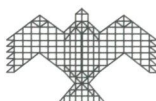


Back to the Village



T. Scarlett Epstein



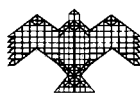
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES
Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore - 560 012, India

Back to the Village

**Seventh Annual
M. N. Srinivas Memorial Lecture**

T. Scarlett Epstein

NIAS LECTURE L2 - 07



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES
Indian Institute of Science Campus
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Back to the Village*

T. Scarlett Epstein

The invitation to present this Memorial lecture is for me not only a great honour but also an important emotional occasion. The previous presenters of these Memorial Lectures were mainly attracted by Prof. M.N. Srinivas's quite outstanding breadth of knowledge, experience and analytical capacities. These attractions I of course also share but in my case there is an added element of a close personal friendship that started more than 50 years ago.

It began under the auspices of Dr. Max Gluckman, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester where Dr. M.N. Srinivas was a Visiting Professor and I was a post-graduate student. Though I was then formally a student of economics under the supervision of the late Prof. Sir W. Arthur Lewis, Prof. Gluckman was keen for a young economist like myself to do an anthropological-style field study for my Ph.D. in Central Africa. Yet ever

*This is the Seventh M.N. Srinivas Memorial Lecture given by Dr. T. Scarlett Epstein OBE on November 7, 2006 on 'Back to the Village' during IV NIAS-DST Course held at JRD Tata Auditorium, NIAS.

since I was a young girl I had been fascinated by Indian cultures and had longed to get to India. When I mentioned this to Prof. Srinivas who was already then interested in interdisciplinary research he encouraged me to change my field location to South India. He even suggested the topic for my Ph.D. which I subsequently pursued. I was delighted to follow his advice and managed to get a Rockefeller Research Fellowship that financed my field work. Prof. M.N. Srinivas became my formal supervisor in India, which further strengthened our relationship.

**PROFESSOR M.N. SRINIVAS,
THE MODEL SUPERVISOR**

He met me on arrival by ship at Bombay port during the autumn of 1954 and travelled with me on the long train journey to Mysore. Moreover, he helped me find accommodation with a local Brahmin family in Mysore City where I began to learn the vernacular. He even toured the countryside with me and helped me locate a suitable village for my first field site – Wangala in Mandya District. Altogether he initiated me into South Indian rural cultures. He thus became my Role Model of a Ph.D. supervisor which in later years I tried to emulate when it was my turn to supervise as many as 22 Third World Ph.D. students of whom six are Indians.

i) From a Student to a Colleague

In later years my relationship with Prof. M.N. Srinivas developed into a close friendship between our respective families. He came to regard and treat me as a colleague, which I much appreciated. If I have managed to establish any reputation for my South Indian village research I know I owe it to Prof. Srinivas. He will remain my mentor and role model until the day I shall myself die. I shall think of him always not only as an outstanding expert social scientist but also as a very kind, gentle and modest man with a great sense of humour.

WHY FOCUS ON “BACK TO THE VILLAGE”

The Choice of this lecture's topic BACK TO THE VILLAGE was greatly influenced by Prof. M. N. Srinivas' overriding concern with India's rural poverty. Under his influence I came to share his concerns. As a world renown social scientist he devoted a good part of his life to studying rural cultures and social life. He also promoted village studies in diverse parts of India and elsewhere. Moreover, he often complained that though it is social anthropologists “who have carried out micro-studies of villages, tribes, slums, etc, very few of them have been development-oriented in their research; it is high time that they made good this deficiency”¹. I took his criticism of

¹ M.N. Srinivas, 1979, p.11

social anthropologists as a personal challenge that I was eager to meet.

i) Differences in Interpretation

His extensive participant observation studies of Indian rural societies made him point out the big difference that exists between how developers and planners interpret what is happening in rural India on the one hand and how the objects of their concern perceive it on the other. "The developers, officials and specialists of all sorts of fields, hail largely from the urban middle classes, excepting for some who are recruited from Scheduled Castes and Tribes and the Other Backward Classes. Even among the latter, the recruits generally tend to come from the better-off, educated and more urbanized kin-groups"² and therefore have lost touch with grass roots level. My own developmentally-oriented studies produced plenty of evidence for the difference that still exists between how developers, politicians and government officials explain the ever-growing rural-urban migration rate in India and how the migrants themselves perceive their move. Also I found that most individuals and agencies concerned with poverty alleviation assume that the poor constitute a homogenous entity that can readily form a joint political pressure group, whereas in fact they are a heterogeneous lot composed of

² Op.cit. p.11

individuals and/or groups whose survival struggle forces them to compete with each other for strictly limited opportunities and resources. Moreover, they come from different social backgrounds and have different aspirations.

Moreover, there exists also a considerable difference in how developers tend to measure poverty; they usually try to identify poverty by a poverty line which is based either on per capita nutritional intake or income availability. Yet many of the rural poor themselves do not like to be considered as being at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Prestige concerns play an important part in the lives of even many of the poorest. Thus how the poor themselves perceive their own poverty often differs considerably from the image policy-makers have of the poor.

ii) Development Orientation

Prof. Srinivas' emphasis on development orientation and poverty alleviation encouraged my own interests in translating my theoretical findings into practical³ propositions. It was this overriding concern with trying to understand and analyse rural development in general and the causes of rural poverty and how it might be alleviated in particular that encouraged me to keep track of the

³ See T. Scarlett Epstein 1962

socio-economic changes that occurred in the two Karnataka villages (Wangala and Dalena⁴) I have been studying since 1954 until the present. Prof. Srinivas thus encouraged me early on to become one of the pioneers of development anthropology.

MICRO STUDIES OF TWO KARNATAKA VILLAGES

Since Prof. Srinivas had suggested I should study **the impact of the large Krishnarajasagar Irrigation Scheme on the socio-economic system of Mysore rural societies** I began my participant observation in 1954 by staying one year in Wangala where villagers had access to irrigation and spent the following year in Dalena where lands were above irrigation level and therefore remained dependent on uncertain rainfall. As these two villages are situated very close to each other and share the same cultural features they both had subsistence economies before the advent of irrigation. They were thus very similar then. It was the advent of irrigation that started these villages on different paths of development.

a) Wangala, the wet land village, 1954

Access to irrigation facilitated the growing of sugarcane and paddy as cash crops, which triggered of a set of socio-economic changes.

⁴ I gave these two villages pseudonyms to keep my informants' anonymity. The irrigated Village I called **WANGALA** to denote that it was a **Wet** land village and the **Dry** land village I called **DALENA**.

i. Jati (sub-caste) differentiation:

Like all other Indian villages Wangala's population was and still is to this day composed of different endogamous sub-castes organised in a hierarchical structure. In what was then still Mysore State the members of the **Vokkaliga**⁵ sub-caste were landowning Farmers, who had hereditary patron-client relationships not only with a number of resident Functionary *Jati* households, but also with the **Adikarnataka**, Scheduled Caste (SC) poor labouring households.⁶ Each Peasant patron household offered his clients a minimum of social security by providing them with an annual reward in kind at harvest time as well as other benefits in return for which the clients were committed to perform different types of services, such as craft or farm labour for which they usually also received a daily wage. Moreover, clients were also expected to provide political support and ritual services for their patron households. The increased demand for labour that irrigated cash cropping required attracted labour migrants to settle in Wangala.

In 1954/5 the poorest Wangala population segment was made up of **Vodda** immigrants and SC households. Both these sub-castes were considered as below the Caste

⁵ For *Vokkaliga* I used the term Peasant; while I referred to a cultivator as Farmer.

⁶ Significantly the vernacular term for this Patron-client relationship is *hale makalu* (old children)

Barrier and were not allowed to draw water from the village Caste wells. Yet the Voddas belong to a Stonecutting *jati* that originates from Tamil Nadu where they are considered as being above the Caste Barrier. Lack of income in their native villages had forced them to become migrant labourers. They settled in Wangala where landowners were pleased to employ them on their wet lands as farm labourers on a daily contract basis to help with the cultivation of paddy and sugarcane, the new cash crops that access to canal irrigation enabled them to cultivate. The *Voddas'* lack of permanent abode gave the resident SCs a chance to consider them as below their own social status. They displayed their superior status by refusing *Voddas* access to the SC source of water.

