to the state of law and order, especially concerning the possible sources of trouble. The responsibilities of the nation-building departments were limited and precisely defined. Their field agencies, supported by the network of general administration, kept them well informed regarding situations requiring their attention: for example, they knew where they had to rush relief during famines or following serious fires, and where they had to enforce preventive measures, for instance at the outbreak of smallpox, plague, and cholera epidemics. The concept of working in association with the people was neither emphasized nor understood. If the people resisted persuasion, they had to be pushed.

The network of political communication, resting on the hatred of alien rule, was excellently developed for the flow of agitational information. It succeeded admirably in building certain patriotic images and in spreading the political ideology of the nationalist movement. But nation-building requires modification in existing norms and institutional arrangements, creation of new norms and institutions, and innovations for more effective communication. Traditional societies cannot be modernized by exhortation alone. For the additional communication functions required in nation-building, the existing network was not particularly suitable.

Viewed in the context of the requirements of nation-building, effective communication between several identifiable segments was necessary. This comprised:

1. Communication between the political sector and the bureaucracy;
2. Communication between the planner and the political decision-maker;
3. Communication between the planner and the research agencies;

4. Communication between the planner and the units of production;

5. Communication between the different departments and agencies of the government;

6. Communication between the different levels of administration;

7. Communication between the general administration and the technician;

8. Communication between the modernizers and the common people;

9. Communication between aid-giving and aid-receiving countries;

10. Communication between overseas consultants/advisers and their native counterparts.

Communication between the politician (the new political chief) and the bureaucracy (the old work horse) was difficult, especially in the earlier years of freedom. Although both were patriotically motivated, their orientations and ethos were different. There was considerable mutual distrust between the two. The politicians' image of bureaucracy, especially of the higher civil servants, identified it closely with alien rule (did not the civil servants lead a secure and comfortable life when the freedom fighters suffered hardships and made sacrifices to drive the British out?). They regarded the bureaucracy, by and large, as unimaginative, unworkable, and immobile and felt that as a group it was concerned more with power and perquisites than with the higher motivation of serving people. The civil servants, many of whom had more than a sneaking admiration and respect for the freedom fighters, resented this attitude. They found that in positions of power some of the patriots were not quite embodiments of service and sacrifice, and not without some of the failings for which they criticized the civil servants so vehemently. The bureaucracy, smug in its familiarity with the skills of administration, was perhaps convinced of its indispensability.

The experience of working together threw up some new problems, but in many ways it also brought the bureaucrats and the politicians closer together. Personalized politics and diffused expectations of the politician were now the major source of

worry to the bureaucracy. Bureaucracy's concern for set procedure and established routine annoyed the politician and the former, in turn, was dismayed by the impatient ways of the political executive who did not want to go by precedent. The two broadly agreed on the aims of national policy, but they did not see eye to eye on the methods of implementing it. The roles of the political and permanent executives were not sharply distinguished, not at any rate by the politician. A curious consequence of this, in some instances, was the merging or transfer of the two roles. Good intentions and pious exhortations by themselves could not remedy the situation. Some political executives tried to set a good example by confining themselves only to the making of major policy decisions and to the exercising of general supervision over the work of the ministries or departments they controlled; they did not interfere in their detailed working and respected the bureaucracy's right of placing its views freely and fearlessly. The higher civil servants also modified their thought- and work-ways. In between those who adopted the path of abject surrender and those who continued to sulk resentfully, a sizeable section of civil servants learned to live with the politician. With a view to achieving speed and efficiency, they modified their procedures, but they also generally insisted on their right to present all aspects of a given case with their own advice. The ultimate decision was of course with the political executive, and this position was never in any serious doubt. Passage of time was expected to evolve the norms governing the relationship between the two.

On the intermediate and lower levels, modifications in the established institutional arrangements and creation of new institutional patterns were expected to establish proper communication between the civil servants and the politicians. Some innovations were also tried: for example, participation by the members of the two sectors in common orientation courses and seminars was expected to bring them closer.

