

N.F.S OCTOBER 1986 ARTICLES

X While some distortions of the so-called planned X
X economic development that has taken no place so far in X
X hilly areas have been recognised by the planners, some X
X other contradictions still remain in their thinking says X
X the author who frequently confronts the result of X
X distorted development in long foot marches in hilly X
X areas. X

HILL AREA DEVELOPMENT AND SEVENTH FIVE YEAR PLAN

By: Pandurang Hegde

in hill area development
In the initial five year plans the emphasis was broadly
on three areas- agriculture, road building and other
development work. Of these three first two areas received
special and greater allocation of funds and importance. By
1970's this approach started showing adverse results as depleted
forests and natural resources caused land slides in hills.
The recurring floods in Ganges opened the eyes of planners.
They realised the importance of conserving watersheds in
hill areas to restore the health of plains. This shift in
ideas towards ecological factors of integrating hill areas
and plains as a totality lead to the formation of Hill Area
Development Programme (HADP) in fifth five year plan in 1974-79.

The hill areas are broadly classified into two categories,
States like Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim and
other smaller state the
form the first category where almost the entire area of state is
hill area. These states are being treated as special category
States. In the second category states are those states where

hill areas form only a part - (a) states of Assam, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and - (b) Western Ghat areas covering 163 talukas of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Goa. Only this second category is covered under HADP. The Himalayan region covers an area of 68.7 thousand sq.kms with 59.8 lakh people. The Western Ghat region covers a larger area of 160.5 thousand sq.kms with 388.4 lakh population.

The seventh plan section on HADP admits that in fifth and sixth plans the "tenor of the plans did not differ significantly from normal state plans." The seventh plan calls for consideration of ecological aspects at the stage of formulation of policies, programmes and schemes. The plan document links the disastrous environmental affects of floods and water scarcity to depletion of forests and other natural resources. It calls for maintaining the ecological equilibrium to serve the needs of the nation and local community. Frequent references are made to ecological aspects.

The basis of HADP is to promote a basic, secure life support system for local people and also to protect the interest of people in plains. The strategy centers around participation of local people, especially women and children in managing society's resources at local level. The plan calls for inculcating ecological awareness among local people, so that the harmful affects are prevented in advance.

Meeting of basic needs like energy, fodder, water, education and health is given foremost importance in formulation of development programmes. This shall reduce the drudgery of women and children providing alternative energy sources and introduction

of fuel efficient ovens will definitely go a long way in reducing drudgery of women and reducing the pressure on forests. Preventive health care, safe drinking water and education are basic essentials for reasonable living.

3 The HADP in seventh plan has discussed various issues in addition to basic needs approach. We will review some of the important issues discussed in the plan document in the light of grass roots experience.

The plan envisages a proper land use pattern to attain self sufficiency in food and at the same time calls for 'scientific land use' aimed at increasing productivity and product changes in land. The planners foresee an external market for increased yield and call for strengthening communication and market network. This objective of land use is self contradictory. The recent changes in cropping pattern from traditional food crops to cash crops like potato and soyabean has definitely linked hill economy to large market economy of plains. But in this process the change in land use has affected the food self-sufficiency of the hill village as the shortage of food-grains has forced people to import food grains. The introduction of horticulture crops has destroyed oak forests of Himalayas. In the Western Ghat belt the rapid increase in coconut plantations has put extra pressure on forest and water. Learning from these mistakes we have to evolve a rational land use policy wherein the soil is used to produce the basic need, food-grain.

The plan document makes it clear that the revenue earning can no longer be a major goal of forestry programmes. However, in the same tone it says "the forestry programme will aim at meeting the needs of national requirement of forest produce and needs of village community." The conflict ^{between} national interest of meeting the demand of forest based industry and the ecological consideration of soil and water conservation is not examined clearly.

The plan seeks to identify sensitive areas in hills for treatment. This is a big fallacy as the present condition of hills in country is in such a critical stage that the whole nation is suffering from recurrent floods and droughts. The need of the hour is to take a comprehensive decision to save the hills, not an ad-hoc approach or patchwork to bandage the wounds of hills. The hill forests of the country should be declared as protection forests, the basic resource providing soil and water. The moratorium of felling that exists in hills of Uttar Pradesh should be extended to Western Ghats.

There is a very close link between hill economy and agriculture. In recent years the increase in cattle population has led to greater pressure on limited grazing land and forests. A recent study on pressure of grazing in Garhwal by Dr. R.K. Gupta reveals that the pure grazing pressure in Chamoli district is 4.05 times more than normal. This shows the eventual limit we have reached and the pressure on carrying capacity of land. The pressure in other hills and Western Ghats may be more severe. So the immediate requirement is to reduce the grazing pressure by introducing the practice of developing pasture land.

The document is very pragmatic with regard to the plans of developing decentralised cottage industries based on local resources. However, the skills need to be updated and new skills have to be taught from basic educational level.

It calls for organising tourism and trekking as an industry with due regard to local resources. This concept has its own drawbacks as tourism in places like Mahabaleshwar in Western Ghats, Maharashtra, or trekking in Himalayan high altitude has serious ecological and social implications. The closure of Valley of Flowers in Himalayas to tourists due to the destruction of fragile ecosystem is a point in this case. The whole idea needs a careful, cautioned approach.

