

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### THE BLOCK SURVEYS

During our visits to various Blocks, we have observed that very little, if any, importance has been given to the study and survey of the social and economic conditions in the tribal villages. Wherever surveys have been conducted, they have been mainly confined to an examination of physical conditions. In most Blocks, some sort of survey was conducted in the pre-extension phase but no further systematic study was made when they were converted into Multipurpose Tribal Blocks.

An analysis of the type of survey conducted in the Multipurpose Blocks before their inception may be of interest. In two cases, Akrani Mahal and Tamenglong, there was no survey at all. In nineteen cases a survey was conducted according to the prescribed proforma which was approved by the Mussoorie Conference. In fifteen other cases it is reported that there was some sort of general survey to examine the conditions of the Block area, and in six cases, in Araku and Paderu, in Manoharpur and Bishunpur, in Mokhada-Talasari and Peint, there was a detailed economic survey. In Tamia a complete book, to which we refer later in this Chapter, has been produced. It is an excellent example of the way a Research Institute can study and inspire the course of tribal development.

Except, therefore, in certain cases, the surveys have been generally inadequate. Although it is agreed on all sides that the development programme in tribal areas should be based on the prevailing social and economic situation and should suit the needs and desires of the tribal people, there is little indication that this essential condition of development has been implemented in practice. A survey offers a useful opportunity to the development workers to become aware of the actual conditions of life in their villages and to relate the development activities to them. In fact, it provides the ideal condition for determining a tribal base to the programme.

It is not only the result of the survey that we desire to emphasise. The survey programme provides a mechanism which will enable the development workers to become sensitive to the special social and economic conditions of the tribal people, which are often so different to those elsewhere. It is important, therefore, that they should undergo this *exercise* of conducting the survey, first at the very beginning of the scheme, and thereafter by keeping the survey records up to date from year to year. It is necessary for the Project Executive Officer to become aware of this important aspect of the programme and to get the survey conducted by all development workers, including the Extension Officers and the V.L.Ws. Unless the P.E.O. becomes convinced of the importance of this, the programme is not likely to be built up on a suitably adjusted foundation.

With regard to the nature of the survey, there is scope for experimentation, and its contents may differ from place to place. Some of the preliminary surveys can be conducted by the development workers themselves after they have been given some orientation in the culture and social practice of their people and some training in the matter of collecting the data required; other types of advanced surveys should be conducted by workers of the Tribal Research Departments.

The surveys can be of three types :—

- (a) a preliminary survey,
- (b) a basic survey, and
- (c) a specific survey.

#### *The Preliminary Survey*

The preliminary survey should, of course, be carried out by the P.E.O. and his staff at the very inception or even before the inception of a Block. It should be of an elementary character, rapidly conducted, to discover and to acquaint the Block officials with the main features of the area in which they are to work. It should include (a) figures of population and its distribution by age and sex, (b) the main characteristics of the physical environment with special attention to any obstacles to the development of communications, (c) elementary data regarding the basic and supported economy of the villages, (d) existing living standards, (e) some information about the tribes and sub-tribes as well as the non-tribals living in the Block and (f) the existing facilities for medical relief, education and welfare services. Even at this stage there should be an attempt to discover which is the most undeveloped part of the Block and where the poorest people are living.

#### *The Basic Survey*

As soon as possible after this preliminary survey there should be a basic survey which should also be carried out by the P.E.O. and his officials. The point of this is not to submit reports to Government but to serve as a kind of education or training which will enable the Block officers to understand the difficulties of their area, the needs of their people and to allot priorities in their work. It should include some general information regarding the economy, social organisation, religion and daily life of the tribes. It should also study the general condition of the non-tribal population. It should obtain statistics for each family and its individual members in the village community. It should also take up such definite problems as the nature of the tribal arts and crafts and the possibility of developing them and finding a market for them. No cottage industries training centre should be started until this has been done. It should discover the possibilities of developing irrigation schemes; examine what kind of improved breeds of animals could be introduced, having regard to the elevation and climate; the possibilities of introducing cash crops, with reference to the nature of the soil, the rainfall and possible markets. Above all, it should make the staff sufficiently acquainted with the problems of communications so that their plans will be on a thoroughly realistic basis. This will involve a great deal more than mere paper-work, for the P.E.O. and his staff will have to tour throughout their entire area.

We cannot put too heavy a burden on the Block staff and in our chapter on methods of reporting we have suggested a number of items which may be included in the Annual Reports. Reporting on these matters will be closely linked with the basic survey and will give an impetus to the Block officers to continue it from year to year. This is a very important matter, for we have been struck on a number of occasions by the astonishing ignorance of some officials, even after they have been a couple of years in a Block, about the actual customs and ideas of the people they are trying to serve.

*The Specific Survey*

What we have called the specific survey should be the task of the Tribal Research Institutes, the Research Sections of the Universities or any other recognised research societies. It will be a more thorough and extensive study and should deal with the specific problems of the village communities. It will be specially concerned with the problems of adjustment of the tribals to the development programmes. It should go in detail into the question of indebtedness. It should study the people's food habits in relation to their food resources in order to discover ways of improving the standard of diet; the living conditions and problems of tribal children; the role of the younger generation in the development schemes; social problems that may affect the health and the morale of the community or which may interfere with its economic development. It should examine the land situation; how far forest rules can be adapted to tribal needs: the possibilities of improving tribal houses. We do not wish to lay down too closely the scope of this final survey, which will be naturally closely related to the general programme of tribal research which we have discussed in the last chapter.

As we suggest in that chapter it is most important that the State Governments should try to make available to the Block workers any literature on the area and its tribal people which has already been published. It might be possible to get important sections of rare books cyclostyled and distributed to officials. Other books will, we hope, be reprinted.

The most important survey of a Block area that has yet been done is the preliminary survey of the Tamia Development Pilot Project conducted by a team of students from the Department of Tribal Welfare of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Bombay and led by Dr B. H. Mehta. This is an important sociological document, but if our research workers are to give us information about 300 Blocks it cannot serve as a model, for their work will have to be much simpler. At the same time, the future research student can learn much from it and it should be in the hands of every P.E.O. now and in the days to come.

In suggesting a series of surveys, it is not our intention to imply that the development programme should be delayed till they are completed. What is necessary is to recognise that the programme of survey is a continuous programme of understanding both the tribals themselves and the work done among them and should, therefore, be integrally woven into the development programme. Workers of the level of V.L.W. and Extension Organisers, of course, can only carry out the early preliminary survey after having some training in the method of collecting statistics and themselves becoming sensitised to the culture and life of the tribals. It is at the same time desirable to acknowledge the role of trained investigators in conducting the basic and specific surveys. The nature of the survey conducted and the study made in the Multipurpose Tribal Blocks should be taken as a proof of the conviction, purposefulness and sincerity of the development workers in giving a tribal foundation to the development programme.