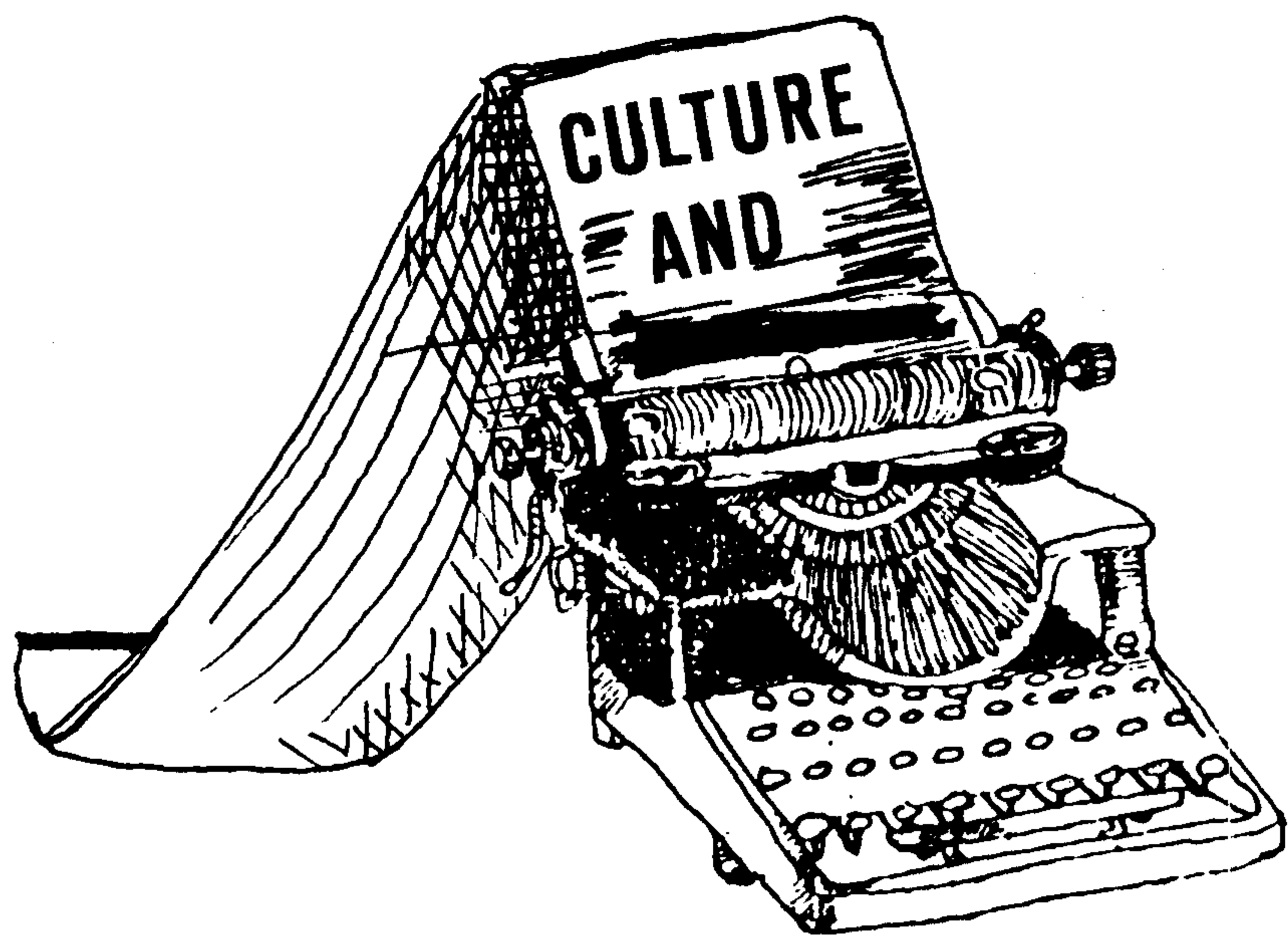


CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT



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1. Cultural Implications

During the last few decades, the economic and social situation of most Third world countries (TWCs) has not significantly changed, and consequently, their quality of life has not really improved. Development projects (designed and implemented either by internal or external experts, or with the cooperation of both) have mainly concentrated on economic aspects, while social and cultural factors have been to a great extent ignored. Even so, in most cases the economic needs, priorities and limitations of TWCs have been very

often disregarded. Economic and political development theorists are convinced that the development of the world economy has been instrumental in the creating striking economic inequalities that currently divided North from South. As the gap between developed and underdeveloped nations grows wider, they wonder whether it will ever be closed, and the fundamental point is that the quality of life in TWCs must be improved. Even if self interest is to be our only guide for concern, we should pay very close attention to what is happening in the TWCs. In social reality, all achievement of economic growth in one country depends increasingly on the performance of others.