Peasants constituted the **dominant caste**⁷ in Mysore villages not only in terms of land ownership but also in numbers and economic and political power. Out of a total of 192 Wangala households 66 per cent belonged to the Peasant sub-caste who owned 89 per cent of the cultivable village lands. SCs made up 15 per cent of the village households and owned no more than 6 per cent of village lands; *Voddas* constituted 3 per cent of the households and owned no land at all.

⁷ For an explanation of the "Dominant Caste Concept" see M.N. Srinivas, 1969, pp. 111-113

ii. Irrigation re-enforced the traditional differentiation between the various sub castes:

The introduction in Wangala of sugarcane and paddy as cash crops raised with one stroke the total economy from a lower to a higher level and made everyone better off though not to the same extent of course. It thus re-enforced the traditional social system. Those Peasants who owned the largest area of irrigated lands benefited most. Yet even their SC clients also benefited because they earned additional daily wages for the additional work cash-cropping required. This interdependence thus strengthened the traditional hereditary patron client relationship between Peasant and SC households and resulted in **village introversion**. In turn it also reaffirmed the traditional social and ritual differentiation between the different sub-castes. All this happened at a time when the Constitution of the newly independent State of India made Caste discrimination a criminal offence and offered the SCs a number of special privileges.

The major village settlement occupied by the many Peasant families and the few Functionary households was separated by an open space from the SC colony on the one side and from the *Vodda* huts on the other side. SCs and *Voddas* were not allowed to enter Peasant homes or the village temples and coffee shops. Peasants would enter SC

or *Vodda* quarters but only rarely their homes. Whenever I walked round the Peasant part of Wangala I was always followed by a flock of Peasant children, who left me as soon as I crossed the line to SC or *Vodda* housing, where I was taken over by those children.

Children thus grew up inculcated with the notion of Caste Segregation.

iii. A failed SC rebellion:

Wangala SCs were in 1954 not aware of the privileges the Indian constitution had awarded them. It took a SC Congress Party politician from nearby Mandya town to encourage Wangala SCs to rebel against Peasant domination in a drama incident.⁸ He insisted that for the first time their SC actor king should sit on a throne and be thus higher than the Peasant audience who would sit on the ground. Wangala's Peasants strongly resented this and let it be known that not only they but also their fellow *jati* members from neighbouring villages would boycott such a drama performance. The SCs, advised by their Politician sponsor went to a lot of trouble and expense to stage the drama in their own residential area; He assured them of a large audience including the District Commissioner and other high ranking administrators from the nearby town

⁸ For a full account of this drama incident see T. Scarlett Epstein (1962), p.183

of Mandya. Unfortunately for the SCs on the day of the performance light rain began to fall just when these officials started out for Wangala. This gave them a good excuse to turn back. Thus no more than a few entrance-paying SCs from neighbouring villages and myself attended the drama which though well performed turned out to be a complete disaster and landed the SCs in serious economic difficulties. The village *panchayat* (council) of which only Peasants were members decided to punish the SCs for their rebellion by introducing a lockout of SC labour. To get this lockout lifted each SC had to pay a fixed amount as fine for their disobedience. This taught the SCs a lesson they have not forgotten to this day, though many things have changed since then. **The whole drama episode amounted to a political action by economic dependents against their masters and employers. The Peasants, however, formed a united front against their rebellious SCs and used economic sanctions to reassert their traditional socio-political dominance.**

b) Dalena, a dry land village (1955)

Dalena's *jati* composition was very similar to that of Wangala. In 1955 Dalena had 153 households of which Peasants made up 80 per cent and owned 97 per cent of the village lands. SC households made up 10 per cent and owned no more than 2 per cent of the lands. Dalena's lands lying

above irrigation level have remained dry yet residents also consider the advent of canal irrigation in the region as the turning point in their recent history. It encouraged Peasants to try and participate in the growing regional economy. For them this meant that they had to diversify their economic activities and reach outside their own village. They began providing the services needed by farmers in neighbouring irrigated villages. This meant that they were spontaneously responsible for a process of specialization and division of labour taking place between irrigated and dry land villages.

i. Peasants monopolized employment opportunities

A number of Dalena Peasants secured employment at the Mandya sugar factory and commuted daily to work. As the factory managers were at the time all Peasant *jati* members Dalena Peasants used intra-*jati* loyalties to get these jobs. This meant that **none of Dalena's poor SCs managed to get employment at this or any other Mandya factory, though these were all unskilled jobs for which they should have qualified.**

ii. The importance of education

Dalena Peasants soon realised that education and the knowledge of English were necessary pre-conditions of success in the wider economy. Already in 1955 Dalena included a few university graduates. They took up

professional positions outside their native place. With the money thus earned many of them helped their kin left in Dalena to buy irrigated lands whenever any came on the market in neighbouring villages.

iii. Village-extroversion and the break-down of hereditary patron-client relationships

As long as Dalena had a subsistence economy, Peasants also used to have the same type of hereditary patron-client relationships with SC households as still existed in Wangala in 1954. The ownership of irrigated lands outside their own village where it was more economic for farmers to hire contract labour on a daily basis led to the disappearance in Dalena of the hereditary patron-client labour relationships. Yet Peasant patrons still expected their SC clients to perform their traditional ritual functions, which the SCs were understandably not prepared to do. This caused a lot of friction in the village.

The different economic changes resulting from the advent of irrigation in the lives of Dalena's Peasants and SCs were reflected in growing economic polarisation: the SCs lost their minimum social security, while Peasant wealth increased considerably.

WANGALA AND DALENA RESTUDIED IN 1970⁹

These restudies showed that Wangala continued to be **village-introverted** in spite of the considerable increase in population and Dalena had become increasingly more and more **village-extroverted**.

Wangala's Population increased from 958 in 1955 to 1,603 in 1970. **Dalena's Population** increased from 707 in 1955 to 1,072 in 1970. Thus Wangala's population grew at a higher rate than Dalena's. This difference was not due to different fertility rates but to out-migration from Dalena. Where agriculture was still only rain-fed and there were hardly any alternative income-earning opportunities within the village. Increasing numbers of Dalena Peasants had either left the village for work in the wider economy or had secured jobs in Mandya's factories and commuted daily.

By contrast **Wangala's** increased irrigated acreage, higher agricultural productivity and a booming jaggery market ensured that Wangala's land-carrying capacity could still sustain the increasing numbers and therefore only very few villagers had left. The increased Peasant wealth manifested itself in their more and more elaborate living conditions.

⁹ See T. Scarlett Epstein (1973)

Whereas at the other end of the economic scale the SCs standard of living had deteriorated and thus the gap between wealthy Wangala Peasants and poor SCs had widened. When in 1970 I asked some of my SC friends how they were keeping, my Western cultural background made me expect them to say: "Can you not see our health has deteriorated, we wear torn clothes and our houses are run down all because we now earn less money to meet our requirements". To my surprise this was not what they told me, instead I heard them say: **"We are worse off now because we cannot celebrate the weddings of our children and altogether our rituals in our accustomed style". Their own perception of their poverty thus differed considerably from the perception most Urbanites would expect of how the poorest themselves perceive their own poverty.**

The increasing economic differentiation between Wangala Peasants and the increasing awareness among SCs of their privileges led to another SC failed Rebellion: One young Wangala SC dared to drink his coffee inside one of the village coffee shops when his Peasant patron spotted him and angrily threw him to the ground. When the injured young SC had gathered himself after this attack he insisted that he would take his patron to the Courts. However, the SC crowd that had gathered fearing the repercussions on their whole

community of such a Court Case convinced him to quieten down. The dispute was settled by the injured SC agreeing not to take his Peasant patron to court and the latter canceling his hereditary relationship with the SC's household while another SC immediately offered to fill the gap.

This case clearly indicates not only that village Peasants could then ignore State legislation that exists to protect SCs against discrimination and get away with it, but it also shows the competition that exists among some of the poorest SC households. Another SC had no compunction about depriving his fellow SC of his minimum social security as long as his own family benefited from it. This throws into relief how extreme poverty promotes competition for scarce sources of income rather than to encourage united actions among the poor. Poverty made the SCs accept their social subordination as the price they have to pay for securing their minimum livelihood.

