

Agricultural Extension methodology in the community development blocks

by

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Prior to the launching of the Community Development Projects, each department of Government was considered as an independent entity. For this reason each department addressed itself to the task of tackling the villager from its own point of view through its hierarchy of officials. As a result, the Agricultural Demonstrator, the Co-operative Inspector, the Supervisor of Works, the Veterinary Surgeon, the Health Inspector, the Inspector of Schools and a host of many other officials approached him and wanted him to do this, that and a third. The success which they were able to achieve in the village depended very much on their own individual efforts and on their capacity to sell their ideas to him. It also depended upon the financial allocations made available to him for undertaking the various developmental activities. The popular Governments in India found this a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. Impatient of the pace of progress, and realizing that the nation's welfare was almost wholly dependant on the welfare of the rural population, the Government of India have embarked on the Community development programme.

This programme starts with the premise that the villager has long been neglected and that he has become possessed with a frame of mind which does not want even to think of his own betterment. He has resigned himself to his fate and has no wants. He is as it were in sack and ashes. This frame of mind which does not recognise the possibility of the villager improving his own lot was something that was most injurious to national development. The Community Development Programme, therefore, seeks to instil into the villager a sense of prestige, an awareness in him that he is a distinct entity who matters much for India's welfare. He has to be awakened from his lethargy and has to be enthused over the new life that awaits him. He has to be made to "want" to be better than what he is now. That provocation of wanting to be better is expected to serve as a motive force which will spur him on to activity. His enthusiasm is proposed to be canalised into constructive channels. All the villagers are expected to co-operate in a common endeavour to better their socio-economic condition. Unlike in the past the

various Government departments are expected to join hands and put through programmes which impinge on every aspect of social life so that the entire socio-economic condition of the village might improve instead of lop sided developments. That in essence is the philosophy and practice of Community Development Programmes.

Realizing that this is one of the greatest experiments in national development ever undertaken in any democratic country, the whole world is watching the results of this grand venture. Several nations have sent observers to see and to learn what it is all about. Each foreign visitor has carried with him his own impressions. The Government of India too have found it necessary to undertake an appraisal of the progress that has been achieved. A number of Committees and experts have undertaken this job. And the question has been asked whether the villager has risen up from his slumber, whether he now really wants to improve and whether he is putting in his own endeavours to improve his lot. Or is what is going on merely a show by Government officials without any response whatsoever from the rural population? The basis of these questions is that unless the villager is made to get to work, there will be no sustained efforts at improvement. And without a radical change in the outlook of the villager and without his own active endeavours no lasting improvements can be effected. It is apprehended that unless this fundamental change in outlook is brought about, the economic improvement now witnessed will be a temporary phase of our economic life which will vanish the moment the drive organised by Government officials is withdrawn. There can be no two opinions about the correctness of this stand. In the present paper, an attempt is made to focus attention on one or two aspects of the Community Development Organisation.

The problem before us is largely psychological. We are tackling a situation where the villager is deemed lethargic and fatalistic in his attitude. He has to be aroused and his outlook so changed that he would hereafter want to improve. It is expected that as a result of the work under the Community Development Programme, he would put forth his best in this direction and he would ultimately want several things to be done not only by his own efforts but also by various Government Departments. That is the change that is now attempted to be brought about.

Speaking of the Agricultural Department, development plans are being drawn up for each village taking into account its potentialities. Supply lines by way of improved seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, etc., are being maintained. Demonstrations and exhibitions are conducted, group meetings are held, and the Department's messages are conveyed through radio, posters, pamphlets and other media. One would like to ask whether all these lines of our extension work are based on a study of the psychology of the cultivator and are such as would appeal to him and goad him to action or whether they are merely blind attempts at harnessing whatever method comes handy, in the fond hope that one or the other attempt will hit the mark.

In this context, I think we have to learn much from a business organization. Before a product is put on the market and before a campaign for selling it commences, the business man organises research into the various aspects of his work. First he undertakes what is called "consumer research" in order to discover what the particular human desires are which his product would satisfy. Certain desires are basic in human beings, for example the desire for comfort, the desire for keeping good health, self-preservation, etc. Basic desires cannot be newly created, but their intensity can be changed by propaganda and with that change, there will be motivation or activity. The business man will discover which desire is foremost in his prospective customers. He would play upon these desires in his advertisement campaign and thus attract his customer to purchase his product. The businessman will ascertain through organised research work what the motive is with which a set of persons purchase a particular product. After discovering these various motives he will use these motives for purposes of his advertisement campaign. Another aspect of research the businessman will undertake is a study of the use which his product is actually put to. He would study what particular desires it satisfies, that is, whether of comfort, or of health or other human satisfactions. After discovering this, he will use this idea in his advertising campaign so that other people who have the same desire will be tempted to buy the article. The businessman will then study his field and assess to what extent sales can be pushed through in the respective areas. After completing his research work to study the field conditions, the businessman gets ready for preparing his advertisements. This again has to be done on scientific lines in order that the large expenditure that it involves will not go to the drain but will result in building up his sales. The message contained