The development crises faced by the TWCs have proved the wishful thinking of Western modernization theories which held that Westernization and the suppression of traditional cultures would promote the development of TWCs. A challenge is thus posed to the concept of a Western-oriented world culture, i.e. cultural domination. Due to a number of economic, social, cultural and political events beginning in the late 1970s in a number of TWCs such as Iran, Pakistan, Nicaragua, and later the Philippines, Argentina, Brazil and Chile, there has been a shift in development strategies and policies by development economists and planners. But in reality, there is still a Western bias against tradition: if traditional cultures do not cope with Western modernity and development, then traditional culture is seen as incompatible. But one

should remember that European cultures - namely those of Western Europe and the United States usually forget that tradition played an important and stimulating role in their own modernization. TWCs are not dominated by unchanging traditions, customs, values, and beliefs. On the contrary, they are highly flexible. As Singer points out, it is possible to examine adjustments and adaptive strategies to innovations only over a longer term.¹

Understanding a particular culture requires a correct comprehension of its underlying ideas and intelligent appreciation of its aesthetic forms, it is, however, the values of a culture that contain its essence and offer the best way to understand it and participate in it. Hall says that: "the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own".² The problem is us. Some of our problems cannot be attributed to anyone outside our field. We have simply not done a competent, convincing job in contributing to development projects and helping the people in TWCs.

The development problem in TWCs is both thus economic and cultural. Because a people's economy is part of their culture there should be no rigid distinction between economic and cultural impact. Culture asserts its invisible presence in all patterns of day-to-day communications and this is not specific to TWCs. Anthropologists understand culture as the "total way of life" of a certain community. Therefore, cultural understanding is prerequisite to any contributions to the

development process. Failure to accept the validity of other cultures is probably most evident in cross-cultural meetings. In the West, considerable effort goes in to making meetings more efficient - although in practice such effort is generally unsuccessful. Cultures differ in the degree to which they emphasize explicit communication and rationality. English speaking cultures, in particular, attach importance to explicit precision, to problem solving, and clear, logical presentation. But in much of the non-Western world, group discussion and decision making occur without explicit conflicts, it is unusual for people to press their differences by magnifying them.³

When one studies the UNESCO publication on "culture, society, and economics for a new world" and other reports on culture prepared by various institutions it is clear that there is a general agreement that culture is inseparable from the process of economic and social development. What is needed is to make culture an integral part of national planning, and this is rarely attempted in the formulation of national development plans of most developing countries. Integration of culture into a national plan can be done through various means such as utilization of mass media, media, community councils, educational institutions and programmes in their wider sense, newspapers, radio and television, and direct participation of people. Unfortunately, the political leaders of most TWCs so sadly are detached from the traditional culture of their larger

community, and this is the result of political systems which are usually top-down and authoritarian.

The neglect of culture threatens to undermine the very process of development. Plans for economic and social development are often left to economists, whose horizons are less socially and culturally oriented. The result is that the immense potentialities of indigenous cultures to mobilize people, and to strengthen national unity lie dormant, and the process of development continues to be slow. The vast, untapped treasure of human resources and the almost limitless possibilities of the human spirit remain untouched. Basically, the neglect of culture in TWCs arises from the schism between local cultures and the ruling classes and elites who are dominated by Western patterns, values, attitudes and tastes.

