

Occasional Paper No. 100

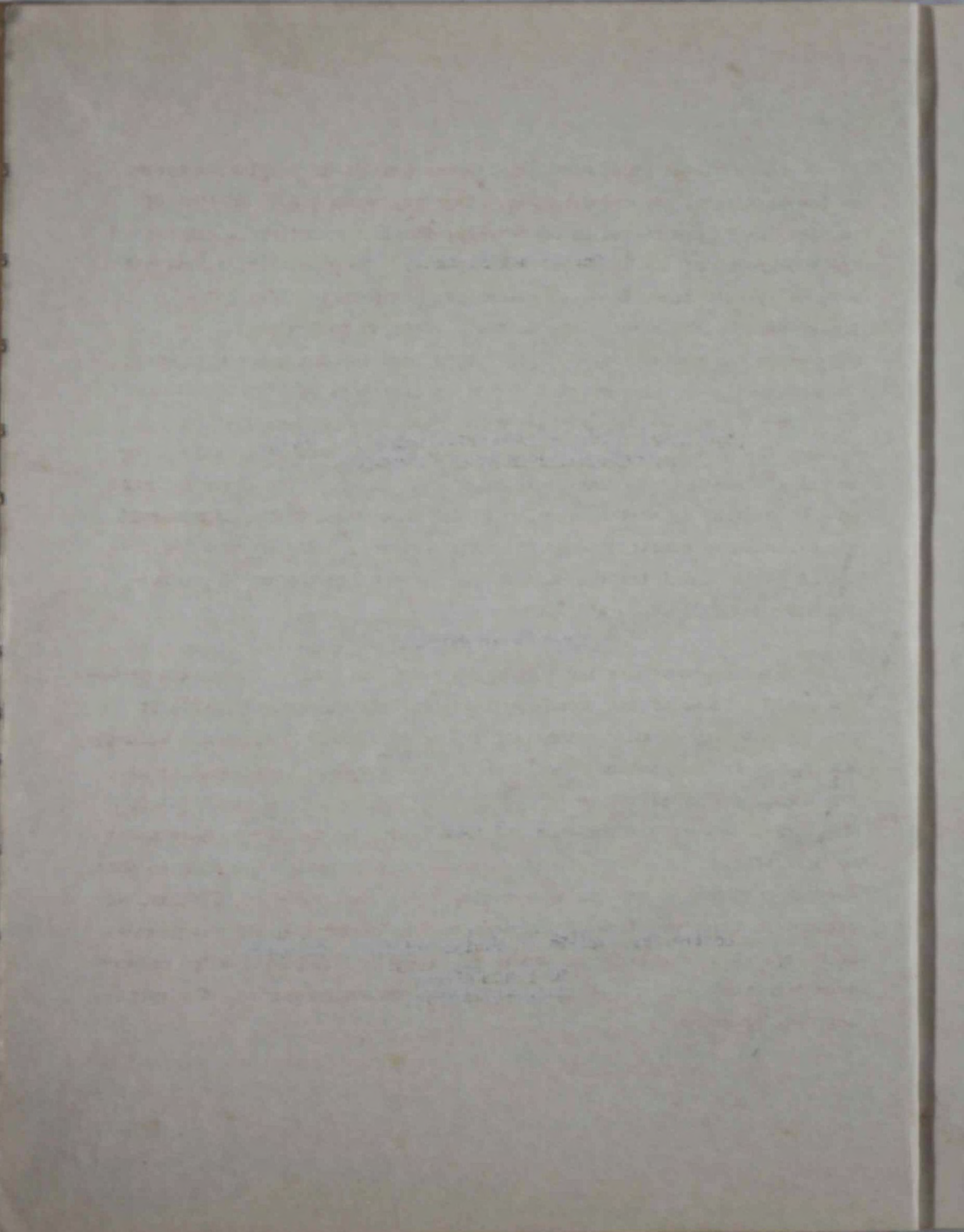
THE LOCAL STATE AND RURAL POLICIES : A STUDY  
OF DIGAPAHANDI BLOCK 1957—1983

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JANUARY—1988



Most of the studies on rural power tend to lay exclusive stress on the structural aspects of power. They emphasise the dimensions of 'social base' like caste, landownership, ethnic, educational, sex and age background of the local political elite.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, functional aspects (praxis dimensions) of power like the policies formulated/implemented by the rural elite in their attempts to legitimate and strengthen the social bases of power have been in most cases neglected. On the other hand, studies on the rural policy have adopted some kind of economic approach and treated the subject in isolation from its 'power' dimensions.<sup>2</sup> Against this background, we attempt in this paper to examine some of the functional aspects of power.<sup>3</sup> The paper is based on a case study of certain rural policies undertaken by the Digapahandi Block/Panchayat Samiti (Ganjam District, Orissa).<sup>4</sup> The Block being the lowest level administrative unit in the state hierarchy may be characterised as the 'local state' organ.

The paper is divided into three broad sections. First, the implementation process of the Community Development Programme (1957-76) is presented by way of an examination of four different CD schemes. Secondly, the policy implementation of one poverty amelioration programme, namely the Economic Rehabilitation of Rural Poor (ERRP) has been highlighted. The ERRP is a scheme formulated and implemented by the Orissa Government as part of its Sixth Plan efforts in rural development. Our data in this section pertains to two villages during the period 1980-83. Finally, we present an interpretation of the data on the CD and the ERRP programmes in an effort to identify the nature of shifts in the legitimation process over time and also, the possible areas of further research on the rural hegemony programmes.

The Community Development Programme,  
1957-1976

During the Second Five Year Plan, the planners' emphasis on the institutional reforms resulted in the growth of panchayat system as a main vehicle to implement the Community Development (CD) Programme at the village-level with the so-called "People's participation". Panchayats as they came into existence in Orissa in 1961 became the main agency to implement the unfinished tasks of the community development programme of the Second Five Year Plan (1957-62). In the Digapahandi Block, the Panchayat Samiti was formed in March 1961 and since then the Samiti took the task of implementing various schemes and sub-schemes covered under the Community Development Programme. The Samiti prepared a plan outlay for each aspect of the programme, and the Gram Panchayats were to implement these programmes at the village level.

In the present section, we intend to analyse the relationship between different community development projects in their implementation phase, and the rural power structure, during 1957-1976. We shall first see how the Samiti allots its CD budget under different heads and what is the nature of the projects envisaged in such allotment. Here we shall analyse the data for Digapahandi block at three time points, viz. 1957-62, 1967-68 and 1975-76 (It may be noted that during 1957-62, the Samiti was involved in the implementation only during 1961 and 1962). After having an idea about the nature of projects attended by the Samiti, we shall proceed to analyse how these projects, by their very nature, help certain specific groups in the village power structure. Thus, our understanding will proceed from the nature of specific project allocations to the impact of their implementation.