Communication on the highest planning level was also not always easy. All major policies were to be determined by the political decision-makers, but the specialized job of preparing detailed blueprints had to be handled by the technocrats. Implementation of the plans and policies was largely left to the bureaucracy. All three, the politician, the bureaucrat, and

the technocrat, continued to speak their respective dialects. There were significant differences in their approaches and ways of working. Unlike the technocrat, who tried to look at problems objectively from the point of view of his specialization, the politician could not be oblivious to ideological commitments, to parochial pulls, and to the possible political consequences of the policies suggested by the specialist. In respect of the priorities and the emphases in planning, the two often did not see eye to eye. Acting under pressures of different types and for a variety of reasons, the politician had to commit himself to positions that did not meet with the approval of the expert. The expert's computations and projections were often beyond the comprehension of a majority of the politicians. These factors created difficulties in the way of communication.

The structure of India's Planning Commission, though, is such that it includes politicians, administrators and technocrats —the three types of personnel most acutely needed in the process of planning for national development. The Prime Minister of India has been the chairman of Planning Commission from its inception. Its membership is varied and includes, besides some of the key ministers of the government of India, members drawn from the ranks of technocrats, administrators, and politicians. This diversity in its membership posed some problems of communication but, on the whole, the Commission has succeeded in working at a team without sharp cleavages and pronounced differences. The prestige of the late Prime Minister Nehru and the presence of some important members of the Union Cabinet added weight to the views of the Planning Commission and made them generally acceptable to the Parliament. Nevertheless, the dominating presence of the Planning Commission was occasionally resented by politicians both inside and outside the Parliament. It was particularly criticized for its tendency to override the ministries by scrutinizing their proposals and pronouncing judgements over them. For an extra-constitutional body like the Planning Commission to exercise such control over the ministries was regarded as unusual and objectionable. The Commission was sometimes described as a "parallel government" or even as a "super cabinet." The echoes of this criticism were also heard in the capitals of the various constituent states of the Union. Although

some channels of communication between the Commission and political institutions have been created, many inadequacies still persist.

The planner (and also the administrator) has not been able to communicate effectively with the various research agencies which have important roles to play in the country's massive efforts for economic development and technological change. The Planning Commission and the various ministries concerned with the implementation of development policies have to use a great deal of research, both for formulating their policies and for more economical and efficient implementation of these policies. Besides utilizing the existing agencies and impressive network of organization devoted to research, mostly of an applied nature, has had to be created. As a substantially large part of the funds for research is provided by the government, it can directly or indirectly exercise considerable influence on research policies and priorities. While it is true that in framing research policies, scholars and scientists are consulted, the control of research funds and the management of research organizations is largely vested in the bureaucracy which, despite some notable exceptions, has little insight into or understanding of the nature and problems of research. In consequence, little really useful work can be done inside the impressive buildings that are put up for the research organizations.

The structure of the research organizations also leaves much to be desired: modelled on stereotyped bureaucratic patterns, it is not conducive to smooth and effective communication within the research agencies themselves. They are run more as offices than as organizations intended to produce high quality research. In recent years, this problem has exercised the minds of both the scientists and the planners. The question of allowing a greater measure of autonomy to research institutions is being considered. They are to be restructured in such a way that intra-agency communication, conducive to greater productive efficiency, may be assured. So far only pious hopes have been expressed; steps to translate them into action have yet to be taken. It may be added that the research workers themselves have shown little initiative in trying to break the barriers to communication. Being preoccupied with fundamental problems

they often fail to relate their research directly to the requirements of national planning and development. The scientists, especially the social scientists, speak and write in a jargon that is becoming less understandable to those outside their circle. Their findings cannot make the desired impact unless they translate themselves in a language that can be understood by the politician and the administrator.

