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MARKETS, TECHNOLOGY AND AGENCY: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND CHANGE

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The paper agues that there is not just one manner in which people interact with technology and markets. While indigenous peoples' economic systems change, as in the transition from subsistence to accumulation, and economic relations too change in this process; there can still be aspects of the previous economic relations that could be carried over into the newly constituted economic relations. The search for accumulation and higher productivity, can also be carried out in economic relations that are carried over from the previously existing situation. In a sense, there can be a path influence on the development of economic transitions – building a market economy from an egalitarian tribal base, may lead to a somewhat different structure from building a market economy from a feudal/caste base.

INTRODUCTION: TWO PROCESSES

When we talk about development among Adivasi or indigenous peoples, offficially termed Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities in India[1], there are two kinds of processes that are being referred to. One, is that of displacement due to development. In this process the adivasi people are forced to give up their lands, including forests, to the state and industrial capital. With the loss of traditional agriculture-cum-forest livelihoods the adivasis are forced into change, i.e. into different kinds of economic activities. But we would not necessarily call it development, meaning an improvement in well-being or an increase in capabilities. Such mal-development is the result of political factors such as marginalization of adivasis, or economic factors, such as non-recognition of ownership of the land and forests they have worked on and built.

The other kind of process of development, one we would like to deal with over here, is that which is related to increases in production and improvements in well-being. Such development has some prerequisites – for instance, the acceptance of forms of property rights over land, access to forests, at the economic level; and forms of political autonomy, either the formation of states as in North-east India, or village (gram sabha) decentralization. These economic and political rights are necessary for the realization of what is also called 'self-determined' development (UN, 2008). Of course, any development, whether self-determined or otherwise, necessarily occurs in scial conditions, within and outside the community, that are not of one's choosing. It is this kind of development that this paper deals with.

Why Change?

Why talk about change? Can adivasis not continue as they are and have been? The first reason is that needs have changed – e.g. health care and literate education. But along with that, aspirations too have changed. Adivasis want to maintain their current welfare/well-being and advance it. Can the new needs and changed aspirations be met by continuing with the same production systems as earlier?

At a general level, it can be said that it can be possible to either (a) expand current activities; and/or (b) move into new activities. While there can be an expansion of current livelihood activities, this cannot be the full answer because an expansion of current activities (e,g. the existing combination of swidden cultivation on hill slopes, wet rice in limited valleys and forest product collection) cannot provide the higher per capita income that is required to meet the changed needs and aspirations. To put it in a more general manner, with existing technology, there is a limit to the extent to which current livelihood activities can yield higher incomes per capita. Consequently it is necessary to move into new activities. Stepping up, or increasing the scale of the existing activities, would not be enough; stepping out, or moving into new and different activities, would be necessary.

A number of changes have been observed in swidden systems in studies across a number of countries, such as India (Dhrupad Choudhary, 2009), Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh (ADB, 2009), Yunnan, China (Dev Nathan, et al , editors, 2003) and many of the papers in Voices from the Forest (2008). To summarize these changes:

1. A large part of swidden production is not for self-consumption but for the market (e.g. raw cotton, or even rice in CHT).
2. Within production for the market, depending on road communications to markets, there is often a shift from low-income yielding, relatively non-perishable, annual crops (raw cotton and ginger or turmeric) to higher-income yielding, but perishable tree crops (fruits of various kinds).
3. Where indigenous peoples are able to earn sufficiently high incomes from plough rice in valleys and/or horticulture, they often use hill slopes for timber farming, e.g. teak and gamari in CHT or jatropha in Nagaland. Of course, the extent of timber farming depends on the type of timber trade and transit regulations existing. The late-90s heavy restrictions of timber logging by the Indian Supreme Court, considerably reduced timber farming in Meghalaya in India.
4. Even in swidden production for self-consumption there are changes, such as greater use of HYV seeds and even use of herbicides by women in CHT to reduce their burden of weeding. At times, women grow different kinds of rice – traditional hill varieties for self-consumption and HYV rice for the market.