(See p.4)

Table 1 shows that the substantive emphasis of allocation expenditure under various heads in CD projects during the Second Five Year Plan was more on construction projects, rather than on agricultural development. Though the agricultural development was formally recorded high priority, the programme in actual practice was largely concerned with the construction of social amenities projects by using the surplus man-power and the state government funds.<sup>5</sup> About 26.25 per cent of expenditures under the community development programme accounted for salaries of the Block officials under the account-head, 'Block Headquarters'. Thus, when 'the agricultural extension' accounted for 4.17 per cent of the total expenditure incurred between 1957 and 1962, the salary of officials and construction of social amenities projects during the period accounted for 26.25 and 40.25 per cent of the plan outlay respectively. Only 28.33 per cent of total expenditures was devoted to irrigation activities. This shows that in terms of sectoral activities, the construction works were given a high priority in the allotment of expenditure. On the other, projects geared towards agriculture production such as supply of inputs, supply of water by irrigation system occupied a low scale in the Block's scheme of community development.

The trend continued at least till 1975-76 when panchayat raj institutions in Orissa were superseded due to the declaration of national emergency in the country. Let us look at allocation of grants done by the Samiti during the Third and Fourth Plan periods respectively. Table 2 <sup>(See p.5)</sup> indicates allocations for 1967-68 and Table 3 <sup>(See 2.6)</sup> indicates the same for 1975-76.

Table 2 and Table 3 suggest the recurrence of the trends of expenditure as during the Second Plan Period (see Table : 1). During 1967-68 (see Table 2) agriculture extension activities stood as low as 9.28 per cent of the total expenditure. On the other, the salary and

the construction activities of different social amenities projects covered as high as 46.27 and 44.45 per cent respectively of the total resource allocations for the programmed activity of the Samiti. Table 3 indicates a thorough domination of the construction of social amenities projects during 1975-76. Except a meagre health grant of Rs.7,641.51 the rest of a total of 2.6 lakhs rupees (i.e. 97.07 per cent) was devoted to the construction of Samiti roads, wells, canal repairing and school building.

Table 1

Statement Showing Progress of Expenditure  
on Community Development Projects from  
1.6.1957 to 31.3.1962 (2nd Plan Period)

| Head of A/c.                                  | Schematic Budget      |          |
|---|-----------------------|----------|
|   | Amount<br>(in rupees) | Per cent |
| Block headquarters                            | 3,15,000              | 26.25    |
| Animal husbandry and<br>agriculture extension | 50,000                | 4.17     |
| Irrigation                                    | 3,40,000              | 28.33    |
| Health and Rural<br>sanitation                | 1,15,000              | 9.58     |
| Education                                     | 60,000                | 5.00     |
| Social education                              | 70,000                | 5.83     |
| Communication                                 | 85,000                | 7.08     |
| Rural arts and crafts                         | 65,000                | 5.42     |
| Housing                                       | 1,00,000              | 8.33     |
| Irrigation subsidy                            | -                     | -        |
|   | 12,00,000             | 100.00   |

Source : Digapahandi Panchayat Samiti File, No.1.

Table 2  
Statement Showing Expenditure on Community  
Development Projects, 1967-1968

| Heads of Expenditure                      | Grants   | Per cent of the<br>total outlay |
|---|----------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Officers Salary and Block Headquarters | 65,592   | 46.27                           |
| 2. Agriculture and Animal Husbandry       | 17,000   | 9.18                            |
| 3. Irrigation                             | 15,000   | 8.10                            |
| 4. Sanitation                             | 15,000   | 8.10                            |
| 5. Education                              | -        | -                               |
| 6. Non-recurring                          | 8,500    | 4.59                            |
| 7. Social education                       | 16,722   | 9.03                            |
| 8. Roads and Building                     | 12,543   | 6.77                            |
| 9. Village education                      | 14,300   | 7.72                            |
|   | 1,84,657 | 100.00                          |

Source : Digapahandi Panchayat Samiti File No.1.

One may thus divide the resource allocation pattern at the Panchayat Samiti under four heads - (i) agriculture extension, (ii) irrigation (iii) social amenities projects and (iv) block headquarters. And, during the period 1957-1976, the third and fourth categories of expenditure dominated the whole budget for community development (See Table 4, p.6a). It is pertinent to note that except 'agriculture extension' which involved direct official supply of inputs to the peasants, the other three projects needed a lot of construction works such as construction of canals, roads, Samiti or Block or school buildings, village tanks or drinking water wells etc. All these construction works were carried out by a group of contractors who were selected and assigned the tasks by the Block authorities. The contractors, then, were

left to implement the schemes on their own terms. With regard to 'agriculture extension' schemes, officials were directly responsible to carry out the schemes. Also, it did not involve any construction work.

Table 3

Statement Showing Expenditure on Community Development Projects, 1975-76

| Source of Grants                        | Total Amount Fixed (Rupees) | Details of the Works  |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Block Fund                           | 3,994.69                    | two village roads   |
| 2. Non-Block Fund (Gram Panchayat Fund) | 13,850.00                   | 16 unfinished wells   |
| 3. C.D. Grant                           | 86,500.00                   | construction of well  |
| 4. C.D. Grant                           | 6,700.00                    | for unfinished wells  |
| 5. Village Welfare Dept.                | 8,448.16                    | for wells, schools building, etc.                               |
| 6. Revenue Dept. Grant                  | 1,650.00                    | - do -  |
| 7. Zilla Parishad Grant                 | 8,026.39                    | - do -  |
| 8. Education Grant                      | 40,000.00                   | for schools at villages   |
| 9. Health Grant                         | 7,641.51                    | -   |
| 10. C.D. Samiti Road Grant              | 76,310.00                   | for Samiti roads planned before (under minimum needs programme) |
| 11. Minor Irrigation C.D. Grant         | 452.60                      | for one canal repairing   |
| 12. Misc. Grant                         | 6,849.16                    | for construction of three school roads                          |
|   | 2,60,522.51                 |   |

Source : Digapahandi Panchayat Samiti, File No.2.



Table 4

A Classified Statement of Resource Allocation Pattern  
of Community Development Projects During 1957-76

(In rupees)

| Heads of A/c.                | 1957-1962 |          | 1967-1968 |          | 1975-1976  |          |
|------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|
|                              | Amount    | Per cent | Amount    | Per cent | Amount     | Per cent |
| 1. Agricultural Extension    | 0,50,000  | 4.17     | 17,000    | 9.18     | -          | -        |
| 2. Irrigation                | 3,40,000  | 28.33    | 15,000    | 8.10     | -          | -        |
| 3. Social Amenities Projects | 4,30,000  | 40.25    | 67,560    | 36.35    | 2,60,522.5 | 100.0    |
| 4. Block Headgear Works      | 3,15,000  | 26.25    | 85,592    | 46.27    | -          | -        |
| Total                        | 12,00,000 | 100.0    | 1,85,157  | 100.0    | 2,60,522.5 | 100.0    |

Now that we have an idea about the nature of Projects picked up by the Samiti for its Implementation of the C.D. programmes, let us turn to the central concerns of the paper : Whose interest had been served through the implementation of these projects? How did the implementation of these projects build up a relationship between the Samiti and the local power structure? How did the pre-existing power structure serve the 'interest' of local people in a highly skewed and hierarchical structure? An attempt is made below to answer these questions by analysing four specific community development projects, viz. (i) well construction, (ii) irrigation and road construction (iii) library, and (iv) distribution of agricultural inputs. In answering these questions, we may gain insights into the 'Functional' aspects of local power structure and thus move beyond the usual 'Structural' aspects which have engaged the attention of a host of sociologists in some earlier studies.