in an advertisement is directed to the desires which the product would satisfy. When an advertisement for a new house, for instance, starts with the message "We have a comfortable house" and presents the picture of the members of a family sitting together in a happy mood, the appeal here is to the desire for comfort. Similarly the appeal in an advertisement may be directed to other basic human desires. Psychologists have recognised a large number of motives that can be utilised in an advertisement campaign. Examples are the desire for economy, of safety, of possession, of humour, of cleanliness, of social distinction and so on. In an advertisement campaign, preliminary tests are carried out in order to evaluate to what extent the appeal to particular motives or desires is responded to. The most useful appeals are employed in the advertisements. The advertiser then considers which medium of advertisement would give best results. Various media are tried such as posters, printed matter, newspaper advertisements, radio and so on. The motives selected for purposes of advertisement are utilised in the messages conveyed through the various media. Finally the best medium is selected. In such a selection of the medium, data collected initially of the age, sex, income, education, etc., of the buyers are taken into account.

It is on the basis of such a painstaking course of research that any business man sells his service or his product.

In the Community Development Programmes that are in operation now it does not seem that any research has been undertaken to discover which particular motives can be played upon to secure the maximum response from the Villagers. All that is done is that every available method of propaganda has been attempted whatever be its potentiality to rouse the villager. Some observers have said that there has not been adequate public response for the Community Development Work from the persons for whose benefit the project has been started. This means, that this grand venture is not such a success it was expected to be. The reasons why public response is alleged to be lacking has not been studied on any scientific lines. Assuming that this true, one may well ask whether it is beyond human ingenuity to set the matter right. It is sometimes said that a particular agricultural improvement has not been adopted on any large scale by the ryots. In the same breath it is asserted that the average Indian ryot is an intelligent and shrewd person and that he would take to any improvement provided he is convinced that it is to his benefit. Since many of our agricultural improvements have

not spread well enough does the above statement mean that these improvements are not of benefit to the ryots or that the ryots are not convinced of their utility? In order to convince ryots, the extension staff is asked to lay out demonstration plots, for instance, and data are collected as to how many demonstration plots are laid by each Extension Officer. It is readily assumed that the ryots could be easily persuaded to go and visit the demonstration plots. If any Extension Officer has not laid out a sufficient number of demonstration plots, his work is considered as not upto the mark. There are about 30 to 50 villages under each Extension Officer and the population of a village may be anything from a few hundreds to two or three thousand. I am not sure whether it is not too much to expect an otherwise indifferent ryot to visit demonstration plots. Some years ago the Extension staff were asked to just tackle two or three enlightened ryots in each villages and make them cultivate their lands in the way the Agricultural Department would like them to do. It was then believed that the other ryots would easily imitate and do the same. This experiment succeeded to some extent. In order to make our extension methods more specific I would suggest that experts who are conversant with the study of the psychological factors which should be taken into account in breaking up the ryots' lethargy should be harnessed to this work. They should study the particular motive which can be stimulated if a ryot is to be persuaded to undertake any agricultural improvement work. And on the basis of the data collected by them our extension methods should be formulated. The media, we employ for conveying our messages should be selected on close study of the psychological factors involved. Even the get up of our message whether through the spoken word or pictures or through printed matter should be based on a clear appreciation of the problem and the most suitable media and manner of presentation. Research is required just before work is started in a block as to how to convey the messages of the Extension Officers to villagers. What particular extension method should be adopted, should be clearly understood. The most appropriate extension method should then be undertaken. Concurrently, an appraisal should be made of the success achieved by each message and method of extension. Unless this line of approach is utilised, sooner than later, it seems to me that we cannot escape from disappointments at the partial failure of ten years of hard work in a block. It will then be too late to accuse the villager of his obduracy. The fault would lie at our own doors for having undertaken extension work on unscientific lines.

The Agricultural College and Research Institute, Coimbatore is expecting to have a separate Extension Wing before long. * This wing can well be entrusted with the job of planning the proper extension methods for the blocks based on a scientific study of the problem and the most suitable methods. Experts in this field of research have to be associated with this work. On this occasion, I would like to refer to my article entitled "The place of advertising in the activities of the Agricultural Department", published in the March, 1941 issue of the Madras Agricultural Journal. I had suggested therein that the Department should have a central agency for issuing popular publications. This has materialised. The need for harnessing the advertiser's technique in our extension methods was also indicated in that paper and I reiterate that suggestion in the present context also.

In conclusion I express my gratefulness to the Director of Agriculture for having permitted me to contribute this article.

[* The Extension wing has since been sanctioned by the Government. — Editor.]