India has a mixed economy. The growing public sector is under state control. This makes for relatively easy communication between the government and the public sector. But this sphere is also not without problems of communication. The public sector not only has to meet the requirements of planned development but also has to work for the fulfilment of some of the ideals of social justice adopted by the government. At the same time, it cannot be entirely oblivious to the operation of the laws of a market economy. At several points it has also to communicate with the private sector. The nature of its structure, aims, and control creates problems of communication. The problems of the private sector are of a different nature. Within the framework of an economy ideologically committed to develop along socialistic lines, state controls on the public sector are many. Licences, import permits, foreign exchange, state purchase, fiscal measures, and company law administration are some of the major instruments in the hands of the state to control the activities of this sector. In recent years, some innovations have been made to establish communication between the planner and the government, on the one hand, and the units of production—in both the private and the public sectors —on the other. The industrial policy resolutions set the direction for industrial development. A number of development councils for various industries, such as chemical and electrical industries, have been set up. The membership of these councils is drawn from both the sectors. The planning and administrative wings of the government are also represented. Common programmes of production are worked out by discussion and mutual exchange of views by these councils. Another example of such innovation is provided by the Export Promotion Council, which discusses all questions concerning production for the export market as well as those concerning incentives for exports and quality control.

India is not the only country whose government is characterized by interministry and interdepartmental rivalries. As elsewhere, ministries and departments of the government in this country also try to inflate their own importance and attempt to enlarge their spheres of influence. Planning is a complex and many-sided process that requires pooling and integration of the resources of these departments. The prevalence of rivalries and jealousies between different parts of the same government, especially among those who are engaged in the tasks of nation-building, creates serious problems. It is not difficult to imagine what happens to developmental activity when, for example, the ministry in change of irrigation or cooperation differs in its approach and operational strategy with the Ministry of Agriculture. Similarly, differences between the Ministries of Education, Health, and Community Development can also create awkward situations. These barriers to interministry and interdepartmental communication have been recognized. Interministerial and interdepartmental coordination committees have been set up to bring about a degree of harmony and unison in their planning. Ministries and departments working in allied fields are brought together in such committees.

Although India has a fairly stable and well-organized administrative structure, communication does not flow smoothly between the different levels of administration.

The wider national view and the narrower view of the constituent states, in regard to even, some of the more pressing problems, are not always in harmony. Local problems and pressures force the state governments to view the issues in a different perspective. The National Development Council and other similar bodies, which bring together representatives of the central and state governments, try to provide a forum to harmonize competing claims and evolve common acceptable policies. But communication mechanism still remains inadequate.

Communication from the centre and from the state headquarters to the district (the key unit of administration) and the block (the key unit of development) is also defective, although perhaps the best organized. Directives move from the higher to the lower units in the hierarchy, but the flow of information in the reverse direction is not equally well provided for. Within

the bureaucracy, status structure is a strong barrier to the flow of information from the lower to the higher levels. Many officials on the upper echelons do not have sufficient tolerance for suggestions coming from those down below.

In the political hierarchy, the situation is different. The political executive, besides having the benefit of established channels, also obtains information through formal and informal political channels. A certain number of local problems reach the higher civil servants through the political executive, although these political channels mostly communicate only complaints and the more pressing needs.

Several innovations have been made to remedy these defects. Through repeated exhortation and organized training, an attempt has been made to break the class barriers between officials. These efforts have contributed to develop emotional awareness of the fact that development is a collaborative effort, but this awareness has not appreciably eased the process of communication. Under the scheme of democratic decentralization, an effort has been made to link the political and the administrative networks: democratic institutions, charged with the responsibilities of planning and development for their respective spheres, have been set up at the village, block, and district levels; and the administrative machinery of the government at these levels has been placed under these democratic bodies.

A third innovation in this field is the setting up of statutory and/or ad hoc advisory councils or committees. These bodies have a special focus; their terms of reference cover one central interest or a set of related interests. On them, representation is given to politicians and administrators, as well as to groups intimately connected with the particular interest the body represents.

Nation-building requires close collaboration between the general administrator and the technician. In India, as perhaps elsewhere, these two groups do not interact well and communication between them often becomes difficult. The traditional structure of administration in the country was highly compartmentalized: each department had a distinct line of command; interdepartmental links were few. Although the general administrator enjoyed a distinctly superior status, little direct and formal control was exercised by him on the technical

departments. Integrated development programmes required a high degree of coordination. In the community development blocks the technicians were placed under dual control; the block development officer exercised administrative control over them, while higher officers of their respective departments continued to exercise technical control. This innovation, basically sound in conception, met with considerable resistance, and even today, twelve years after the inauguration of the community development programme, this modification in the traditional arrangement has not been emotionally accepted. The general administrator feels that the authority vested in him to control the technician is not adequate; the higher officials of the technical departments are resentful because they have lost a chunk of their empire. Orientation and training programmes, aimed at rectifying the breach, have not met with the required degree of success.