Let us begin with the construction of a Gram Panchayat well in 1965. The construction involved - (i) site selection by the Panchayat, and (ii) appointment of a contractor by the Samiti. First there was a controversy regarding the site selection. The village settlement was based on caste groupings and hence the site selection team, which selected a site based on the potential water resource near the Harijan basti, faced bitter resistance from a powerful Brahmin group. This resulted in the shift of the site from the backward caste area to the Brahmin 'basti'. Along with the Sarpanch, some Brahmin leaders lobbied hard to alter the Samiti's initial site selection and got their proposal for a new site endorsed by the Samiti around October 1968. Thus the site of the well was selected not purely on considerations of the technical potential of water resource and the land; the choice was governed by a premium on primordial hierarchical rights claimed by the upper caste people for their settlements.

While the site selection got entangled in the upper caste networks, the selection of the contractors (mainly 'petty' contractors) was influenced by the linkage they had with Sarpanchs or the Chairmen of the Samiti.<sup>6</sup> The selected person was already under a B-class contractor whose brother was a Sarpanch. The work of constructing several wells on sites across the villages was assigned to him. This was done on the assumption that the construction of six or seven wells by one contractor would involve less project cost, more effective resource mobilisation, and faster completion of the work. Thus, petty contractors who had links with the Samiti authorities could corner the construction work to be done under the projects.

The same power nexus was again involved in exploiting the difference between the planned project costs and the actual project costs, to fatten the pockets of contractors and officials. Sometimes the actual expenditure was more than the planned, and on some other occasions it was actually less than the planned ones. In the latter case, the Block officials acted in collaboration with the contractors to produce faked bills, after siphoning away a significant share of the project costs into their pockets. That was how a multiple nexus between the Block officials and the contractors worked successfully.

But in case of capital projects with larger financial investment of Rs.70,000 to 80,000, it required a far more powerful political nexus to corner the contract. Higher commission rates accrued then to several individuals from among the groups of Block officials and Samiti members or other important state leaders of the locality. In such cases, the capital projects involved were schemes like Minor Irrigation Projects and construction of roads and buildings. Thus, for example, during 1974-75 there were two Samiti roads constructed with the project cost of Rs.80,000. The B-class contractor, who was given the contract for

these roads, was a political ally of the local MLA and the Samiti Chairmen, whom he helped to purchase some cultivable lands. There was also a lot of lobbying by leaders of few large villages to spread the Samiti roads through their areas. Ultimately, all the Samiti roads were built to connect a few large villages with the market centres at Digapahandi. Such alignment of roads would certainly help the powerful 'entrepreneurial' cultivators of big villages by providing them with easier access to the local urban market.

Now, in so far as the distribution of "practical aid" is concerned, cultivators were provided with inputs like fertilisers, high yielding seeds of paddy, sugar cane, banana and potato and were encouraged to follow Japanese mode of cultivation. Given the short supply of these inputs and only 25% subsidies, agricultural extension programme was also largely confined to the better-off section of the cultivators.

As far as the weaker sections of the Block population were concerned, their involvement in the implementation of the CD programme was only as wage labourers under the contractors engaged in the construction of the social amenities projects, which were accorded top priority by the Panchayat.

Thus, the major share of the benefits that flowed from the Panchayat Samitis' emphasis on the construction of the social amenities projects went in favour of the economically viable farmers, who emerged as contractors. In 1970, the Digapahandi Samiti selected, in response to the State Government orders, as many as 15 contractors who were already working with PWD Irrigation and having Solvency certificates. These contractors were also economically viable farmers. Thus the various trends of the implementation process suggest that the political networks between the contractors, rich farmers and the Block officials

could direct the development process to the advantage of their "own" people in the streets who constituted the key 'patrons' of the vote banks and finally to their 'own' family pockets. Thus a series of appropriation of the public wealth was allowed to continue for about two decades to implement the CD programmes under the umbrella of the State apparatus. And a large majority of the population who were lowly placed on socio-economic hierarchy remained as ever outside the purview of the development process.

## II

### Policy Implementation Process of ERRP Programme

The programme for the Economic Rehabilitation of Rural Poor (ERRP) was sponsored by the Orissa Government as a Sixth Plan policy. It was adopted in June 1980 by J.B. Patnaik's Congress (I) government. Modelled after the IRDP, it marked a continuation of the poverty amelioration programmes formulated after the Congress victory in the 1971 election, which were fought under the Garibi Hatao slogan. The programme was also a reaction to the state of growing criticism of the 'trickle-down approach' adopted during the Green Revolution.

The implementation process of the ERRP programme involves five stages - (a) formulation of Action Plan (b) selection of beneficiaries, (c) financial co-ordination, (d) purchasing committee and, (e) the process of utilisation of the programme by the beneficiaries. The Action Plan for a particular budget year is formulated at the Block level which takes into account the total project costs and various projects as enunciated at the district level meeting for each Block. It also mentions the total group-wise target, women (if any), scheduled castes and tribes and the other caste groups. In case of non-implementation of projects under a preceding Action Plan, the new one may carry a list of backlog of projects containing sector-wise targets and outlay too. The Action

Plan, after its approval by the District Rural Development Authority, sets the guidelines for the Block to implement the projects assigned to it. As an example, we give below the Action Plan for 1983-84. (See Table 5)

It is important to note at this stage that there is a backlog mounting in each action plan. The backlog in 1983-84 plan is Rs.7,19,065 (i.e. 50% of the total plan outlay of 1982-83) and during 1984-85, it shows Rs.10,85,195/- (i.e. massive 63% of the plan outlay of 1983-84) indicating the State Government's failure to mobilise resources and to implement the programme. A continuous yearly backlog of 50% to 60% is certainly too heavy a constraint for the Block officials to implement the Action Plan.