PREDICTIONS IN 1970 FOR 2000¹⁰

By extrapolating the changes I observed that had taken place between 1955 and 1970 I attempted to predict what

¹⁰ See T. Scarlett Epstein (1973) pp. 233-242

Wangala and Dalena and other similar type societies will be like by the year 2000.

i) Population growth: I assumed that the **population growth will continue to increase at the same rate it had done between 1955 and 1970** in both these villages.

ii) Intra- and Extra-village focus: I judged that the intensity of Wangala's **'village introversion'** and Dalena's **'village extroversion'** would continue to increase.

iii) Intra-jati class structures: I reasoned that the differential economic progress of different categories of villagers may lead to the development of an intra-jati class structure.

WRONG AND RIGHT PREDICTIONS¹¹

i) Population Growth: My estimate of Wangala and Dalena population growth rates between 1970 and 1996 tuned out to have been too high. I discovered that the reason for this mistake was the fact that I had ignored the importance of education. I got it wrong because the extrapolation of the 15 years between my first two studies

¹¹ See T. Scarlett Epstein, et.al. (1998), p.199

had been too short a period for the impact of education to have made its mark on fertility behaviour. It has become generally accepted that it takes two generations for the results of education to become noticeable. By 1996 the average annual rate of population increase had in fact declined both in Wangala and Dalena.

ii) Intra-and Extra-village focus: Wangala continued to be **village-introverted** with only a few villagers having left. Irrigation still provided sufficient intra-village income-generation even for the growing population. This encouraged the development of an intra-village diversification of economic activities to meet the increased and more diversified intra-village demand. It was reflected in a busy village economy. Accordingly, Wangala continued to function as a fairly cohesive social system. Yet there were signs that it would not last much longer. Population increase and the introduction of agricultural technologies coupled with migrant labourers being prepared to accept lower wage rates than did Wangala's indigenous SCs made it more and more difficult for the latter to secure farm labour jobs. Moreover, the attraction urban life offered induced some of the younger and educated male Peasants to migrate to Bangalore. This led to the beginning of the breakdown of the hereditary labour relationships even in Wangala and deprived increasing numbers of SC households of their traditional social security.

The SCs remained among the poorest. Yet they were still clinging to the hope that in Wangala they would continue to enjoy at least a minimum social security. Therefore migration seemed then still too risky to them.

Dalena had continued to follow the path of more and more **village-extroversion** as the village's dry lands could not sustain the increasing population; growing numbers of villagers were thus forced to seek a livelihood outside their native place. Thus Dalena's social system was beginning to fall apart. One positive aspect of Dalena's malfunctioning society was that in line with Government regulations Dalena Peasants no more objected to SCs entering the village coffee shops.

iii) Intra-jati Class structure was what I had predicted and this also did happen. There were obvious signs of the development of class within caste; more so among the Peasants than among the SCs. The equal inheritance rule among sons when applied by Wangala Peasants meant that the number of brothers a man had and the size of his father's land holding determined his economic status. Under the prevailing conditions of increasing population many young Wangala men inherited unsustainably small holdings leaving them no option but to sell their land and join the landless village households. The expectation of land

constraints for their sons made Wangala parents realise the importance of education. They considered that an educational qualification provided the passport for a public service job¹². Those young villagers who were the only sons of a large landowning father were the lucky ones. These only sons further increased their holdings by purchasing the land that came onto the market. **Though Caste remained the overriding principle of social organisation in these two South Indian villages, yet within each *jati* there were the beginnings of a class structure.**

MACRO IMPLICATIONS OF THESE MICRO STUDIES

The account of the changes that occurred in these two villages clearly indicates the important role income-generation can play in making villagers want to remain in their native place. Access to canal irrigation and the resulting cash crop possibilities made Wangala residents **village-introverted** so much so that even by 1996 only a few villagers had moved to the city. These villagers turned to urban migration only a few years ago when land constraints that resulted from population growth exaggerated by water shortages made it difficult for the educated sons of “middle farmers” to make a reasonable

¹² See Dore, Ronald, (1997)

living in the village while also threatening the survival of increasing numbers of the poorest stratum. In line with the increasing income-earning difficulties that Wangala experienced over the last few years the village has begun to follow Dalena's **village extroversion**. The changes that have occurred in Wangala since the beginning of this century seem to indicate that unless sufficient off-farm income-earning opportunities and better social facilities will be made available for villagers an ever-increasing rate of Rural-Urban migration with all the problem that this causes both in rural and urban areas will become a widespread phenomenon not only in India but also in most other Developing Countries.

GLOBAL RURAL-URBAN IMBALANCES

“Globally 1.2 billion people are in extreme poverty. More than two thirds of them are in Asia; South Asia alone accounts for nearly half of them.... Three quarters of the poor work and live in rural areas; significantly more than a half are expected to do so in 2025...Progress with poverty reduction in the last decade has been slow

The rural sector has largely remained neglected despite its great concentration of poor people”¹³. The ongoing **urban bias** “involved an *allocation* to persons or

¹³ See IFAD, 2001, p.1

organisations in towns, of shares of resources so large as to be inefficient and inequitable, or a *disposition* among the powerful to allocate resources in such a way”¹⁴. Though it is widely recognised that there exists such an urban bias yet to prove it is usually pretty difficult. “It requires demonstrating the widespread existence, inefficiency and inequity of substantially worse rural than urban *outcomes* and such material is extremely difficult to find”¹⁵.

Over the past few decades rural areas have been exporting some of their poverty to urban settlements not only in their respective countries, but also to numerous Western industrial societies. “There are now more than 550 million urban slum dwellers in Asia; 187 million in Africa; 128 million in Latin American and another 64 million in the world’s 30 richest countries”¹⁶. Land and water shortages in rural areas have extended rural poverty. Absence of off-farm income-earning opportunities among the rural poor force many of them to migrate as a survival strategy. A large proportion of them fail to realize their expectations and end up having to face life in urban slums, where they often find things much more difficult than they used to do in their native villages, mainly because urban life does not have the close social interaction they enjoyed in their native places.

¹⁴ See M. Lipton, 1977 pp. 44-66

¹⁵ See M. Lipton, 2005, pp.724-726

¹⁶ See The Guardian, 2003, p.27

i) Urban Water requirements create water shortages in rural areas

There has begun to exist an increasing demand and decreasing supply of fresh-water. In many parts of the world water has now become the scarce factor of production. Only recently have people begun to realise that fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment. Only one per cent of the world's water resources provides the fresh water necessary for human consumption, agriculture and industry. "The ever growing world population continues to increase the world demand for clean water, while the volume of available freshwater is in constant decline, owing to the continuing pollution of these finite resources by industrial waste and domestic sewage. The per capita area of agricultural land under irrigation is also shrinking and competition for water is increasing. Not only are there disputes over water between urban and rural populations, there is also competition between intra-country regions and across international borders"¹⁷.

The increase in number and severity of disputes over water made the President of the World Bank Group remark: "these tensions have given rise to the suggestions that the wars of the 21st century may be fought over water rather

¹⁷ See Epstein and Jezeph, 2001:p.1443

than oil..... There is no way we can continue with business as usual. By 2025, we will need 40 per cent more water for cities and 20 per cent more for food. In some areas four times more water is pumped out than is recharged by streams and run-off. Water tables are sinking several meters every year”¹⁸. Villagers are increasingly becoming aware of the severity of water shortages. “A farmer in Kenya said: ‘Water is life and because we have no water, life is miserable’ and an old woman in Ethiopia remarked: ‘We live hour to hour, wondering whether it will rain’”¹⁹.

Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP and Acting Director of Habitat supports the view that the battle for the conservation of water will be won or lost in the mega-cities of the world. As evidence for his statement he refers to the fact that the rapid growth of the world’s urban population has led to extensive increases in urban water usage; as a result during the last century, the combined municipal and industrial use of water worldwide grew 24 times while agricultural use of water increased only five times²⁰. To cope with the enormous demand for water in the rapidly growing urban centres will require a large increase in investment. The World Bank estimates that investments will have to double over the next 25 years from some US\$70 billion today.