Unfortunately most development projects and technical assistance provided to TWCs do not take cultural and social factors into consideration. Kottak believes that many project incompatibilities have arisen from inadequate attention to, and consequent lack of fit with, existing socio-cultural conditions.⁴ Now, we can learn a lot from the past experiences, for example the case of failed technical assistance to Iran. In 1980, a seminar was organized by a number of American academics and advisers who had tried for years to introduce reform in Iran. Their lack of knowledge of society, culture, administration, politics and the history of external agents not only led to the failure of their reforms, but it

created extra problems and pessimism among the people of the host country. The aim of the seminar was to study: "The failure of U.S. technical assistance in public administration: the Iranian case". American aid to Iran started in 1953 as aid to Iranian ministries and continued for nearly 25 years. In addition, in the 1960s the United Nations sent public administration advisers to Iran. After decades of technical assistance failed to produce the hoped-for results, and there have been many more mistakes than successes. For instance:

"Nearly all advisers in the public administration program arrived in Iran with no knowledge of the language and with a very superficial knowledge of Iranian culture, its history, and its social, economic and political systems.

"To attune an American to the internal politics of a strange country requires radical shifting of his.

"Why study failure? The answer is to prevent repeating in the future the mistakes one made in the past. Although one must be cautious about generalizing from a single case, or a few cases, there is strong suggestion from the Iranian case and others- we do not know how to help developing nations reform their administrative structures.⁵

In practice, the effectiveness of development efforts and technical assistance programmes depends on their being geared to the

social and cultural situation of the societies which it is intended to benefit.

11. Cultural Integration and Development

Development is one of the great contemporary world issues. Development programmes without social and cultural considerations have either failed, or have had very little impact on the quality of life. For instance, in Saudi Arabia people do not feel happy to live in apartments, which is related to the social, cultural and climate factors. In Iran, a resettlement project of nomads failed due to the type of houses which were built for them. Nomads are accustomed to living in an open space, to moving regularly, and not to living in houses where doors should be closed, entrance doors should be locked, and food must be prepared in the kitchen instead of in the open air. In reality, the most fundamental problems of change with which it deals are essentially non-economic.

Most countries independent only after 1945 started to undergo 'development' by attempting to take a short cut by importing capital, technology and know-how, from industrial countries. In reality the political elites of TWCs, by embracing industrialization, share responsibility for the failure of such imports to improve local living standards. Industrial development requires relevant societal evolution, and the critical question arise: who is really doing industrialization? In the first place, it is apparent that foreign capital, technology and enterprises remain in the hands of foreign economic

forces especially the multinational companies (MNCs). Most countries implement the strategy of import substitution industrialization, meaning that the goods that were previously imported, are now domestically produced or assembled.

'Modernization' has been equated with 'development', material growth was seen as the yardstick of 'progress', and everything else was to 'trickle down'.

In the process of development the contributions of MNCs can play a very constructive role, and some of them have recognized a social responsibility to countries in which they do business, understanding that a less impoverished TWCs could, in the long run, mean more business and more profit. MNCs may find it profitable to do research and development on technology more appropriate to the needs of less developed countries. Instead, for instance, in Egypt, most MNCs are engaged in producing goods which correspond to the needs of a rich minority (such as colour television sets, and expensive radio-cassette recorders which the masses cannot afford.⁶

Modernization and development however are national concerns in TWCs, for example Japan (whose industrialization was fostered by her traditional culture), and among developing countries India, the people's republic of China and Sri Lanka. It is mainly the task of the "modernizing" developing elite "to mobilize national forces, appealing to national values, historical traditions and national unity in support of the socio-economic reforms. It is essen-

tial to notice that a healthy cultural nationalism could foster support for genuine national development.

Nowadays, many TWCs have realized that they have to build the required infrastructure for industrialization. There are no short cuts for development. TWCs can draw the lessons from the negative impact of rapid industrialization. Experience has shown that most TWCs invest on heavy industries or industries not relevant to their infrastructure. Rapid and concentrated industrial growth has resulted in premature urbanization, sectoral imbalances, the emergence of monopolies and civil disorder, (particularly in main cities). For instance, one of the results of the creation of an automotive industry (mainly assembling) in Iran was (and still is) the creation of enormous traffic jam problems in Tehran which have also resulted in pollution, anger and stress. In Indonesia, the automotive industry has encountered profound difficulties because the purchasing capacity of Indonesia even as a member of OPEC is too weak to meet the high price of automobiles.