The eighth problem area in the communication process in nation-building—involving communication between the modernizer and the common people—will be discussed more fully in the rest of this contribution. The practical significance of this aspect of the problem is widely recognized. It has been approached in two different ways—almost from two opposite directions. An extension network has been created to take the message of modernization to the common people. At the same time, in order to articulate interest in the local communities, a network of decentralized democratic institutions has also been set up. This arrangement was intended to establish a two-way process of communication. In a limited way, it has succeeded in achieving its objective. However, as we shall see later, the two sets of institutions are hampered by blurred images, inner contradictions, and operational difficulties. Proper communication between the two has not yet been established.

India has had to depend upon foreign aid for many of her development projects. The policy of nonalignment with either of the two major power blocks necessitated her having to seek such aid without any political strings. For several years this policy was misunderstood, and it even aroused active hostility towards India in certain quarters. There was also misunderstanding in respect of some of the priorities in planning; several aspects of her national policy were not clearly understood. The

new images, aspirations, and idiom of India were not adequately appreciated by either block. In consequence, relations between aid-giving nations and India continued to remain somewhat uneasy. India herself was partly to blame for this as she failed to project her programme and policy in a manner that could be easily understood by the aid-givers. On the other hand, little evidence exists to suggest that the more advanced nations, on their part, made any conscious and sustained effort to understand the Indian attitude and sentiments. This unhappy chapter in the history of India's relations with aid-giving nations indicates the necessity of a serious examination of the different aspects of the problem of international communication in the field of technical assistance.

Many of the overseas technicians, consultants, and advisers who came over to India were not sufficiently sensitized to the existing conditions and work-ways in the country, especially to its political culture and bureaucratic patterns. It was apparent that some of them were not chosen very carefully and that their preparation for the overseas assignment was obviously inadequate. Positive and forward-looking individuals, equipped with cross-cultural perspectives and empathy, constituted a minority. Though numerically small, this group was perhaps the most successful in interacting well with Indian co-workers. Others could not feel at home in the country and were generally impatient and critical of the ways of their Indian associates. While some of them developed antipathy and hostility to India and Indian things, others chose the line of least resistance by adopting an attitude of formal compliance to the minimum requirements of their jobs. On the other hand, Indian personnel chosen to work with foreign technicians and experts were also not carefully prepared for their new role. The dialogue between the two was on the whole unsatisfactory, and their collaboration could not become very productive.

The above outline is intended only to be suggestive of certain important areas in which there exists a need for effective communication. In a sketchy and somewhat perfunctory manner, an attempt has been made to list some of the innovations that have been made in India to fill the gaps in communication. Mention has been made of some efforts to modify existing

norms and institutional arrangements, of some attempts at creation of new norms and institutions, and also of a few innovations for more effective communication. It may be emphasized that while many of the maladies have been recognized, their treatment has so far been largely symptomatic. Serious diagnostic studies of the nature and strength of the different types of barriers to communication in different areas of development planning and administration have yet to be made. In the absence of such scientific studies, covering every significant aspect of the problem, comprehensive planning for removal of inadequacies and defects in communication cannot be attempted.

INDIAN VILLAGE: INNOVATION IN COMMUNICATION

To carry the message of change to the rural masses, several types of innovations in communication have been attempted in India. They include: (1) creation of new channels of communication; (2) introduction of new methods of communication; and (3) utilization of traditional methods for new purposes.

The new channels of communication created for this purpose are:

(*a*) A network of extension services
(*b*) A network of local agents of communication
(*c*) A network of decentralized democratic institutions

In the past, the nation-building departments tried to introduce some changes in their respective jurisdictions but their efforts lacked coordination and integration, although in a limited way they did succeed in persuading the village people to adopt some progressive innovations. The benefits of these efforts were mostly confined to a few individuals or to small segments of the village-communities. Inadequate support from other departments responsible for activities in allied fields resulted at best in half-hearted efforts to bring about change. The greatest weakness of this approach was that it did not take a total view of the problems of village development and did not make any effort to involve the community in the process. Field agents of different departments were trained essentially as technicians;

human skills required in successful extension did not form a part of their equipment.