The second stage in the ERDP implementation process is the selection of the beneficiaries. It requires an administrative coordination which involves formation of a village level committee comprising of following members - (a) BDO or his extension officer who acts as the coordinating authority and (b) VLW as the village officer who submits a list of beneficiaries selected from among the villagers according to the definition of the target groups and also authenticates the income level of the beneficiary; (c) the Thasildar or the Revenue Inspector (RI) who comes to the meeting with land record of the beneficiaries and (d) an MLA or his representative in the village or a local member of the Panchayat Samiti. Since political persons are involved in the selection of beneficiaries and since an MLA normally prevails over a BDO or a VLW or an extension officer, the selection of beneficiaries is always political in character.

Thirdly, the finances for the ERDP require resource mobilisation from three sources. The central aid ( $33\frac{1}{3}\%$ ) is released as IRD grants

Table 5

## Action Plan of ERRP, 1983-84

| Year    | Targets (in households) |    |     |       | Amount Required (in rupees) |        |           |           | Backlog Total (in rupees) |
|---------|-------------------------|----|-----|-------|-----------------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------|
|         | SC                      | ST | OC  | Total | SC                          | ST     | OC        | Total     |                           |
| 1983-84 | 253                     | 36 | 426 | 717   | 5,44,995                    | 85,560 | 10,82,640 | 17,13,195 | 7,19,065                  |

by the DRDA to the Block through the Commercial Banks of the area and the state grants (41<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>%) are released as CD grants by the CD Department of the State Government through BDO's PL account. And the Banks are fixed for each specific area to sanction loans (25%) to the beneficiaries, which they do after verifying the economic viability of the beneficiaries.

In so far as the implementation of the project is concerned, beneficiaries are not provided with money capital but with goats, hens, cows etc. by a Purchasing Committee. This Committee consists of following members : (a) BDO or his extension officer as the coordinating head of the Committee; (b) the concerned technical officers from other departments, (e.g., soil conservation officer for land based schemes, veterinary surgeon or supervisor for goatery, dairy schemes etc.), (c) the target groups themselves who are invited to do the purchasing in consultation with the technical officers, (d) the Bankers.

With this general information as a background, let us now see how the project is actually implemented. We present below two case studies of ERRP implementation from two different villages of the Block. One case study relates to the implementation of the goatery scheme and the other to a dairy development scheme.

Example 1 : Case of Goatery Scheme in Village Jharipadar

In the village Jharipadar out of a total population of possibly 20 families belonging to marginal and agricultural labourers, 10 Scheduled Caste families were selected as beneficiaries under the Goatery scheme. These ten members, consisting of six scheduled caste members and four from other castes, were given ten goats each with a total project cost of Rs.2,200/-. The project cost comprised of a subsidy of Rs.1,650 and a Bank loan of Rs.550/-. The cost of ten goats each assigned to all families stood at Rs.1500/-. There was no drum-beating in this village to make people aware of the scheduled time for the selection of the beneficiaries. The VDW selected ten beneficiaries on his own accord.

The beneficiaries, anxious to get some benefits, bribed the VDW for their selection; otherwise, instead of them, other people in the village could have been selected and they would lose a scheme worth of Rs.1500/-. Moreover, they have never before got any benefit from the government. When they were selected for the goatery project they accepted it reluctantly because goatery scheme did not provide them with a vision of any substantial change in their life depending on wage labour. Among these 10 beneficiaries there was a retired peon who was educated upto primary school level and was sometime back working in Tehsil and FWD offices. All others were illiterates. This retired peon contacted the VDW and other officials and pleaded for some benefits for his friends and relatives. All these 10 families selected were his relatives and acquaintances. Since there was no drum-beating in the village, other families who could also be considered as genuine targets under EERP scheme were not aware of it at the time of the selection of beneficiaries.

After the selection process, these ten villagers were informed by the technical officers to proceed to a butcher's shop at a nearby commercial town, Aska, (20 kms. away from their villages) to purchase



some 100 'quality' goats. The officials of the purchasing committee arrived there on their own. The illiterate peasants found there a number of goats but were dissatisfied with their quality which, they felt, were physically weak and vulnerable to local diseases. When peasants insisted on the poor quality of the goats, the veterinary doctor retorted angrily : 'do you know more than I do?' The peasants were cowed down. Along with 100 goats they were loaded back in a truck and asked to return to their village and the officials returned on their own after paying the 'necessary' amounts to the merchant. When the goats one after another were afflicted with disease, beginning from the second month after their purchase, the peasants with their diseased goats turned for the help of the veterinary surgeon (VAS) and got prescriptions. Being unable to maintain the goats, the beneficiaries sold some goats at low prices to local merchants and immediately got some money for their family consumption.

Initially, there were 10 goats allotted to each of them. After one and half year of its allotment they were left with only 3 or 4 goats without much rehabilitation accruing to them. On occasions when their goats were killed the beneficiaries managed death certificates of the animals. In cases, where they had been forced by circumstances to sell the goats to local merchants, they again managed to get the certificates from the veterinary officials. Now the question confronting them was how to pay back the bank loans of around Rs.550/- each. They were in a cyclical dilemma of their life, whether to sell the rest of the goats to repay the bank loan and return to their original poverty positions or to retain the goats to maintain a semblance of escape from their earlier positions. The target groups thus do not approve of the glowing tributes the planners and the Government accord to their poverty amelioration schemes.

Example 2 : Case of a Dairy Scheme in Village Talasingi

In the case of a dairy scheme implemented in village Talasingi, all the ten selected beneficiaries are from 'other' castes and also acquaintances of an old village leader who is the local MLA's brother. And, since the project cost of the dairy scheme is far higher (i.e. Rs.8000/- allotted in two instalments) than all other schemes under ERDP, there was an intense political lobbying by the MLA's brother in the Block headquarters to get the scheme for his village. Of course, the Block officials were convinced about the economic viability of such a project in that village since the village was a large one with a population of around five thousand that would provide market for milk. Apart from this, the fact that the village was well-linked to nearby semi-urban towns, where the consumption of milk is higher weighed in favour of allotting the dairy scheme to the village.

In a scheme like this in which Rs.8000/- was allotted to each of the 10 beneficiaries, with Rs.80,000/- as total project costs, the Block officials, the village intermediaries and businessmen evinced keen interest. The villagers paid 2 to 3 per cent of the project costs to the VLW and the contactman for their names to be included in the beneficiary list of the dairy project. The resource was scarce and the genuine target was far larger than the target actually selected for the project. Hence, a more intense use of networks was employed by the beneficiaries to get the project. The contactman, the village leader and the VLW became very active for their own reasons. For the village leader who had been a Sarpanch and now aiming at the next panchayat elections, reasons were not merely economic like the appropriation of some commissions but also maintenance of his political status by intensifying village networks through his influence on the Block officials. For the VLW, however, the 'commissions' were more important. His signature on the proforma indicating the annual income of the beneficiaries provided him with the grounds to siphon off some money from the target group.