¹⁸ Wolfensohn, 2000

¹⁹ Op.cited

²⁰ [UNEP/65 (2000)]

ii) Rural and Urban Developments compete for Scarce Resources

The growing concern over the expected enormous urban growth has led Governments and International Agencies reduce their support for agricultural development in general and the rural poor in particular. “The proportion of official development assistance going to agriculture has fallen from about 20 per cent in the late 1980s to about 12 per cent today. Assistance to agriculture from international financial institutions has followed a similar path. Aid even more than public investment, goes disproportionately to countries – and increasingly to non-rural sectors – where most of the poor do not live or work”²¹. There seems to be very little realisation at present among policy makers that by neglecting the urgent needs of rural populations they foster the rapid urban expansion which they now consider a major problem on the development horizon.

iii) The UN Social Summit target of “halving the incidence of dollar global poverty in 1990-2015

“UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently said there has been ‘real but insufficient progress’ towards meeting the MDG targets noting that extreme poverty declined from 28 per cent of developing world’s population in 1990 to

²¹ IFAD, 2001, p. 2

19 per cent in 2002..... At the same the time Secretary-General regretted that the declared ‘global partnership for development’ – aimed at ending poverty, which he called the “central moral challenge of our age” – remains “more phrase than fact”²². **‘DONORS SHOULD CONSIDER ‘A POOR-CENTRIC’ APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT WORK’**, the UN envoy said in New York. The international community should consider undertaking development differently by first asking the poor what they really want rather than the more traditional “supply-driven” approach.....those involved in development efforts should “think about demand-driven development where poor people are asked what they really want, rather than continuing with the traditional style of supply-driven development programmes”²³. On World Poverty Eradication Day more than 10 million Asians took the ‘Stand Up’ pledge overnight for the eradication of poverty. This is the first generation that “believes and knows” it can really end extreme poverty and exhorts all not to miss the “extraordinary opportunity to do just that.” United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for simultaneous action on both issues, warning that it will be impossible to eradicate one blight without the other.....The world has the resources and the know-how to make hunger history. What we need is political will and resolve. Let us renew

²² UN News 17/10/06

²³ UN News 12/10/06

our pledge to work together towards the day when no man, woman or child goes to sleep hungry. Let us resolve to win the fight against hunger once and for all. And I think that, with determination, resolve and will, it can be done.... More than two thirds of the world's hungry live in rural areas, and increased investment in agriculture is one of the most effective means to help them..... The causes of food insecurity are complex"²⁴, and need an integrated approach.

iv) Rural-Urban Migration and Urban Slums

"The statistics are disturbing. Over 50 per cent of populations of Karachi, Mumbai and New Delhi live in slums"²⁵. Dr Patrick Wakely, Professor of Urban Development, University of London like many other developers is convinced that "the urban population in Africa and Asia is set to double by 2025"²⁶. Accordingly, the development strategy now pursued both by national governments and the large international donor agencies, such as for instance the World Bank is to put most resources into improving the urban infra-structure to equip urban settlements better for the absorption of the expected masses of rural-urban migrants.

²⁴ UN News 18/10/06

²⁵ See Wakely P, 2000, p. 8

²⁶ *Op.cit*

The demographic forecast of a doubling of the African and Asian urban population by the year 2025 seems to be based on the assumption that the rural-urban migration that occurred during the last few decades will continue at an increasing rate because almost all rural dwellers are thought to be eager to uproot themselves just to be able to live in an urban environment. This forecast projects a nightmarish development and it seems to be based on questionable assumptions. Yet most developers seem to accept it as if it were a God-given law and that nothing can possibly be done to reduce this increasing rural-urban migration rate. The Governor of Karnataka State, Khurshed Alam Khan stressed already in 1998 “the need for setting up agro-based small scale industries in villages as that would create jobs. This would stop migration to cities and improve the quality of life of the poor”²⁷. Among developers hardly anyone attempts to discover what makes increasing numbers of different categories of villagers uproot themselves and move to a city and how migrants fare once they get there.

v) The Application of Outdated Urbanisation Theories causes serious Problems both in villages and cities

Internal migration used to be considered a beneficial process whereby the zero marginal product of village

²⁷ *Deccan Herald*, 1998, 3 Nov. p.5

surplus labour could be converted into yielding an increasing marginal product by their involvement in urban industrial expansion²⁸. However, as Richard Jolly already in 1970 stated: “Far from being concerned with measures to stem the flow, the major interest of the economists (i.e., those who stressed the importance of labour transfer) was with policies that would release labour to increase the flow. Indeed, one of the reasons given for trying to increase productivity in the agricultural sector was to release sufficient labour for urban industrialization. How irrelevant most of this concern looks today²⁹. It looks even much more irrelevant in 2006!

The large and still growing rate of urbanization is reflected in the rapid expansion of urban slums that are occupied mostly by disillusioned and poverty-stricken rural-urban migrants. This clearly shows the extent to which the promotion of urbanization has been accompanied by insufficient job creation and overburdened social services. This in turn is responsible for the increase in urban crime and violence. Rural-urban migration exacerbates the human problems it causes both in the rural and urban sectors. Since most rural migrants are young men their departure leads to a serious loss of human capital in their native places. On the other hand, the ever-increasing numbers of migrants coming into cities create a surplus

²⁸ See A. W. Lewis, 1955.

²⁹ Richard Jolly, 1970, p. 4

supply of labour which causes serious urban unemployment problems while at the same time it keeps urban wage rates low. Strategies to encourage a decline in the rate of rural-urban migration are likely to succeed only if they are based on the findings of sound primary studies that investigate the reasons for the migration of different socio-economic rural segments. However, there still exists an obvious lack of such in-depth primary data. This made me want to conduct such a micro-study.

A MICRO PILOT STUDY OF WANGALA AND DALENA RURAL-URBAN MIGRANTS CONDUCTED IN 2004

A Research Grant³⁰ I received enabled me to spend another three months in Karnataka. This period was obviously not long enough for one researcher to conduct a comprehensive, carefully sampled and representative study of rural-urban migrants. All I could hope to achieve was by means of individual in-depth case studies collected from different Wangala and Dalena migrants to **illustrate** not only what motivates individuals who originate from different socio-economic village segments to migrate to the city but also the factors that determine their success or failure in the city. The study fell into two parts:

³⁰ I gratefully acknowledge the Nuffield Research Grant which enabled me in 2004 to conduct the study of migrants from Wangala and Dalena.

a) Collection of Relevant Secondary Background Data

i) Population Growth: The 2001 Indian Census projected a 54 million population for Karnataka by 2006 and another 12 million increase by 2016. Presently a large proportion of Karnataka's population still lives in rural settlements³¹.

ii) Water Shortages and Crop Failures: During the past decade there had been very little improvement of agricultural productivity in Karnataka. As the HYV seeds require large volumes of water to secure their promised higher yields and scarcity of rainfall resulted in even the Krishnarajasagar canal irrigation scheme running dry between 2000 and 2003 most of the crops failed. This obviously caused serious problems for farmers:

iii) The Impact of Debt Burdens on Farmers

A large proportion of Wangala farmers could not pay the debts they had incurred for the purchase of seeds and fertilizers. It made many of the affected farmers suffer from depression and drove others even to suicide. Significantly the doctor at Wangala's Primary Health Centre told me that about two third of the villagers who come to consult him suffer from strain symptoms.

³¹ Indian Census 2001

The water shortage thus played havoc in particular in villages like Wangala that had become accustomed to benefiting from irrigated crop cultivation for numerous years. already.

iv) Urban Bias

In view of the importance now attached to Globalisation the large donor agencies encouraged the expansion of industrial development. In Karnataka too this resulted in rapid urban industrialization, accompanied by the provision of improved education and health services as well as entertainment facilities. Dr. Nanjundappa, the Deputy Chairman of the Karnataka State Planning Board complained in 1999 that “rural development is still a non-starter in the State even after five decades of Independence.... He stressed that there was still a bias towards urban areas in growth policies.....The present technocratic strategy should be replaced by a strategy that allocates importance to the human component in development” he insisted³².

Karnataka developers, like most of their national and international counterparts do not appear to believe that it may be possible or even desirable to reduce the rate of rural-urban migration by redressing existing rural-urban imbalances.