Only rational, realistic, and well studied development plans can change the present economic situation of TWCs. The masses of the people should be mobilized and internal resources should be fully used. Unfortunately, failure of past economic reforms in most TWCs has undermined public trust in government social and economic reforms. This means that governments have to spend extra energy to attract public confidence, cooperation and support, and this would be

mainly achieved by improving the quality of life of the people. Certainly, specialists assigned to implement development projects, or to act as advisers should be aware of past present social, cultural and economic problems, which affect the outlook of the people of the host countries.

Successful development requires the integration of traditional with modern systems, not a complete breakdown of the old and its replacement by the new: a combination of old and new, whereby people can maintain their links to the past, their cultural identity, their historic roots is necessary. Japan is the best example of such a synthesis. Sound development needs self-reliance and independence with an emphasis on the potential of local resources. An external adviser who disregards this has a high risk of failure. Actually the center of development lies with the people themselves, and, therefore, local people will and expertise are at the foundation of all successful development. This suggests the need to explore cultural dimensions of development in which people's tools, technology know-how become the cornerstones for their development via their own efforts. An external adviser or developer may be able to facilitate these processes, but only by going in to the culture learning with his or her clients, as social anthropologists do.

Development advisers should be aware that every country has its own social, cultural, administrative and economic characteristics. Every intervention, e.g. the giving of technical

assistance, needs to be separately studied, planned and implemented. This could be achieved, with close cooperation of internal agents, and participation of local people. One should not ignore the capacity of ordinary people to design and build their own houses and improve their own lives. Dependence upon professionals is problematic at best. Ramesh Manandhar believes that "this practice of taking power away from the people and vesting it in professionals is going on not only in Nepal but in many countries of the world."⁸

This type of thinking has often resulted in the imposition of values and consumption patterns upon the society- in fact in cultural alienation (such as the Philippines, Iran, Indonesia, Egypt and Brazil). History has shown that economic development without strong emphasis on social and cultural development cannot lead to the enrichment and independence of poor countries. The relationship between overall development objectives and various social activities, particularly education, cultural expression, science, and communication need to be identified. Only then will the roles which these activities potentially can play in overall development be optimized, and change initiated in the development processes.

III. Development and Self-Help

Development in TWCs should be accompanied by the strengthening of local capabilities. That is to say, efforts will be needed to develop and provide equitable access to information, to further develop

the ability of local personnel to plan, assess and evaluate technologies appropriate to the needs of the country and to induce local research and develop links between local research and development (R&D) , the economy, and the educational system. Technology can be both an agent of change and a destroyer of values. Developing countries must choose technology appropriate to their development objectives and needs. Luis Cabral, the president of Guinea-Bissau in 1979 said: " ... a rational plan is necessary in order to avoid the unfair distribution of services to one region at the expense of another , to one ethnic group to ^{the} detriment of others, to some institutions to the neglect of others."⁹

The history of technology transfer indicates that the transfer of inappropriate foreign technology causes numerous problems such as labour displacement, the need to import skilled workers and sophisticated management, to contract unaffordable financing, to build expensive transportation system, to pay for new educational facilities and so on. We should be aware that even application of proper technology must be absorbed if it is to function in its new setting.

Through the promotion of R&D in TWCs it may become gradually possible to design and produce locally suited technical and industrial models and machine tools. Expansion of R&D would lead a country to self-reliance, save hard currency , and provide foreign exchange. In most TWCs , the lack of a historical tradition in

science and technology, and limited human physical scientific and technological efforts unless co-operative agreements are established. Nowadays, national and international organizations are willing to set up scientific cooperation with TWCs this should be achieved rationally, according to the needs and priorities and with care and good will and with an eye towards self-reliance.

Development planning in TWCs involves not only efforts to increase economic growth but also a careful questioning of priorities. Joseph Kotsokoane, former Minister of Education of Lesotho, once said that: "What our people need today is basic education - such as literacy and vocational training to enable them to know themselves and be open to ideas that will contribute to their personal and collective self-improvement". Development education programmes conducted for the benefit of rural and urban poor in a total development setting should be approached as investments in broader social development.

Appropriate technology for a development goal is not necessarily small scale, labour intensive, traditional village technology. Depending on the situation, the most appropriate technology may be very sophisticated indeed, like the SITE satellite education project in India or computer applications for large epidemiology studies to improve public health. It is important to remember that technology is merely a tool, conferring no status in itself. Choice simply involves matching the most appropriate tool to the required

task and need.