After the selection of the beneficiaries, the purchasing committee set out to buy Jersey cows. The Committee, acting under the directions of the state government, went to Rajamahendri (Andhra Pradesh), a place outside the local market. It is widely believed that in connivance with the local merchants there, the cows were actually purchased by spending only the subsidy component (i.e. 75%) of the project costs which included their T.A. and D.A. The loan component (25%) of the project costs was appropriated and shared among the officials of the purchasing committee and the merchants. The beneficiaries could guess their price by the quality of the cows bought there.

Even though low quality Jersey cows were allotted the beneficiaries were initially expecting some income from selling milk in the local or the outside market. But the entire market nexus and many social factors acted as impediments in the realisation of their hopes. The poor peasants, who have to work hard to meet their daily needs, soon found less and less relevance in the dairy scheme which also required a proper maintenance of the Jersey cow which involve feeding the cow with rice-bran and providing it with medicines till the cow gets adjusted to the local climate. The milch cow apparently due to a new milieu did not yield milk immediately which caused milking and marketing problems for the poor peasants. Also ritual factors that cow is a Mother-goddess and unless one is able to maintain properly she would become weak, 'weep' and collapse, threatened the poor peasants' ritual system. They were in two instalments provided with two Jersey cows. In some cases, they sold one to the rich people of the area and in other cases they sold both the cows to different people of the area. The initial enthusiasm of getting some benefits were gone. Now, the peasants feel aggrieved by the local officials' behaviour. The officials were held responsible, for they not only provided low quality cows which could not yield expected milk of 4 or 5 litre each per day, which could have provided them with a stable income

of Rs.10-12 per day, but also siphored off the loan components of the project.

Thus the programme provided temporary gains and incomes to the peasants but in the long run, it failed to cater to the 'basic needs' of the people who continued to survive as wage-labourers or seasonal-agricultural employees in the rich peasants' land. Of course the State government had also realised belatedly the problems involved in buying Jersey cows from national level markets outside the State. It issued instructions in August 1983 to the Blocks to do local purchases on each and every social amenities project which included schemes like dairy and goatery as well - the assumption being that target groups would have a say in the purchasing of animals from the local markets and with their knowledge about the local prices there would not be much scope for the officials and the merchants to manipulate the purchasing process. However, the official evaluation of the EERP programme did not take note of the bureaucratic-commercial nexus involved in appropriating money from project costs and thereby reducing the actual value of the projects. Correspondingly, the local merchants hiked the prices of the purchases under the projects : "Ae Sarkar Ka Mal Daryame Dal". (This is Government's project, throw it in to the sea). In connivance with the officials they sold their commodities at much higher than the current market prices. The officials in turn received "commissions" from the local businessmen.

#### Example 2A

The second possibility is also there. Under local purchases, the beneficiaries sometimes 'propose' the local merchants from whom they intend to make the purchase. In connivance with the local agency, they show that these are the goats or cows which they have purchased, without actually buying them. Their main purpose here is to get some instant money. The merchants take back the goats or cows with an additional

commission accounting for 10-25% of the project costs. The rate of the commission depends on the nature of the project. Thus all these factors block the effective implementation of the programme.

The purpose of the programme of ERRP is to help the poor peasants (of 0-2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> acre with Rs.1200 as annual income) to generate annually some income assets (e.g. Rs.3000-4000) leading to their rehabilitation above the poverty line. Examples I and II discussed above show that whatever reasons are there, the programme has completely failed to generate an income yielding asset for the poor peasants.

Now that we have seen the actual working of ERRP since 1980, we may turn to the reasons for the ineffective state of affairs in implementing the programme.

- (i) In situations where the target groups are found to be genuine they have been selected on the basis of political networks. For example, the targets (i.e. groups or the areas) are either directly related to an MLA and his 'contactman' or to a Sarpanch (Example 2) or to a village level officer (Example 1) or to all of these categories (as in Examples 1 and 2). The question of political contiguity immediately arises due to the scarce resources and the limited number of schemes allocated to the target groups. For example, the actual target groups selected as in Examples 1 and 2 fell short of the number of potential targets in the village. This resulted among the rural poor in intense lobbying to get hold of the resources which were very scarce for them.
- (ii) There are also cases where false targets get benefits accruing from better projects like the dairy scheme. These targets usually consist of a contactman or any official who is interested in cornering high yielding Jersey cows. They manipulate the poor and transfer the benefits to themselves. This is largely due to the technical and sociological constraints on the

rural poor. The poor peasants in order to get benefits from the 'Bideshi' cows need to go daily to different villagers to sell the milk. On the other, they maintain themselves and their day-to-day livelihood on the daily wage earnings and the work availability in and outside the field. Thus, the policy introduces a serious dilemma in their life-situations.

- (iii) However, even when the target groups are genuinely poor, the total value of the projects in actual practice reduced due to the series of appropriation of the project money by what may be called the 'intermediary regime' consisting of the politician-contactmen, officers from the local bureaucracy and the local merchants. These three groups together form a political network which is marked by interdependence, mutual conflict or competition to control the State's resources allotted under different heads of the rural development programme.
- (iv) Finally, at the back of the strategy, there remains the question of resource mobilisation and functional coordinations. The Government has failed to mobilise the resources to keep up the implementation process. It has allocated for 1980-1983 only 40% to 50% of its total plan outlay meant for the programme indicating a massive failure in resource mobilisation. While there are constraints in the resource mobilisation for the plan implementation, the Commercial Banks with whatever resources at their disposal are normally security-oriented and do not sanction loans (only 25% in certain ERDP schemes) to people who have no assets. Without security guarantees of two persons meant for each target the nationalised banks do not sanction the loan component of the programme. Thus the Banks have also created problems of financial coordinations.

This section deals with the nature of ERDP Programme in general.

- (1) The strategy is primarily employment-oriented, not production-oriented. The assumption of the planners is that the lack of employment opportunities constitutes the fundamental problem for the rural poor to

gain some purchasing power and, hence, some income-generating projects ought to be assigned to them. Thus the strategy does not resolve for the poor the preponderable questions of agro-based productive assets - their ownership and control - whose skewed distribution over the population and area itself contributes to large-scale unemployment problem.<sup>7</sup>

- (ii) Without a production-oriented land reforms strategy, the existing employment-oriented programme is reduced to a short-time achievement of the present political regime. In the context of unequal land ownership and resource control patterns the existing strategy only provides for a short-term 'upward' mobility of the poor peasants. On some occasions this form of peasant mobility takes a nose-dive forming, as it were, a cyclical process; and in the other cases, it has resulted in a relative upward mobility which beyond a point remains stagnant over time (as in Example 2). This form of mobility may be called a stagnant 'upward' mobility.