³² *Deccan Herald*, (1999), p.3

v) Maximisation of GDP overrides concerns for Poverty Relief

Most developers these days proclaim that in line with the Global goal to severely reduce poverty levels by the year 2015 their major concern is poverty alleviation. If this were really true developmental activities would need to focus on India's rural sector where the majority of poor still live. Yet the urban bias seems to continue. "Although there is no consensus on what happened in India in the 1990s, there is good evidence both that poverty fell and that the official **estimates of poverty reduction are too optimistic, particularly in rural India**³³.

The unprecedented rates of over-all population growth put further weight onto the rural-urban migration. Inevitably this rapidly increasing migration rate creates serious socio-economic and political difficulties. The rapid rise of mega-cities in an area where the main orientation has until recently been agricultural obviously poses a big problem.

vi) The Myth of the Happy City Life

This myth which is perpetuated by the media seems to attract in particular two different segments of villagers. First of all, the educated sons of "large and middle farmers"

³³ Angus Deaton & Valerie Kozel, 2005

who want to try their luck in the city. The other segment is composed of the poorest rural stratum who consider migration as a survival strategy assuming that they will be able to secure steady employment and income once they will get to the city. Yet when they arrive the majority among them become sadly disappointed. They end up living in appalling conditions among strangers in urban slum settlements without any income or access to the basic requirements of life and no one to turn to for help.

b) Collection of Migrant Case Studies

I began this primary research by enquiring from my Wangala and Dalena friends the names of the people who had left their village since my previous visit in 1999. They could give me the urban addresses of only a small proportion. For most of the others they could only tell me the city to which they had migrated. Most of them had gone to Bangalore, only three young Dalena men had moved to Mandya and another one to Mysore where they had personal contacts. Except for a small number of Dalena and Wangala villagers most had tried their luck in Bangalore. As I could obtain the Bangalore where-about only for a few of them I had to conduct a difficult piece of detective work. It was not easy to track migrants down in Bangalore that has a population of six million and is claimed to grow daily by an influx of about 1,000 people. Using

network relations I managed to locate a considerable proportion of the migrants on my lists. The case studies I thus collected do not constitute a representative sample. They only **illustrate** the variables that motivate different categories of rural migrants to leave their native village and how they managed to adapt to the urban environment. Based on a prepared a set of guidelines³⁴, for the conduct of the in-depth interviews³⁵ with Wangala and Dalena migrants. I collected altogether 29 case studies from all those Wangala and Dalena migrants who I managed to track down many of whom lived in one or other of Bangalore's slums³⁶.

A selection from my case studies formed the background for a documentary entitled "**Back to the Village**"³⁷.

A first overall analysis of the data that emerged from the case studies immediately indicated that rural-urban migration is motivated by a complex interaction of the

³⁴ See Appendix A

³⁵ My thanks are due to Dr. Ramaswamy of ISEC for the invaluable help he offered in tracing our informants and in conducting the lengthy, in-depth interviews.

³⁶ My thanks are due also due to my many informants who patiently were prepared to answer my searching questions.

³⁷ See Appendix B for a Synopsis of this documentary. However, unfortunately the Indian Authorities have not yet been released the film.

push and *pull* variables, rather than being uni-variably determined.

Lack of income-earning opportunities in their native villages “**push**” poor low caste landless labourers and/or marginal Peasant caste farmers out of their native villages. They are also **pulled** to city life by the higher quality of educational, health and entertainment facilities to which they believe they will have access in cities. Until not so long ago villagers depended for their livelihood primarily on what their lands could produce. As long as the population did not exceed the land-carrying capacity of cultivable lands at least a minimum level of living was assured for each resident. To uproot yourself from your native place is for most a traumatic experience. However, under present conditions the landless rural poor are left with no other option but to undertake what is for many of them a painful experience.

Absence of income-generating opportunities in rural areas force growing numbers of villagers to migrate to cities in the hope of securing a livelihood for themselves and their families. A large proportion of them fail to realize their expectations and end up having to face life in urban slums, where they often find things much more difficult than they used to do in their native villages. Ashamed of their failure most of them cut the linkage with their village kin and friends.

The case studies of Wangala and Dalena migrant individuals and/or families that belong to different castes throw into relief not only what motivates these different population segments to move to the city but also what variables determine their success or failure in their new urban environment.

CASE STUDIES

a) Barana, a Dalena SC

i) First encounter of difficulties

Barana moved to Bangalore some years ago. He left his native village because he found it impossible to secure there a livelihood for himself and his family. For a few weeks after his arrival in the city he could stay with some of his relatives, but then he was told he had to move out. Barana experienced great difficulty in finding somewhere to sleep and until he got a job he had to sleep rough.

ii) The hard Life of a Marble Polisher

After a few months unsuccessfully looking for a job his cousin's husband, who himself worked as a marble polisher recommended Barana as a helper marble polisher to his *maistry* (contractor). Barana's first wages amounted to no more than Rs 50 per day. When I interviewed him in 2004 his daily wage was Rs. 150 per day. This was then just

enough to keep himself going but he hardly could provide any money for his wife and children who still live with his mother in Dalena. He narrated the problems marble polishers face: as they depend on the mercy of their maistry. This means they have to show utter obedience to their boss. Moreover, whenever a polishing machine breaks down, the maistry just declares a holiday and the workers lose their wages until the equipment is repaired. Thus the workers are at the maistry's complete merci. Another problem facing marble polishers is the lack of work security. If a maistry's contract finishes he dismisses his workforce. Such dismissal was responsible for Barana having had to go without food for several days. Usually this happens during the lean and *inauspicious months when the contractor and/or the house owners normally do not like to begin fixing marble tiles*. During such times it is difficult for marble polishers to find work as a result Barana often faces hunger periods.

iii) Life in a Bangalore slum

Barana now lives in a tiny room along with another two young man. They equally share the monthly rent of Rs 450 and Rs 60 towards electricity. The room is so small that the door cannot be opened if all the three persons sleep inside. Yet they often cook their food inside the room. They have to share bathing and toilet facilities with numerous neighbours. Barana considered that staying in the city involves spending more money on consumption than in

Dalena, while living conditions are far below the quality found in the village. Yet, city life also offers him several advantages. Most importantly here he can hide his SC membership. In the city hardly anyone knows the other person's caste. Though it is of course true that "you cannot live with food alone" it is also true that "you cannot live without food either" Barana got the room for rent only when he gave his identity as a member of the Peasant caste. Had he admitted that he was an SC member the landlord would not have let him rent even this tiny room. Because his neighbours now believe that he is a Vokkaliga they invite him for festivals and rituals to their houses. He is convinced that if his SC identity became known his life in the present location would become unbearably miserable and he would not be able to continue living in this locality.

iv) The Myth of SC Privileges

Barana's major aspiration is to establish himself as a maistry for marble polishers. However, he lacks the funds to acquire the necessary equipment. Though he is aware of the favourable credit facilities the Government has made available for SCs he also knows that to get access to such credit an SC has to offer a large bribe to the official responsible for administering such credit. For Barana the privileges the Government offers SCs appear like a myth. Whenever he wants to avail himself of one or other of these privileges he finds that in reality they do not exist.

v) Advantages and Disadvantages of Rural and Urban Life

Barana emphasized that he would like to return living in his native village provided he would be offered guaranteed employment there at a reasonable rate of pay. He finds village life better because it offers a healthier environment and one lives among one's kith and kin. Parents, friends and relatives have mutual concern for each other's livelihood.

b) Simmegowda, a Dalena Peasant

i) Parents Encouraged Education

Simmegowda is the eldest of three sons and his parents owned four acres of irrigated lands in a neighboring village and two acres of dry lands in Dalena. Though his parents had no education at all and were still illiterate they encouraged their three sons to acquire education. His parents' foresight helped Simmegowda and one of his two younger brothers to secure incomes from outside agriculture. The youngest brother stayed in Dalena as an agriculturist.

ii) An Influential Sponsor

After having completed his B.Sc. at a Mandya College in the 1970s Simmegowda became one of the local investigators for Dr. Sudha Rao. She was then collecting primary data on Education and Rural Development in