Community development organization in India has made a conscious attempt to rectify these defects. Planned change is viewed by it as a unified and integrated process requiring a variable, multi-faceted, and multidimensional but coordinated approach. To achieve this, a number of specialities such as agriculture, cooperation, animal husbandry, public health, education, and rural engineering have been brought together under a single organizntion. The *development block* has emerged as the key unit of planning and development for the villages: its personnel is a multi-speciality team under unified control. This team is expected to work in close association with the people and their voluntary statutory organizations. Pre-and in-service training programmes, devised for the development personnel, aim at inculcating desirable attitudes and attributes in the action agents and at developing the required interactional and communicational skills in them.

Although not without weaknesses and defects, this approach has made a considerable impact. Today, there exists in the country an effective and organized network of extension workers able to communicate directly and more successfully with the rural masses.

Some of the inadequacies and drawbacks in the system are:

(1) Within the facade of unity imposed by the block organization, there are several inner contradictions. The acceptance of the unified pattern is more apparent than real. Interdepartmental jealousies and rivalries powerfully obstruct the emergence of the block organization as a unified multi-speciality team. The technicians still continue to speak their respective dialects.

(2) The extension agents continue to have a dual image of their roles and function; even their approach and methods are characterized by such split images. They are aware of the importance of educational *extension methods*, but for quick results they sometimes feel that the traditional *executive methods* would have been more effectivc. Official pressure from above for fulfilling targets often deters them from giving a real trial to the slow and time-consuming methods of extension.

(3) Although training programmes for development workers

include instruction on human skills and communication, much of this learning is by and large theoretical. Little effort is made to assess the backgrounds of individual participants and to relate the training to their specific needs. Significant typological differences between development workers are thus not recognized; and extremely limited, if any, attempts are made to offer individual counselling to them. On-the-job guidance on human skills is practically nonexistent. They are introduced to a number of audiovisual aids in communication, but even during their training they know that they will not have the time or occasion to use many of them. Utilization of these aids under actual field conditions is also not effectively explained to them.

(4) Failure to back the field agent with adequate and timely supplies and technical support results in his "loss of face." Handicapped by this lack of support, he cannot carry the communication process to completion. Village people soon lose faith in the extension worker and also in the innovations he seeks to promote.

An attempt has been made to create a network of local agents of communication. This problem has been approached from two angles: on the individual level, certain key persons are selected, trained and associated with specific programmes of village development; on the group level, associate organizations are created to help the communication process in relation to development.

The first approach is exemplified by the offices of *grama sahayak* (village helper) and *gramalakshmi* (village goddess of prosperity), both of whom are chosen from among the village people. They are given some training and then associated with development work. Associate organizations—*yuwak mandal* (youth club modelled on 4-H clubs) and *mahila mandali* (womens' club)—aim at creating new leadership, at articulating interest, and at involving organized groups in the tasks of development. A number of village leaders' training camps are also organized.

This effort has encountered some serious operational difficulties. Not many persons are willing to come forward for the offices of *grama sahayak* and *gramalakshmi*; recruitment to the latter is especially difficult because of the traditional definition of the woman's role and because of norms requiring her seclusion. In the absence of popular enthusiam for these positions,

the question of selecting persons with the requisite aptitude and personality traits does not arise; the villagers have often to be coaxed and cajoled into accepting these assignments. Their training is poorly organized, and because of its short duration and unimaginative handling, it does not succeed in imparting either technical competence or human skills. And, finally, their role in development work is not properly defined. Apart from rendering some general assistance to extension agents, they do not appear to do anything in particular.

Associate organizations are also often set up in a hurry. They start with considerable enthusiasm but organizational difficulties, lack of guidance, and absence of support, soon reduce them to a languishing and lingering existence. The training of their leaders is also neither well organized nor particularly effective.