Our Examples 1 and 2a indicate that as a result of certain types of benefits accruing to the poor peasants, they get some incomes by selling milk or fish or coconuts generated from the rural development schemes. But there are a number of social, economic, cultural constraints which impose on them and force them to sell the cows, goats etc., to the people in the upper echelons of the social order. Consequently a 'new' situation emerges, for the poor peasants after acquiring a new experience with State-sponsored rural development schemes return to their pre-existing economic status. This type of mobility following Shanin may be characterised as cyclical mobility.<sup>8</sup>

### III

#### An Interpretation

During the Community Development period of about two decades (1957-1976) the construction works of social amenities project, as

examined above, were accorded high priority by the Samiti. This was in direct contravention of the original intents of the CD programme meant to seek agriculture development by agriculture extension works and irrigation. In spite of this violation of its original purposes, the CD projects were locally formulated and implemented the same way during the first three five year plans.

The overall emphasis on construction activities helped in proliferation of the 'petty' contractors from among the landed families who could always afford to show the necessary security deposits to get a Government solvency license. The poor peasants and lower castes who lived off seasonal employment could not get any of the major benefits accruing from the state apparatus. Their involvement in the programme was primarily as physical labourers engaged in the Block's construction works undertaken by the 'petty' contractors.

While the over-all policy perspective of the CD programme favoured the landed rich, its implementation reinforced a series of pre-existing community conflicts : 'my village vs. your village or tribe', 'Brahman basti vs. Harijan basti', 'my family vs. your family' etc.<sup>9</sup> The case of site selection of a drinking water well for a village under a CD scheme in 1965 demonstrates the point. The caste settlement of the village was the deciding factor in the site selection. The 'community' spirit as emphasised by the CD programme was in actual practice the spirit of the dominant caste in the village.

On the other hand, the private appropriation of the state resources, a recurrent phenomena under the secured umbrella of the legal apparatus, facilitated a steady flow of income to the families of the Block officials and the local political leaders who among other things used to collect labourers for construction works. The latter in essence acted as mediators between the village and the local state apparatus. If



this process of embezzlement or 'corruption' was not followed up by any legal action or mass mobilization in checking the trend, it was to placate the likely discontent swelling on a mass scale among the lower ranks of the state apparatus. During the CD days, as we have seen, a portion from the state's money capital allotted for the construction of roads, panchayat buildings, schools or CD library could be directly siphoned off by the 'intermediary regime' at the Block level. The procedures of selecting the contractors, too, provided the local officials with considerable autonomy to manipulate the process by way of acquiring certain 'commissions' from the contractors themselves.

During the recent years of the Poverty Amelioration Programmes, one however notices a distinct trend in the legitimation process. The policy perspective has now shifted from treating village as a 'community' to the one which treats village as a unit 'stratified' into various groups. A 'community' perspective in rural development seems to be taken over by a 'stratification' perspective. The primary emphasis now is to establish a direct contact between the State agencies on the one hand, and the different strata of peasants on the other. The method is to appropriate in 'antodaya' style the most active elements from the lower strata of the peasantry. The 'antodaya' style requires an order of priority in the State patronage. First of all, the landless and agriculture labourers, secondly the marginal and small farmers, and only at a final stage the rich farmers ought to be allotted the schemes under the Antodaya perspective. It is thus necessary to examine the State's stratification perspective and its impact on the different peasant groups in "Village India" - a question which has remained beyond the scope of the present paper.

Since this paper as stated above is primarily about a poverty amelioration programme called ERRP which in its focus is limited to

the 'poorest of the poor', viz. the agriculture labour and marginal farmers only, we give below an interpretation of the above data on its implementation process in the Digapahandi Block. First, the selection process. To begin with, the VLW must be paid by the peasants some commissions to include their names in the selection proforma on which his signature in certifying the annual income of the target groups is essential. Otherwise he could always include others in the village or in a nearby village as target groups. The local elite knows well that as per the state-government guidelines not more than 10 households in each village could be selected as beneficiaries. In other words, the Government scheme is extremely limited and thus, quasi-structural. In the villages where there are more than 10 families of poor peasants as potential beneficiaries, the Government scheme introduces among the peasants an intense competition to snatch the Sarkari 'manna' first. It is this competition among the peasants which is at the root of the official manipulation of the selection process.

Peasants on the otherhand allege that they are being 'cheated' by the manipulative Block officials. Only the officials' honesty is at question, not the state-government's quasi-structural schemes. The 'fraud, cheating and grabbing' of the schemes by the local officials are for the peasants not difficult to sense. That the government scheme itself is a quasistructural one which provides the potential ground for the local officials to manipulate is however an understanding not easily obtainable to the targets groups themselves. This may be as we see below due to a direct relationship between the target groups and the local state officials on the one hand and also, due to a mediated relationship between the Government scheme and the target groups on the other. Consequently, the government scheme seems to be a 'good' gift to the poor peasants, and only the local officials are the 'bad' lot.

Once the selection of the target groups is over, the Block's technical staff and the local nationalised bank take over the rest of the implementation process like purchasing goats etc., assessing the economic viability till a "take-off" stage is achieved by the targets and finally, seeking the repayment of the loan component, if any. The peasants are an integral part of the purchasing committee. However, their knowledge in judging the quality of the live-stock like goats, Jersey cows, buffalo, poultry is usually ignored and suppressed by the local officials.

The technical staff in connivance with the local merchants leave them with no option but to purchase <sup>whatever</sup> ~~is~~ available at the moment with the local trader. When the live-stock turns out to be of poor quality, and when the scheme turns out to be unsuccessful contrary to the enthusiastic expectations at the beginning, the peasants fall back on some sort of counterfeit thinking : "had we been allotted those good-looking goats ..... had our knowledge been accepted by the 'babus' in the purchasing committee ..... had we been allowed to buy the live-stock from a different merchant ..... our Fate probably would have been better". This is in essence a fatalistic way of thinking.

It is now important to note a crucial difference in the composition of the selection committee and the purchasing committee. The local state leaders (a MLA or a Samiti Chairman) are an integral part of the selection committee where they are also actively involved in selecting their 'clients' as target groups. But political leaders are not institutionally members of the purchasing committee, for the target groups themselves are formally involved in the purchase of goats, buffaloes, fish or coconut plants. No involvement of the political representatives is formally necessary at this stage. Their relative isolation from the purchasing committee ironically gives them an

additional political strength. It seems to be a convenient ploy to keep the local leaders out from the purchasing committee, lest they should also be blamed by the targets for 'frauding, cheating and grabbing' the scheme formulated by themselves. In fact, it is not for anything, the local MLAs and the Ministers in the village melas or public meetings do not utter a single word against the selection committee of which they or their delegates are an integral part. On the other, they concentrate all their energies against the local officials of the purchasing committee, or against the local merchants who allegedly do not 'cooperate' with the Government in supplying the target groups with the 'quality' live-stock.

Secondly, the same mechanism also offers the local officials with what in bureaucratic language is known as "freedom from political interference". Since no elected representative is formally involved in the purchasing committee, the committee officials who for their rules of action are not accountable to the local public have their 'autonomy' to manipulate the target groups.