Dalena for her own Ph.D. thesis the revised version of which was later published and well reviewed³⁸. In 1978 Ms. Rao, the daughter of Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, invited Simmegowda to accompany her to Bangalore, where she helped him get a job in an accountancy firm. During the first few months in the city he found it very difficult to sustain himself with the meager income he was earning. He was then often tempted to return to Dalena. Yet Ms. Rao not only offered him financial support but also encouraged him to start a Bachelor of Law degree course. He repeatedly stressed: "But if it had not been for Ms. Sudha Rao I would not be in the fortunate position in which I now find myself!" While persevering with his three years law degree studies he was in and out of several jobs. Ms. Rao also used her father's influence to get him a permanent position. However, though he spoke very good English all efforts to get him settled in a job proved futile. He ultimately decided to practice law and again through Ms. Rao's sponsorship he managed to become a High Court Judge.

iii) Simmegowda's Marriage

As a good-looking, young lawyer in Bangalore he was obviously a highly eligible bachelor. Thus his marriage was settled with the pre-university educated daughter of a rich landed family residing in a village near Dalena. The bride's parents bore the marriage expenditure and also paid

³⁸ See Sudha V. Rao, (1985)

for the bride's golden ornaments. Recently his in-laws gifted him a valuable housing site in Bangalore on which he will now build his own house.

iv) Simmegowda's Emphasis on Education

When I interviewed him he lived on a rented basis with his wife and two sons in one of the Bangalore elite districts. It struck me as an attractive Western style furnished house. He explained that he wanted to live in this select area because it offered excellent English media schools for his two sons. His first son now studies electronics and the second aspires to become a medical doctor. Right throughout our lengthy discussion he kept emphasizing the importance of proper education. He traced all problems back to poor education by which he meant mainly informal education. In particular he blamed TV for showing all sorts of nasty things which the young then want to emulate. However, he was also critical of the formal school education. He said: "In previous times the teachers were locals, who knew the background of each of their pupils and were keen to perpetuate traditions whereas now teachers are mostly outsiders, who just work for the money.

v) Urban versus Rural Life

Simmegowda explained that what he likes about urban life was that there was no pressure on you to perform as many rituals as in the village. Also there exists a much

greater variety of educational and health facilities and housing is also much better. As disadvantages of urban life he considered primarily the lack of social interaction; “each family lives their own separate lives and nobody cares for anyone else outside their own narrow kin. Moreover, jobs are now getting harder and harder to get and without an income in the city individuals cannot survive”. He contrasted the urban emphasis on individualism with what he considered the preferable existence of social interrelationships in villages. Villagers are always prepared to help each other. Yet he realized that rural life has also been changing recently. Population growth resulted in increasing numbers of even Peasant households that have insufficient land to sustain their families while they cannot find alternative income earning opportunities in the villages. Simmegowda claims that this makes it extremely difficult for them to survive and many of them are therefore forced to migrate to urban areas.

Simmegowda’s advice to young villagers is to try and stay in the village if at all possible, for life in the city is a rat race and without a powerful sponsor many migrants are doomed to become slum dwellers. Modern technology makes it possible for villagers to acquire many facilities that used to be associated only with urban settlements, such as for instance, good roads, piped water, telephones, radio, television and increasingly also computers. At the same

time rural societies seem also to adopt much of the undesirable behaviour pattern that has become associated with city life, such as e.g. consumption of alcohol, gambling, violence and crime. Simmegowda claims that unless something is done to retain what he calls “the traditional organic village solidarity” it will be doomed to disappear. However, in spite of all the demerits he realizes exist in present day rural societies he still hopes it will be possible for him to return living in Dalena after his retirement.

c) Wangala’s SCs

Unfortunately, I failed to track down in Bangalore any of Wangala’s SCs who had migrated to the city. Yet on a visit to the village I did meet the mother of one such SC migrant. She told me that having failed to secure an income in the village a few months ago her son together with four other young Wangala SCs tried their luck in Bangalore. However, so far they have had to live in a city slum and none of them had yet managed to secure a more permanent source of income. They still depend on the odd one day unskilled labour employment for their subsistence. They do not know how long they will put up with living under these conditions before they will decide to return to Wangala.

The data I managed to collect from Dalena and Wangala SC migrants clearly indicate that

these poorest low caste migrants face grave difficulties in securing a reasonable livelihood in Bangalore and are doomed to settle in one or other of the numerous city slums.

d) Sheregowda, a Wangala Peasant

This case study clearly throws into relief why he moved to Bangalore and the preconditions that helped his successful settlement in the city.

i) Sheregowda's Favourable background

He belongs to the Karnataka State dominant Peasant caste and has a postgraduate degree in Sociology. He speaks English reasonably well and works in one of the city's hospitals social welfare department. This lucrative and permanent position he managed to obtain through the sponsorship from one of Wangala's Peasants, who became a well established high-ranking IAS officer in Bangalore. Sheregowda's ageing parents still live with one of their sons in Wangala. Their village lands are now formally jointly owned by the two brothers. However, since Sheregowda is now a member of the urban middle class and considers himself to be well off he is not interested in claiming his share of the paternal landed property. In fact he now financially supports the rest of his village kin.

ii) Sheregowda's Marriage

He married a Peasant *Jati* girl in Bangalore. She also has a post-graduate degree and works also in the same hospital as her husband. They have a teenage son who goes to an English media school. His parents have great expectations that he will become a medical doctor or lawyer.

iii) Sheregowda's spacious Home

Sheregowda and his family reside now in a spacious and impressively furnished house which he proudly related he acquired through the intervention of the same sponsor, who had helped him also to get his job.

iv) Urban versus Rural Life

Sheregowda and his wife prefer urban to rural life because it offers them an attractive life-style, a good infrastructure, lots of public amenities, a choice of educational facilities and better employment opportunities with higher pay. However, city life also poses many problems, such as heavy traffic and pollution as well as lots of crime and violence.

Yet they are fully aware that village life provides also quite a lot of advantages, such as for instance friendly social relationships, ceremonies, rituals and fairs on a community basis and most important a healthy environment.

This makes Sheregowda plan to return living in Wangala once he will have retired.

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES

The analysis of the various case studies I conducted clearly indicates the following factors as determinants of the level at which a migrant can join urban society.

i) Caste Status is one of the major determinants of how a rural-urban migrant fares in the city. A migrant's caste does not only exert strong influence over his chances of securing a job, but also what kind of a job and where he will live. When I heard that a meeting was being organised in Bangalore for all migrants from Wangala and Dalena I tried to encourage all the migrants I had met in Bangalore, disregarding their caste or economic situation to attend this meeting and most of them promised to do so. Yet only 14 Wangala Peasants came along, each of them owed their successful stay in Bangalore to their urban patron who originates from Wangala. None of Dalena's migrants showed up nor did any of Wangala's SCs come along. This clearly shows how important it is for a migrant to be a member of a dominant caste network and also to have an influential patron who resides in Bangalore.

ii) Age, gender and health

Rural-Urban migrants who have the best chance to raise their economic status in the city are young healthy male members of the regional dominant caste who have a patron in a position of power. Unless a female migrant is extremely well-qualified or has a special skill the only chance she has to find a job in the city is as unskilled labourer even if she belongs to the Peasant caste. Women often find it difficult even to secure unskilled manual work in the city.

iii) Effective urban sponsorship

Every one of the migrants who had settled reasonably well into urban life stressed that they owed their success to a powerful sponsor. At the migrants meeting the sponsor, who originates from Wangala announced the formation of a Wangala Migrant Trust. He urged each man present to put into this trust as much money as he possibly can spare thereby offering help to the people who still live in Wangala. Since the participants were all Wangala Peasants the trust is obviously a totally Wangala Peasant dominated and focused affair without any intention of helping any of Wangala's poorest SCs , though it was stressed that the Trust would aim also to relieve poverty in Wangala.

iv) Educational achievement

A university degree proves to be a great help in securing a better life in the city. However, a degree is only a

necessary but not a sufficient condition of success in the city. All those Wangala and Dalena Peasants I interviewed who had obviously succeeded in climbing the urban class hierarchy had degrees before they arrived at Bangalore, but not all those with degrees succeeded in the city.

v) Knowledge of English is another important factor affecting the success or failure of an urban migrant. Most of those migrants who have their families with them try their best to send their children to schools where English is the media of instruction. They want to give their children a chance for further improving their social status.

vi) Skill levels

Those migrants who have acquired one or other specific skill that is in demand in the city, such as for instance a bus driver, find it easier to get employment than the many unskilled labourers who migrate to cities.

vii) Patience and Perseverance are character traits that are essential in settling into an urban environment. A large proportion of rural-urban migrants return to their native places after having tried for no more than a few months to settle into city life. Many of them spend several periods in Bangalore trying to settle.

viii) How Rural-Urban Migrants perceive the difference between Village and City life

Everyone of the Wangala and Dalena migrants I interviewed complained about the overriding individualistic interests that predominate in Bangalore. They dislike the lack of community spirit in the urban setting where nobody cares for anyone else but himself and his near kin. They also all miss the company of their family and village friends. Almost all of them stressed that they would prefer village life if it provided the necessary income-earning opportunities and facilities.