Since swidden is usually a very biodiversity friendly system, it is likely that there is a loss of biodiversity when horticulture systems takeover. But it is also observed that acquiring of required income from a smaller land area can enable more land to be removed from extraction and left aside for improving forest cover. Along with the above changes, there

are also substantial improvements in well-being of the indigenous communities undergoing these transformations.

These changes, however, are being undertaken in a largely laissez faire manner, with the powerful (those better off, leaders and men) generally benefiting more. The changes summarized above have invariably been accompanied by privatization of land. Swidden land that used to pass back into the commons now remains with the household that cleared it and is used for developing horticulture or timber faming. As a result, common forest lands have disappeared in many Chakma villages in CHT and Khasi villages in Meghalaya, India, as these lands have been privatized for tree farming. Consequently, privatization has led to the appearance of landlessness in these indigenous communities (see Nathan 2003 for North-east India and Adnan, 2004, for the CHT). This privatization is also accompanied by masculine domination, as men own the lands that were formerly communally owned. Reports also point to increased role of men in marketing of products over longer distances.

These changes have led to concerns about the future of indigenous cultures. The critical question is: Can there be a development within market economic systems that also enhance or recreate relations and cultures that indigenous peoples value? Hence, the challenge of change.

Structure and Agency

In moving into new activities there are questions of both structure and agency – structure broadly laying out the capability set and constraints within which one can choose, and agency seen in the choice between alternatives within that capability set.

It is often said that the adivasi question is one of preservation of a culture. But what is involved is creation of a culture rather than mere preservation. One may seek to preserve certain values within an existing culture. For instance, one may wish to preserve 'thick' relations of reciprocity with kin. But the set of activities within which these 'thick' relations are sought to be maintained is likely to change, as, for instance, from collection of forest produce to horticulture. Thus, we really have to talk of creation of culture, rather than the mere preservation. There is an attempt to preserve certain values, but a culture is more than just values. A culture is also a set of activities and ways of doing things, along with the values in the inter-relations, including gender relations. Consequently, it is necessary to look for ways of realizing values in different sets of activities.

There are two congruent questions to be discussed in this context. First, is there actually any scope for fashioning different sets of relations in production systems? Is there only one kind of production relation that can be associated with a type of technology? And, can technologies actually be used in different ways, in ways that reflect different values? Can technologies be consumed in different ways?

Technology and Production Relations

Taking first the question of production relations accompanying methods of production, we need to distinguish between necessary and contingent features of production relations. For

instance, accumulation through investment of labour and other resources, requires some connection between investment and return for the investment to be forthcoming. This would require a change from a system of commons in which there is no connection between investment and return, to some form of individualization of property, where there is such a connection between investment and return. Many adivasi communities do, in fact, have traditional forms of property in which the labour in, say, planting and nurturing a tree or clearing swiddens, is recognized as conferring a right on the resource created. Can there be forms of property in which such a connection between labour and return is maintained not at the individual but at the collective level? We will go into this question later.

To take a concrete example of the first question: can wet rice cultivation in valleys be carried out under different ownership conditions? The first point to note is upland swiddens are left to natural regeneration, thus including little or no investment of labour. But valley rice, even more so terraced rice cultivation, requires continuing investments of labour in order to retain productivity. Thus, incentive questions come into play in enabling a system of accumulation. As often seen in the case of production of NTFP in commons, there is no investment of individual labour where the returns are not capturable by that individual or household. Consequently, in the case of wet rice cultivation too there is a 'natural' tendency for the individualization of land ownership, while swiddens could continue to remain communally owned.

Another change accompanying the new methods of production (and consumption) requires is that of savings. In a traditional adivasi system, there is a tendency to redistribute surpluses in production through forms of feasting. But changes in production require accumulation of surpluses – for undertaking investment in, say, purchase of cattle for ploughing or in making terraces, and so on. Further, the changes in aspirations, e.g. resulting in the need for literacy, etc. also require savings, or, rather, new forms of consumption. Similar is the case with medical care, which too requires a redistribution of household expenses. In one way or the other patterns of spending need to change, away from different forms of redistributive feasting towards savings and accumulation and expenditures on new needs, such as education and medical care.