[See p.31 There are thus different levels within the local state apparatus (Figure 1). It is this 'differentiation' which possibly helps one state unit vis-a-vis the other in maintaining a neutral image of its roles in relation to the subaltern groups. It establishes, for example, a series of conflicts among the different organisations within state apparatus. There is a conflict between the provincial leaders and the local officials. The leaders addressing village melas attempt to re-enact this conflict. There is a conflict between the Block Staff and the Bank Staff. The Banks being security minded do not easily sanction the loan to the target groups already selected by the Block. The target groups are driven to experience this conflict by shuttling between the administrative and financial units of the same apparatus. There are also cases where even after the scheme fails, the Banks send red cards to

the target groups and threaten them to repay the loan or face its consequences. In the public administration studies on the CD Blocks or the Panchayat System in India, some of these conflicts are usually referred to as "official vs. non-official" cases.<sup>10</sup> The series of such conflicts within the state apparatus itself, as Erik Wright argues, may be categorised as 'organisational contradictions' which are distinct from what is usually known as 'social contradictions'.<sup>11</sup> Hegemony then may be seen, in its multiple dimensions, as a process of diffusion of the organisational contradictions among the subaltern classes.

It is in a sense a re-diffusion strategy because the target groups as seen above driven by the rural policies have already experienced some organisational conflicts like the ones between a political representative and a local bureaucrat, or between BDO and Bank Manager and so on. The political speeches of the provincial or local political leaders in the village 'melas' blaming the security-minded Banks or 'corrupt' Block administration only systematically reinforce these prior experiences of the target groups. This is in a sense a political reproduction of a set of the belief systems already formed by the subaltern groups which keep them stationed in their 'class locations'. This seems to be an important dimension in the hegemony process.

On the one hand, the village 'melas' addressed by the provincial leaders may be seen in the 'Vachik' tradition (oral recitations) as media role in diffusing such organisational conflicts among the target groups and also, in facilitating a neutral image of the policy as well as the political actors. On the other, the relative freedom from political interference ensured for each group of local officials may be seen as a strategy to coopt the members of the middle classes or the 'contradictory class locations' within the state apparatus itself.<sup>12</sup> It is this duality in the hegemony process, the cooption of the basic opposites

(peasants) on the one side and the non-basic opposites (middle classes) on the other, that needs a thorough elaboration in any study of the politics of rural development programmes.

The peasants' experience of 'social contradictions' seem to be continuously circumvented within the ambit of organisational contradictions of the state apparatus. He tends to think of 'good' programmes allotted as 'manna' from a 'good' government but spoiled by the 'intermediary' regime which always comes in between himself and the 'good' government. For the 'good' scheme, he tends to appreciate the Government situated at a distance. He tends to single out only the local officials of the Block, the Bank and the Veterinary centre located at his close proximity as primarily responsible for frustrating the Sarkari policy. The Government package of goats, jersey cows, fish, coconut plants etc. are believed as mannas in patronising them for their amelioration from poverty. But the local bureaucrats and merchants being 'jealous' of the patronage do not let the gifts easily trickle down to them. This series of belief systems are reinforced among other things by the provincial leaders addressing the village melas and also by the Planning Commission members speaking in the seminars. In fact it is not for nothing that the State leaders as well as the Planning Commission economists single out the 'intermediary' regime as primarily responsible in frustrating the 'good' attempts made by the planners in formulating the poverty amelioration schemes.<sup>13</sup> Even when the schemes admittedly fail, the planners shamelessly pay glowing tributes to their dead schemes. For it is, however, necessary for the planners to project consistently a neutral image of the policies formulated by themselves.

The Government's innumerable schemes under the ERRP programme have succeeded in creating among the peasants certain hopes of getting

better off from the pre-existing life-situations. Some hopes are real and some are positively illusory. The Poverty Amelioration schemes have injected among the target groups at least two crucial 'new' experiences of upward mobility : (a) forms of cyclical mobility, and (b) forms of a stagnant upward mobility. Both the forms of mobility have created certain hopes of 'amelioration' from the poverty situations. The policy, thus, ensures to an extent a relatively stable faith in one or the other unit of the State apparatus for which as a whole it is on the other necessary to maintain a 'paternalistic' contact with the peasantry.

There are official struggles in reproducing among the peasants certain fragmented understanding of the State apparatuses or about its different units. There are also attempts in ensuring certain checks and balances in the progress of the subaltern's cognitive processes. These strategies on the whole may be seen as part of a broader attempt to produce and reproduce certain limits on the 'original' thought of the subaltern groups.<sup>14</sup> What transits, for example, between the central state and the local state in the name of 'national interests' are kept out of a nation's knowledge. The bureaucrats cannot openly talk about the state government's failure in resource mobilisation. The state political leaders addressing the public rallies do not touch upon their failure in allocating the Block with adequate funds earmarked in the Action Plan for every year. A continuous yearly backlog of 50% to 60% in the fund allotment by the State government is too heavy a constraint even for the 'good' local officials to implement the Block Action Plan effectively and genuinely. On other occasions, the State government in order to fulfill the annual targets of the Action Plan lumps the funds almost at the year end at the Block's disposal to clear the annual target groups before the financial year ends. These ad hoc policies of the State government pave the way for the "cheating and grabbing" of the schemes at the local level, for which the local officials

are not responsible alone. On the other, a proper knowledge of some much intra-State problems is not easily attainable by the peasants themselves. The target groups of the state policies thus do not have systematic critical knowledge of the organic links between the local state and the provincial or national state. Nor do they have a systematic political understanding of the Government's quasi-structural programmes. Thus, the organisational character of the State Policy possibly contributes to a production or reproduction of a series of limits on the target groups' understanding of the State apparatuses as a whole. See p. 11  
Figure 1

The hegemony strategy is thus a policy of containment of the sub-altern praxis. As noted before there are also attempts to diffuse and re-diffuse among the subalterns the organisational contradictions of the state apparatuses. While the former sets certain boundaries within which the original thought of the subaltern groups is kept within checks, the latter serves the purposes of activating or recreating their experiences of the social contradictions around the ambit of organisational contradictions of the state apparatus. The more and more they ponder only about such organisational conflicts, genuine or false, the more effective is the hegemony process.