Reference has already been made to the creation of a hierarchy of democratic institutions on the village, block, and district levels. This has been a bold and significant step in the right direction. It has definitely helped in the articulation of interest and in the flow of communication from the village upwards. It has also enabled the less privileged to break the harsh ascriptive order of the Hindu social system by providing them an avenue to rise in the emerging power hierarchy. Democratic decentralization has been a powerful instrument in developing political articulation.

These advantages notwithstanding, the experiment is undergoing some teething troubles. The more important ones among them are the following:

(1) In general, these institutions have failed to comprehend their role in the process of development. They have either seen themselves in the role of traditional *panchayats*, with arbitration, mediation, and dispute-resolving as their main functions, or they seek political authority and control of the administrative machinery of the state without evincing much direct interest in programmes of development.

(2) The role of extension services under these institutions has not been closely defined. The resultant confusion has, in some parts of the country, slowed down the tempo of development activity.

(3) Arrangements to orient and train the political and

permanent executives of these institutions have rarely been adequate. Effective communication between the people's representatives and the officials still remains to be established.

Several new methods of communication have been pressed into service to transmit the message of development to the village people. Important innovations in this field are these:

(*a*) Intensive utilization of the group discussion method
(*b*) Use of "method" and "result" demonstrations
(*c*) Use of audio-visual aids like posters, filmstrips, films and radio
(*d*) Use of printed materials; especially newspapers and pamphlets

For arousing interest in innovation and for teaching the related skills, face-to-face communication is without doubt the most important instrument in underdeveloped societies. Field agencies of community development have done remarkably well in using this type of communication. In this context, it is necessary to remember that the extension agent has under him unmanageable areas with large populations; he had several competing pressures on his time; and he has to spend a great deal of his energies in complying with formal official routines. These handicaps notwithstanding, he has succeeded in reaching a fair proportion of village people and in stimulating them to try at least some innovations. The results could have been more encouraging had the extension worker been given a set of clear indicators for the choice of the most appropriate groups for such discussions and had he been able to find time to sustain their interest through repeated follow-up discussions. Timely support, in the shape of technical guidance and required supplies, would have also added to the effectiveness of communication.

The main focus in India's rural development programme is on agriculture. Use of demonstrations—both of method and of results—can be, and has been to a degree, a useful aid to the acceptance of innovations in agriculture. Routinization and ritualization of this method has, however, considerably restricted its utility.

The following conclusions emerged out of a series of case studies of method-and-result demonstrations carried out in

different parts of the country:

(1) No definite criteria were adopted in the selection of sites for the demonstrations. A majority of the plots were unsuitable.

(2) Similarly, the agriculturalists were also not chosen with any discrimination. There was little evidence to suggest that they had any interest in the demonstration. What was worse, they could not be used as "agents" to further promote the item.

(3) Some of the demonstrations related to practices that had already gained wide acceptance. As such, they were unnecessary.

(4) Technical guidance and support to the programme was generally poor.

(5) Preparatory steps which vitally affect the demonstrations, such as advance publicity, were ignored in many cases.

(6) The various stages of the demonstrations were neither publicized nor were they properly explained. People were not given an opportunity to compare the results of the new practices with those of the old practices. Even at the time of harvesting, people were not taken to the demonstration sites.

(7) Proof of net gain was not calculated and explained to the people.

(8) Some of the demonstrations could not be given because of the lack of timely supply of fertilizers, seeds, or implements.

This picture is indeed disconcerting. It is often forgotten that bad demonstrations are an obstacle rather than an incentive to adoption of innovations.

Posters can carry simple messages effectively and can even arouse interest if their thematic presentation is imaginative and if they use a symbol system that can draw people to them. The possibilities of this medium have not been fully exploited. Often enough, the posters use images that are alien to the village people; their language is hard to understand, if not entirely foreign. There has been practically no use of irony and sarcasm even in the posters aimed at anti-social practices. Cartoons have also not been widely used.

The use of filmstrips has been nominal rather than widespread. This medium could be used to illustrate processes, but for a variety of reasons this has not been done.

The popular image of the film, in the rural mind, associates it with two attributes: (1) they provide entertainment; and (2) they have a corrupting and deruralizing influence. Only limited

use has been made of this medium to teach detailed practices; their principle use so far has been to build certain images and to convey information regarding specific programmes and innovations. Most of the films have an urban bias. Where they seek to entertain as well as to educate, the emphasis on entertainment is so great that the educational part is wholly or partly missed. Or, alternatively, the instructional element is so heavy and drab that the film bores the village people. Choice of themes, mode of treatment, and use of language and symbols leave much to be desired.