Self-development, if continued, would lead to self-reliance. But self-reliance does not mean that a TWC should or could be isolated from innovation and technological development in other parts of the world. Self-development and reliance suggest a national capability to identify problem, to choose from a set of options for appropriate solutions and to have the capacity to implement those solutions. It further suggests identifying solutions from available local resources and, when faced with a problem, first asking how that problem can be resolved by independent action without external agencies. A good example of self-help is the Sarvodaya programme in Sri Lanka. In this country the idea of "Help for self-Development" started in the villages: village groups get together at their village centers. Several villages get together at a central village where four full-time sarvodaya workers are resident. This "village awakening" helps village people to organize camps, get into development education programmes, provide tools and equipment and credit when necessary, and brings them in contact with governmental extension services and other assistance the village community needs for self-development.

It is clear, however, that no country in the contemporary world can be fully independent from all others. The TWCs's desire for complete independence is thus not possible. Rather, it is self-reliance and an end to one-sided dependence with less developed countries must experie-

nance in relation to industrialized countries. Countries like India, Brazil or South Korea can offer much technological help to TWCs (e.g. basic communication technology). The relevant point being that self-reliance needs to be built up gradually and in organic fashion.

Self-reliance does not exclude exchanges, all problems can not be solved with internal resources and certainly not immediately. But the initiative for technological co-operation should rest with the TWCs which have in the past been perceived merely as a market for Western technology. We should bear in mind that TWCs are not financially strong enough to afford highly capital intensive technologies. Therefore in some cases they will have to rely on some sorts of exchange, although it will be best if the TWCs themselves identify their needs and, initiate programmes to satisfy those needs with external assistance. In practice, technology must be integrated into an indigenous rather than a foreign development model, based upon genuine self-determination. Nowadays a well-planned economic project based on industrialization should presuppose the technical training of a large number of people and corresponding changes in their education. But it also implies a thorough-going effort to adapt to their cultural frame of reference, increase their knowledge and sharpen their sensitivity.

Through industrialization and modernization, which basically consists technology (and sometimes capital) transfer, TWCs have bought, imported or reproduced material

culture from industrial societies. Such cultural commodities do not necessarily reflect local cultural values. When new goods penetrate a certain country and are bought, then people get used to them. They see imported goods as a status symbol and using household equipment or riding in a car can unconsciously make the users feel "modern and advanced". The short cut which we mentioned earlier, in practice, delays development in TWCs, by undermining traditional industries and creating cultural alienation. National development in its real sense embodies the quality of life of a nation. A national development plan should thus promote indigenous industries. In many developing countries industrialization has ignored or even destroyed traditional industries, retarding the development of products which may have been produced for decades, and which might otherwise have been improved and diversified. For instance, various agricultural products such as rice, wheat, tea and traditional drinks have been, if not abolished, at least disregarded, and vivid examples are found in Iran, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Conclusions

During the last decade much attention has been paid to the cultural dimensions of development and the establishment of priorities for development plans by national international organizations. Nevertheless, in practice there are difficulties and shortfalls in this field, in particular a lack of sufficient attention to social

and cultural factors by internal and external experts involved in development projects. The idea that there is a shortcut to development and industrialization is another problem which requires special consideration. Political elites of most TWCs try to overcome under-development using inappropriate technology and lacking the proper infrastructure. I believe that there should be a constant effort to reorient and redirect TWCs toward appropriate technology, indigenous needs assessments and culturally sensitive development plans. The masses of people should be mobilized on the basis of their capabilities, and internal resources should be widely used. Priority should be given to the development, revival and support of those sectors that would create employment, and prevent migration to urban areas.

There are other difficulties such as inadequate financial and human resources which means that TWCs must invest carefully in projects which the country needs and which will improve the quality of life (particularly in the deprived areas). Human resource development needs priority if a country aims at becoming self-reliant, and self-help and the promotion of R&D are essential to strengthening the ability and capability of the country to solve its own development problems.

UNESCO and other relevant international organizations have definite and fundamental roles in helping TWCs to integrate culture and national plans and assisting them in applying for appropriate

development aid. Through an international, long-term programme, UNESCO can also promote the development of methods required to evaluate, plan and programme the integration of socio-cultural development and overall development by undertaking certain studies and pilot projects.

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