#### IV

#### Conclusions

There is thus a noticeable shift in the rural policies since the community development days. During the community development period, the emphasis on the 'community' spirit of the village India turned out to be the biggest hoax of the first two decades of rural planning in India. The community development schemes, as seen above, served too openly the interests of the upper caste landed rich. The lower caste peasants were engaged only as physical labourers in Panchayat's construction works. In

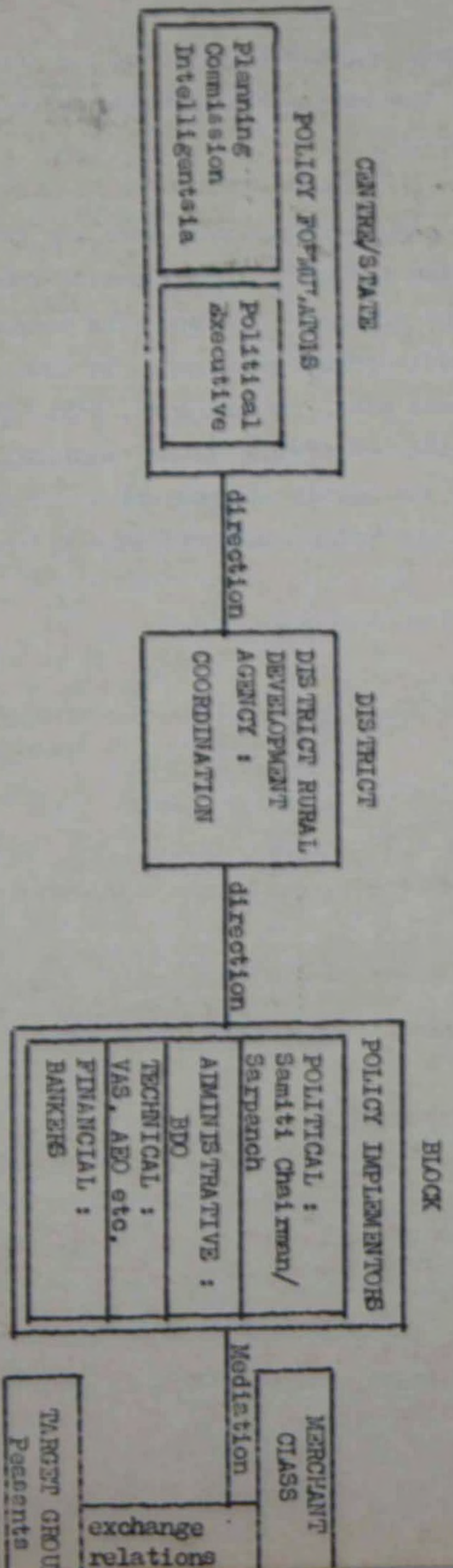


other words, state via the community development programmes could not offer any specific policy package in recognition of the 'poverty' of the peasantry.

It is precisely here that the poverty amelioration programmes of seventies seemed to have departed from the perspective of the community development schemes. Its specific target is rural poor. It also offers them specific policy packages. It thus exhibits a paternalistic attitude to the rural poor. By doing so, state has also diffused among the poor peasants its own organisational contradictions and tried to wean them away from the social contradictions of the real life. This seems to be an essence of the current strategy in the rural sector.

Figure - 1

Organisational Process of the State's Paternalistic Rural Policy :  
Its Differentiation and Unity



Notes

1. The works of Bailey (1958), Beale (1960), Bhatt (1975, 1977), Chakravarti (1975), Cangrade (1974), Halpern (1967), Marriott (1955), Ma Cormack (1960), Mishra (1980), Misra (1981), Orenstein (1968), Pandhe (1977), Reddy (1965, 1977) Singh (1971), Srinivas (1976), Dube (1968), Singh (1969) and others are the trend-setters in this tradition. See also, Sarkar (1986) as a recent addition to this literature.
2. See, for example, the works of Aziz (1983), Krishnamachari (1958), Madan (1977), Mathur and Narain (1969), Reddy (1974), Thekkamalai (1983), Vidyarthi (1982), Mehta (1985), Subba Rao (1985) etc. These studies mainly deal with the extent of implementation and its impact on the 'poverty line', but do not relate it to the legitimization process.
3. There are in this direction few useful studies like Seshadri (1976), Frankel (1979) and Volken (1983).
4. The Digapahandi Block with a total population of 1,13,071 in 1981 is the largest block in the Ganjam district. The rural population of the Block is 1,05,218 whereas the urban population is a meagre 7,853. The population of scheduled caste and tribe together in the Block is 14,143 constituting 12.50 per cent of the total population.
5. The social amenities projects covered areas like construction of school buildings, roads, health centres, community centre buildings, village tanks, drinking water well, and the like.
6. There are various grades of contractors in towns and villages- A-class, B-class and, a large chunk of 'petty contractors' who normally work under, or jointly with the above categories of contractors. The higher categories work for the larger projects under PWD, Irrigation, REO departments etc.
7. For a macro-understanding of this problem, see Frankel (1979), especially the sections on land reforms and poverty amelioration programmes like SFDA, MFAL.
8. For a useful classification of the social mobility of the Russian peasantry as results of the Tsarist agrarian policies, see Shanin (1982).
9. The Bangladesh data on these issues are presented in Hartman and Boyce (1983).

10. See, for example, Pant (1982), Potter (1964) and others.
11. Refer the sections on 'State' in Wright (1979) for his tentative notes on a theory of organisational contradictions and a theory of social contradictions as two distinct but interconnected dimensions of a Marxist theory of State. Contradictions like privatisation vs. nationalisation in the state economy, rationality vs. irrationality in the state functioning, decentralisation vs. centralisation in the decision-making State apparatus, autonomy vs. control, representative vs. bureaucratic apparatuses, bureaucratisation vs. militarisation of the state, central vs. local state apparatus may be cited as few cases from among the series of organisational contradictions within the state apparatuses. In a specific set of social contradictions, balances may tilt towards one or the other opposite. Nevertheless organisational contradictions persist; these do not evaporate; and hence, do deserve a special place in the Marxist discussions on the political character of the State.
12. For an elaborate treatment of the notion of 'contradictory class locations', cf. Wright (1985). For the present purpose, we have treated Block officials, viz, the BDO, the Extension officers, and clerks as part and parcel of upper and lower rungs of 'contradictory class locations' within the local state. The Block peons could be seen as 'working class' members.
13. Mehta's study (1984) also reinforces this political idea. For similar studies refer, Hartman and Boyce (1983), Subba Rao (1985) and Joshi (1987). This sort of political analysis may be characterised as a quasi-structural liberal perspective, especially of the state apparatus. For his brief but pithy observations on this perspective, see Gramsci (1970 : 148) :

"The constitutional formula of the king; or president of the republic, who 'reigns but does not govern' is the juridical expression of this function of arbitration, the concern of the constitutional parties not to 'unmask' the Crown or the President. The formulae stating that it is not the head of State who is responsible for the actions of the government, but his ministers, are the casuistry behind which lies the general principle of safeguarding certain conceptions - the unity of the State; the consent of the governed to the State action-~~whatever~~ whatever the current personnel of the government, and whichever party may be in power".

14. Note here, Gramsci (1970 : 420) : "This (hegemony process) limits the original thought of the popular masses in a negative direction, without having the positive effect of what the masses think in an embryonic and chaotic form about the world and life", (the bracketed phrase is inserted).

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