Radio has been—at least indirectly—a powerful source of information to the village people. Innovative use of this medium is beginning to show some impressive results. Programmes aimed at the rural audiences, in the past and even today, are generally dull, statistics-ridden, and heavy, and yet they are not without a happier aspect. Some stations of All India Radio have given a personality to their rural programmes by building them around a central character who can arouse and maintain interest by adopting the folk idiom and by interpreting the more pedantic and dull speakers to the rural masses through well-timed interruptions. Radio farm forums, i.e., organized listening groups of agriculturalists, are also a useful innovation. It has been found that the message conveyed over the radio penetrates deeper if it is followed by a discussion between the village people and some of their opinion leaders. A two-way communication between the broadcasting station and the village people also stimulates interest.

In the case of radio, as in the case of the other media, the choice of idiom and themes and of manner of presentation is of critical importance. Evidence exists that they can be purposefully handled, but the limited number or successful experiments need to be duplicated on a wider scale. Production of inexpensive and trouble-free receiving sets and arrangements for repair to these instruments are two other important problems connected with the utilization of this medium.

In a country with a high rate of illiteracy, the use of the printed word of necessity will be limited. But the literate section of the village population cannot be ignored: in opinion-formation and in dissemination of ideas, it has a vital role. Useful literature for this section is not being produced. The

situation in regard to the neo-literates is worse. In actual practice, anything printed on coarse paper and in big type passes as material suitable for rural readers. Periodicals produced especially for villages contain more news on VIPs than information relevant to development programmes. Pamphlets and books tend to be heavy and pedantic: in style and language they are often not suited for rural readers.

Utilization of the traditional media of communication for new purposes provided considerable scope for innovation. In their conventional form, these media are used primarily to entertain or to recreate the mythological and historical past. These traditional media have been successfully geared, in some parts of India, to the requirements of development communication. Folk forms of entertainment and drama, such as *Burra Katha* in Andhra Pradesh, *Katha Kalakshepam* in the south, especially in Madras, *Kavigan* in Bengal—to give only three examples—have lent themselves admirably to adaptation for such use. Here, the setting and the principal characters are familiar to rural audiences. The actors know the rural mind and have a firm grasp of their idiom. In the hands of talented and resourceful actors, the treatment of development themes, either as a main attraction or even as a side attraction, can be really forceful. Interpolations in the form of *bol* (words spoken at regular intervals) during the *Bhangara* dance in the Punjab, and in the form of dialogue during the singing of *Laoni* and *Powada* in Maharashtra, have been successfully used for conveying the message of development. Puppet shows have also been effectively used in some parts of the country.

COMMENT ON INNOVATIONS

Thus, during the first decade of its existence, the Indian community development programme has made several significant experiments with the innovative use of communications. These pioneering efforts—through their successes and failures—have demonstrated the possibilities and limitations of the utilization of different communications strategies for national development.

The programme has rightly emphasized the use of face-to-face oral communication at the principal vehicle for the promotion of innovations in village India. Other media have also been pressed into service to supplement this effort, but their secondary role was never lost sight of.

A conscious effort was made to prepare the extension workers for their new and vital communications function. Experience suggests that the effectiveness of communication on the part of these change agents depended largely on their successful handling of three problems in the field—role definition, rapport, and impression management.

A lesson that is obvious, but one that needs to be emphasized nevertheless, is that to convey a message with effect it is essential to use the language, symbols, and styles familiar to the audience. A great deal of waste of effort can be avoided by approaching the village people through their own cultural frame of reference. The limited but successful use of traditional methods for new purposes, especially for attitude change, supports this approach. Urban bias in the handling of communications has perhaps been the most important single factor responsible for inadequate and faulty communication.