The seventh plan document calls for a halt in building extensive road network in hills. This is a great relief. Himalayan region is based on money order economy as people working in plains send money order to their families. So the need is to strengthen postal service and communication system.

While laying special emphasis on eco-restoration and eco-protection of Western Ghats, the task of designing policies has been left to respective states. The previous experience shows that these states have virtually depleted the tropical forests of Western Ghats. This was done under the name of 'development'. To take an example, Kerala, a hilly state represents 42 percent of entire Western Ghats. The percentage of forest cover to total geographical area in 1905 was 44 percent. In 1984 it was a meagre 9 percent. The minimum requirement in this hill area is 66 percent. Now the State is suffering from serious water shortage,

even with high rainfall. The power generation, industry and agriculture are adversely affected. The development policies carried on by state, mainly replacing natural forests with plantation crops, and ^{construction of} dams have been responsible for such disruption in ecology. The situation in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa is still worse. These states still continue the same 'development' schemes leading to total destruction of Western Ghats. It is necessary to specify and evolve a concrete common programme to save Western and Eastern Ghats which supports so many people in South India.

The specific suggestions for development of North Eastern Hill region in the Seventh plan are questionable. The Government of India has declared entire North Eastern Region as industrially backward area. This entitles the region with investment subsidy at maximum permissible rate. The natural resources like forests are treated as inexhaustible resource. During Sixth five year plan a paper project was started in Nagaland under central sector at the estimated cost of 84 crores. Two more paper projects with an estimated cost of Rs. 226 and Rs. 228 crores are under construction in Assam (One crore = 10 million). These forest based, capital intensive industries will adversely affect the local population and ecology of the area. These attempts to establish forest based industries will in the long run convert the renewable forest resource to a non-renewable resource affecting the nation. These concepts envisaged in Seventh Plan for North Eastern region are surprisingly against its basic objectives of ecological protection.

Thus the Seventh Plan document on HADP is a Pandora box of contradictions between its basic objectives and specific projects

In addition to these contradictions, there are broadly three major drawbacks in the document.

First of all, the policy laid down in the Seventh Plan is rarely followed by States. The review of previous work of HADP has clearly brought out this fact. The present plan of HADP may also follow the same precedent.

Secondly, other hill areas like Aravali, Vindhya, Satpura are not included in HADP. These areas also represent important hill areas of our country. Even in present HADP, more weightage is given to Himalayan region as compared to the fragile tropical eco-systems of Western Ghats.

Thirdly the contradiction in objectives and specific suggestions is the outcome of top down model of planning. The specific suggestions are based on the report of working group on HADP members whose \sphericalangle experts or acadamecians, without any feel of grass roots problems. This top down model of planning has failed to incorporate the aspirations, the realities of local population.

Nevertheless, the planning Commission has tried to rectify this laceuna by setting up Advisory Committee on HADP. This comprises of 17 members, with ^{the} main task of advising on HADP based on reality. Unfortunately most of the members are again pure acadamecians with only two grass root level workers. It is hoped that the Planning Commission will gradually bring in more grass root workers in the planning process to pave way for bottom up model of planning.

Hill Area Development And Seventh Five Year Plan

In the initial five-year plans the emphasis in hill area development was broadly on three areas—agriculture, road building and other development work. Of these three, first two areas received special and greater allocation of funds and importance. By 1970's this approach started showing adverse results as depleted forests and natural resources caused landslides in hills. The recurring floods in Ganges opened the eyes of planners. They realised the importance of conserving watersheds in hill areas to restore the health of plains. This shift in ideas towards ecological factors of integrating hill areas and plains as a totality led to the formation of Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) in fifth five-year plan in 1974-79.

The hill areas are broadly classified into two categories. States like Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and other smaller states form the first category where almost the entire area of the state is hilly area. These states are being treated as special category States. In the second category states are those states where hill areas form only a part: (a) states of Assam, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and (b) Western Ghat areas covering 163 talukas of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Goa. Only this second category is covered under HADP. The Himalayan region covers an area of 68.7 thousand sq. kms with 59.8 lakh people. The Western Ghat region covers a larger area of 160.5 thousand sq. kms with 388.4 lakh population.

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Meeting of basic needs like energy, fodder, water, education and health is given foremost importance in formulation of development programmes. This shall reduce the drudgery of women and children; providing alternative energy sources and introduction of fuel efficient ovens will definitely go a long way in reducing drudgery of women and reducing the pressure on forests. Preventive health care, safe drinking water and education are basic essentials for reasonable standard of living.

The HADP in seventh plan has discussed various issues in addition to basic-needs approach. We will review some of the important issues discussed in the plan document in the light of grass roots experience.

The plan envisages a proper land use pattern to attain self sufficiency in food and at the same time calls for 'scientific land use' aimed at increasing productivity. The planners foresee an external market for increased yield and call for strengthening communication and market network. This objective of land use is self-contradictory. The recent changes in cropping pattern from traditional food crops to cash crops like potato and soyabean has definitely linked hill economy to large market economy of plains. But in this process the change in land use has affected the food self-sufficiency of the hill village as the shortage of foodgrains has forced people to import food grains. The introduction of horticulture crops has destroyed oak forests of Himalayas. In the Western Ghat belt the rapid increase in coconut plantations has put extra pressure on forest and water. Learning from these mistakes we have to evolve a rational land use policy wherein the soil is used to produce the basic need, food-grain.

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(Continued on page 10)