DEVELOPMENT POLICIES ARE AT A CRUCIAL POINT

As Winston Churchill warned in 1936 about another historical crisis "We are entering a period of consequence", so are developers right now also in a position to influence the lives of future generations. It is pretty urgent that developers realize that if the existing rural-urban imbalances continue this will have serious adverse effects on future generations. Thus it is high time that in particular India with its predicted large population increase within the next 50 years ensures that public and private entrepreneurs as well as developers begin to redress these imbalances. Unless this is done almost immediately the present urban bias will have serious adverse effects on

India's future rural and urban generations. Agricultural productivity will decline because the villages will be left mainly with elderly people and women with their small children, who will not provide the productive labour force crop cultivation requires. On the other hand, in the cities incidents of urban crime and violence will increase and cities will be flooded by slum settlements which will make it very difficult for urban authorities to provide all the public services this growing population needs. Altogether the health and well-being of the large majority of India's future population is likely to deteriorate and the environment will be degraded.

THE NEED FOR DIVERSIFYING AND INDUSTRIALISING VILLAGE ECONOMIES³⁹

Diversification of rural economies seems to offer the only chance to create income-earning opportunities in rural areas. This is particularly important in countries like India, where the majority of the population in general and the majority of the poor in particular still lives in villages. Urban and rural development needs to be considered as a complementary process rather than a competition for limited resources. The benefits of such an integrated approach will by far outweigh its costs. It is likely to prove

³⁹ See Epstein, forthcoming

more cost-effective to improve rural rather than urban infrastructures. This is so, first of all, because most work associated with infra-structure improvements is highly labour intensive and wages are lower in rural rather than urban areas; second, villagers can be motivated to offer some of their assets and/or labour free as long as they are assured the venture in which they get involved will benefit their own society. There are plenty of examples of wealthier villagers donating land and/or buildings for educational purposes or primary health centres and others who offer voluntary labour to prepare rural roads. By contrast such voluntary activities are rare in urban areas. Moreover, a wealthier rural sector will create increased demand for industrial products and therefore, help to ensure an increasing GNP growth rate. Though growing urbanization increases the demand for farm produce in the cities in many developing countries food prices are kept artificially low to keep urban labour cost at a minimum for infant industries, thereby making the rural sector subsidizing industrialization.

LINKING RURAL WITH URBAN PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

Until now rural and urban sectors in almost all Developing Countries have competed for access to limited public and private resources. Yet there is no reason

why these two sectors must continue to compete. Complementarity would benefit everyone.

HYV seeds and new agricultural equipment helped improve agricultural productivity for a period but the increasing water shortages have eliminated the advantages these seeds and new practices offered. Further increases in agricultural productivity need of course to be pursued when and where possible. However, since such improved productivity is not a possibility in many rural settlements the emphasis has to shift on creating appropriate conditions in rural areas that will encourage growing numbers of villagers to stay in their native places. This will involve not only the diversification of rural economies by encouraging crop diversification, post harvest processing and/or decentralizing the production of small goods but also the provision of education, health, safe water and sanitation facilities.

There exist of course numerous different options whereby government and/or private enterprise can encourage rural development and at the same time ensure an increasing Gross National Product (GNP) growth rate.

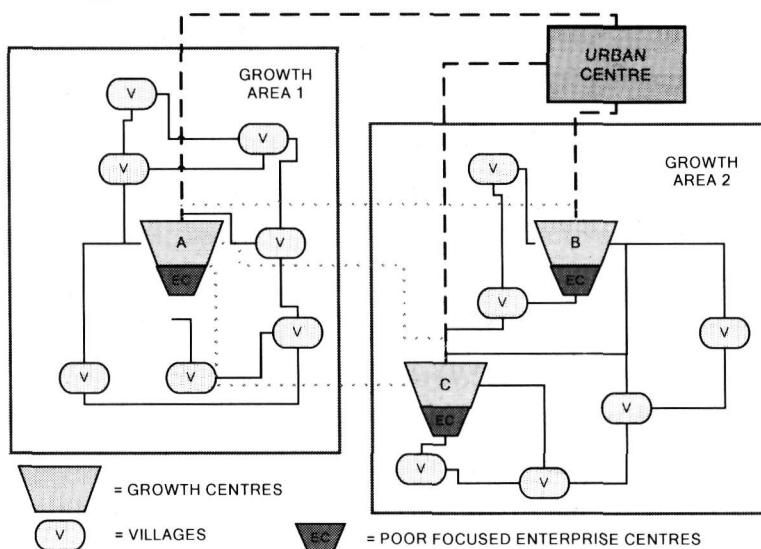


Figure1: Three levels of Rural-Urban Partnership Linkages

One such option, namely **A RURAL-URBAN PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM** (see Figure 1) emanates from my own longitudinal in-dept micro-study of rural transformation in Wangala and Dalena and an adaptation of decentralized production processes that I myself have seen having been successfully implemented in South East Asia. Linking urban centres with rural growth areas and growth centres can ensure an overall balanced development process. Such rural-urban partnership can create mutually beneficial network relations not only between farmers, agro-based processing enterprises and domestic industrial units in rural growth areas, but also between rural growth areas/centres and

urban productive units. The Telecom Revolution which is now taking place in many parts of rural India would further enhance the effectiveness of such Rural-Urban productive linkages. But there are of course a number of pre-conditions that have to be fulfilled before such a Rural-Urban Partnership Development Paradigm can be successfully implemented.

ESSENTIAL PRE-CONDITIONS

(i) Political commitment to redressing rural-urban imbalances is of foremost importance.

(ii) Local participation and interest in such a revised development strategy need to be ensured. Villagers have to be convinced that the authorities are now really committed to promote not only urban but also rural development

(iii) Appropriate and de-centralised education and training facilities to ensure that students from villages acquire appropriate skills without their studies alienating them from their rural background; e.g. Open-University type courses could provide training in simplified business management in general and simplified accountancy in particular. Such courses might also explain the advantages and disadvantages of different

types of business structures so as to put villagers in the position of making intelligent choices whether they should work as self-employed or engage in private partnerships, co-operative ventures or other forms of business.

(iv) International crop research institutes need to focus their research on producing high yielding varieties of seeds for crops that require only little water: The Green Revolution ceases to be green if there is insufficient water available to grow the crops. It is therefore important that the research objectives at these institutions are changed in line with changing conditions. Moreover, researchers should also provide information on the feasibility of different types of crop diversification.

(v) Poor-focused Small Enterprise Promotion Centres need to be established in Rural Growth Areas to provide existing and potential rural poor small entrepreneurs access to expert advice on the various aspects affecting the success or failure of new business ventures. Barana, the Dalena SC's provides an example of a poor villager, who has displayed perseverance and potential entrepreneurship. Men like him could be encouraged and helped to set up profitable small businesses in their villages together with groups of other poor fellow villagers; without such help he is unlikely to succeed.

(vi) Crop Diversification and Promotion of Agro-based Industries are essential features to ensure that agriculture will continue to yield an income for villagers. Agricultural development must be **demand-led**. Vertical integration towards the market will offer employment opportunities and will retain more income within the rural sector, which through the multiplier effect will lead to overall increases in demand for goods and services.