It is also evident that an oral message, by itself, is not enough to promote new practices and techniques. The effectiveness of the message increases manifold when it is supported by visual demonstration. A further step is equally necessary. As an instrument of development policy, communications should also be backed by a sound organization to provide technical guidance and required supplies. Nothing contributes more toward generating apathy, frustration, and lack of faith in the possibility of change in the village people than the failure on the part of change agents to actively assist them to experiment with the innovations for which interest has been aroused in them.

The effort to create a network of local agents of communication emanates from a basic principle adopted by the community development programme in India—the principle of actively involving the people with every phase and with all facets of the programme. Some significant steps have been taken in this direction, although they have not all been uniformly successful. The failures in this field need not cause despair. They only suggest what every policy-maker and change agent should know, that institution building is a slow process: doctrinaire

idealism alone can never create the desired institutions. The process inevitably requires patient and sustained experimentation. Evaluation and adjustment are two other essential components of a successful strategy of institution building for communication and change.

Creative effort to introduce new methods of communication is both desirable and necessary. It calls for imagination, innovation, research and evaluation. India, like other underdeveloped countries, requires a body of specialists who can effectively handle the poster and the cartoon, the newspaper and the pamphlet, and the film and the radio for attitude change and for promotion of innovations.

And finally one other lesson that India and other developing countries can learn from some of the failures of this country's communications strategy is that bureaucratization, routinization, and ritualization of approach often make communication sterile. It is necessary to guard against these dangers. Time is an essential element in the process of change: to make a deep and lasting impact on the village people the message of innovation has to be repeated and demonstrated several times.

SUMMING UP

India has pursued her programme of modernization and national development with an exceptional sense of urgency. Recognizing the crucial role of communication for the success of these plans, she has made a series of noteworthy innovations in this field. Having to explore uncharted territories, she has had to proceed with caution and necessarily has had to encounter some failures in the process. The lessons that have been learned are valuable.

Even today the country lacks a positive, comprehensive, and long-range communications policy. This is understandable, for the country is still searching for an identity and has not yet been able to evolve a consensus on what it ultimately wants to be. There is a mounting desire for attaining increasingly higher standards of life, but the ultimate social and cultural goals still remain somewhat hazy. A considerable gap still persists between the elite and the masses. The country's small modernizing elite has to approach the problem cautiously

for two important reasons: first, because the traditional elite is still a force to reckon with; and second, because the conservatism-ridden masses can react unpredictably if they are pushed too hard in the direction of modernization. In a democracy, the elite can only influence opinion; the ultimate decisions rest with the people. Until there is greater interest articulation and more political education the image of the future is bound to continue to remain blurred. And it may be added that even the elite is of two minds—if it is not confused—about the final choice: it is convinced of the desirability of modernization, but at the same time it cannot resist the pull of tradition.

In this context, an operational aspect of the communication process needs to be seriously taken note of. As the mass media are not relatively well developed, the modernizer cannot approach the rural population directly. He has to rely largely on traditional networks and on oral face-to-face communication through local intermediaries. The intermediary's logic of selectivity and interpretation often determine what part of the message will filter down to the masses and in what form. Bias and vested interests thus modify and distort the message considerably.

The communication policy also has been handicapped by the paucity of scientific research and evaluation and by the absence of a body of specialists who are adept in the innovative handling of communication for rural audiences. Problem areas of communication are beginning to be identified, but as yet there are no penetrating analyses of the range and dimensions of gaps, faults, and difficulties in these areas. An effective strategy for reaching the rural masses cannot be developed because so little is known about reference groups, opinion leaders, and decision-makers in the village communities. The reach and effectiveness of newspapers, books, radio, and film also have not been scientifically assessed. I the absence of this data the policy-maker has had to proceed largely on hunch and intuition. Carefully organized evaluation of these efforts could have suggested correctives, but unfortunately this has not been done on a wide enough scale. Inadequacy of innovative handling of communications for development is also explained by the woefully small number of persons who

have training, experience, and desire to forge ahead in this field.

It is heartening to observe, however, that the importance of communications for programmes of planned change is being increasingly recognized. This recognition, it is hoped, will be followed by purposeful, imaginative, and concerted action. For the speedy and smooth realization of the objectives of development policy, the need for more inputs in research, in evaluation, and in the training of mass media experts in the general field of communication cannot be overemphasized.