(vii) Linking urban-based businesses with rural small-scale producers The Development Paradigm outlined here represents an adaptation of what has already been successfully implemented for instance in Taiwan and South Korea. In these countries urban manufacturers of consumer and other small goods, who have in-country and export marketing links have only small workshops with low overheads. The goods are produced under conditions of domestic industrial units. Urban manufacturers provide accommodation near their work place for their village trainees - most of whom are women. These recruits learn the productive process before returning to their rural base equipped with however many machines they decide to take on a hire-purchase basis. The manufacturer continues to supply them with the necessary raw materials (e.g. cut pieces of shirts or blouses), collects the finished articles, enforces strict quality control, pays piece rates and markets

the products. This rural-urban partnership has shown to be an extremely cost-effective productive process, which helped South East Asian urban manufacturers to capture many export markets. At the same time it has also resulted in an unusually high rural standard of living. Villagers enjoy being able to earn reasonable incomes while being self-employed and without having to worry about how to market what they produce.

(viii) Appropriate shareholding arrangements with legally binding obligations need to be made available to villagers. Such arrangements need to be legally formalized.

(ix) Rural infrastructures have to be improved to ensure effective road and power networks. Also ready access by villagers to education, safe drinking water, sanitation, primary health centres, hospitals banking, etc. must be ensured. Such public works ventures will have the beneficial by-product of offering more income-earning opportunities in rural areas.

**DECENTRALISATION OF INDUSTRIAL
PRODUCTION POSES A CHALLENGE TO
RESEARCHERS, POLITICIANS AND
ADMINISTRATORS**

The logistics of implementing the proposed **Rural-Urban Partnership Development Paradigm** necessitates a lot of natural and social science research, such as e.g. how to provide remote villages with access to power and roads. The implementation of decentralized small goods production will also have to be based on sound research. Politicians and Administrators will have to find ways to ensure that the poor will share in the income-generation in rural areas that will result from a rural-urban **development partnership**.

Finally, I must stress again that it was Professor M.N. Srinivas' enlightened ideas that inspired the argument I presented here; unfortunately, he is no more around to tell me whether or not he approves it.

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR MIGRANT INTERVIEWS

PERSONAL DATA

Village of origin

Name and father's name Present address

Siblings

Brothers, their present address and occupation

Sisters, if married then present address

Type of accommodation

How long at present address

Age

Education

Occupation

Kin left in village of origin Landholdings in village of origin

Marital status if married then same details for wife whenever applicable

Children: same details for sons and daughters whenever applicable

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

How was each job obtained"

Was there a sponsor?

If so who was it'?

Did he have to pay a bribe to get his job:' If so how much:'

What pay did and does he receive in money and/or in kind in each job'

JOB ASPIRATIONS

Would the respondent like another job if possible?

If so what would he like to be?

Would he have liked to continue his education if the money had been available?

ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN

What education does he provide for his sons and daughters? What kind of job would he like for his sons?

RESIDENTIAL HISTORY

Why did he leave his native village?

When did he leave?

Where did he go to first?

Did he know anybody in this place?

If so was it a friend or relative?

Did anyone offer him free accommodation on first arrival?

If so for how long?

Did he own or rent the different places at which he stayed over the years? What were the costs involved'?

CONTACT WITH NATIVE PLACE

Does he continue to be in contact with his relatives left in his native place' If so, who are they (relationship)?

How often has he been back there during the last six months?

What were the occasions? (i.e. functions like weddings or funerals)

If his children are with him in the city does he take them along on his visits?

Does he send money back to his village? If so at what intervals? How much money has he sent during the past six months?

If he still owns land there who cultivates it and what if anything does he derive from it?

COMPARISON OF RURAL AND URBAN LIFE

What does he consider are the advantages and disadvantages of urban life?

What does he consider are the advantages and disadvantages of rural life?

If he could get a similar secure employment back in his native village would he want to return?

Why does he think many urban migrants do return to their native villages these days?

Where does he plan to spend his retirement? Does he want his children to live in a village or city?

If a fellow young villager asks his advice whether he should stay in his village or migrate to a city what would he say?

Does he observe the same rituals now as he did when he still lived in his village’?

If not, why not.?

ANY OTHER COMMENTS

APPENDIX B

A Synopsis of Back to the village A thought provoking documentary film

South Indian villages have been an almost closed world unto themselves for centuriesthis is no longer the case. Globalization has paved the way for cheap imports, handicrafts have been replaced by plastic goods, with the consequent loss of livelihood. Less land, less water, and a massive population growth is forcing millions of villagers into the cities in search of work. While the south Indian city of Bangalore has been lauded as the world's new IT capital, there is a dark side: two million slum dwellers, one quarter of its population, doesn't have running water let alone a computer.

The film's major theme centres on the causes and results of rural-urban migration, a phenomenon that is strangling capitals in filth and its dwellers in misery in the developing world, as governments, pushed on by investment, in India and elsewhere, rush to build industrial centres, draining much needed funding to the rural sector. The film is also a study of resilient Indian people, and age-old friendships, and takes us on a journey, where we experience the survival strategies for several rural societies, through the eyes of villagers themselves.

We visit a Bangalore garment industry geared for export to the US with a comfortable profit margin, thanks to an abundance of cheap labour. All coming from the outlying villages, each worker makes 25 US cents per finished shirt, which then retails for US 35\$ in Western department store. The simple math begs the question: what role do the developed countries and their investment strategies play in the increasingly imbalanced development that continues to take place between city and countryside in India?

Professor T. Scarlett Epstein, helps us to trace the developments in two villages in South India's Karnataka state which she has been studying since 1954. These two villages, one with access to a canal irrigation system, the other dependent on scarce rainfall, developed on different paths, but today share a common denominator...loss of population due to migration. These village people, tell their own stories of the gradual loss of livelihood, and their attempts to adapt to the changes wrought by globalisation. The film presents the dilemma of remaining in an impoverished village or staking out for the capital, win or lose. Some villagers have fared well, others are barely hanging on. The film is intended to be a thought provoking, deeper look at the consequences of an all too consuming emphasis on economic growth at all costs, in the hope that this will benefit the poorest in the society, when without an equitable distribution of resources, those same people will

continue to become increasingly disenfranchised and marginalized. The Indian reality is that today 75% of the population, its poorest...live in the village.

**Length: 26 min. Professional DVCAM video
(TV broadcast quality)**

**Producers and Directors: Richard Wasserman and
Nagathihalli Chandrashekar**

**Consultants: Professor T. Scarlett Epstein and Mr.
T. Thimmegowda, IAS**

**The Film is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Sir
Hans Singer for the important contributions he
made to the alleviation of poverty, an objective
this film also pursues.**

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Dr. T. Scarlett Epstein OBE is presently Director at the Practical Education and Gender Support (PEGs) and Social Assessment Consultancy Consultants (SESAC), UK. Prior to this she was Research Professor at the University of Sussex, England. She held important academic and visiting positions in the universities of various countries and research organizations. She holds a Ph.D in Development Economics and Anthropology from the Manchester University. She held several important academic and visiting positions in various countries. She is recipient of several honours and awards including Order of British Empire (OBE), one of the most prestigious award given in recognition of her contribution to the society. Dr. Epstein has authored 14 books and more than 50 articles published in the national and international journals. She is on the Editorial Board for various publications.

The National Institute of Advanced Studies was conceived and started by the late Shri J. R. D. Tata. Shri Tata was desirous of starting an Institute which would not only conduct high quality research in interdisciplinary areas but also serve as a medium which would bring together administrators in government and private sector with members of the academic community. He believed that such an interaction could be of great help to executives in their decision making capabilities.

NIAS is situated in the picturesque Indian Institute of Science Campus in Bangalore. Its faculty is drawn from different fields representing various disciplines in the natural and social sciences. The institute carries out interdisciplinary research and is unique in its integrated approach to the study of the interfaces between science and technology and societal issues.

Dr. M. S. Swaminathan is the Chairman of the Council of Management of Institute. Dr. Raja Ramanna was the Director since its inception till his retirement on July 31, 1997. Prof. R. Narasimha was the Director from 1997 to March 2004. Dr. K. Kasturirangan, (Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha), Former Chairman, ISRO, is currently the Director of the Institute.