Further, it is noticed, as in Andhra Pradesh and many other such places, that individual ownership meant male ownership by men, while some form of control over swidden produce remained in women's hands. There is therefore a double jeopardy here – both individual ownership as against community ownership, and men's greater control at the cost of women, both features that would go against what are accepted as adivasi values of community ownership and relatively egalitarian gender relations. At the same time, there is the undeniable benefit of greater production – wet rice cultivation in valleys can produce much more calories than the same area of swidden. Should we therefore, as most economists would like to portray it, accept the trade-off of more rice production for an individualization of property and worsening gender relations? Or, should we say no to the economic development in order to preserve adivasi values of community and relatively equal gender relations?

We will take up the issue of the possibility of collective forms of economic enterprise later on in this paper. Here we address the issue of individualization and men's ownership

of land. Not only are there well-established matrilineal systems of individual ownership among Adivasis, even new developments have moved away from the patriarchal norm of land ownership. For instance, in Kashipur, Orissa, when land titles to land on hill slopes were given, they were in the joint names of women and men. The men did not protest this joint ownership. In AP, when land was bought and given to Chenchu families, it was exclusively in the names of women. In the recent Forest Rights Act, land titles are given in both names. What these examples show is that individualization of land does not have to be such as to strengthen men's domination. There is no one-to-one relation between the needed increase of productivity of wet tice cultivation and men's ownership of land. There are questions of the use of agency in deciding on ownership structures.

Individualization of land could be accompanied by men's, women's or joint ownership of land. Which gender structure of ownership prevails depends upon a number of factors, including the legislation under which the distribution of land occurs, the gender balance of political forces. Obviously where land is being newly distributed, as in the cases above, it would be easier to gain acceptance of dual or even women's ownership. Where it is a matter of land that has already been individually divided, and the land is in men's names, there might be more resistance to changing to a system of even joint ownership. The main point of this discussion, however, is that the mere fact of individualization of land does not pre-determine its being in men's name. The type of gender-based ownership of land that prevails is a matter of struggle, or, in other words, of agency and political struggle within the community.

Economic development does not necessarily have to result in women's subordination and increased gender inequality. To put it in another way, development in human societies is subject to social selection. While the social selection of a laissez faire process seems 'blind', it is really a matter of power relations as they work out in the transition. A change in the set of power relations could lead to another dynamic of change during development. The resulting gender relation, whether women or men will dominate the market system, is not (fully?) pre-determined by the technology adopted in development. There are some degrees of freedom in technology-related change. One of the degrees of freedom is that of the type of gender relations that accompanies the technology adopted.

Consumption or Use of Technology

To take another example, which, however, is not one of production but of consumption or use of a new technology. Domestic electricity has the great benefit of enabling children to study much longer into the night. But with electricity also comes that big destroyer of traditional cultures – TV, which has become the main source of domestic entertainment. This is also the source of Hindu myths and stories, besides cricket and 'Indian idol'. Khasi women mentioned that with electricity, the old method of story-telling, grandmothers telling stories grandchildren sitting around the fire has gone out of use. As a result, they mentioned that Khasi stories and myths were no longer being passed on to the new generation and thus were in danger of being lost. Here again, the situation can be seen as a straight trade-off:

accept electricity and TV and give up the myths and stories of Khasi culture; or, reject electricity and continue the story-telling tradition?

There is an argument that one should choose such technology "as appropriate to the indigenous way of life" (Miri, 2003, p. 67). This formulation would imply that there is just one way of using a technology, not that one can choose among different ways of using the same technology. What about using technology in a way appropriate to the adivasi way of life? A telephone, for instance, would seem to be quite far from a 'indigenous way of life'. In a village in Orissa an IFAD project had provided a phone, powered with a solar panel. When asked what use they had for this phone? They answered that the phone was very useful to them, which can be presumed mean that it played a role in their way of life. How? "When someone dies, we have to go to numerous villages to contact all relatives and only then can perform the funeral. Now, we can just phone them. This saves us the difficulty of keeping the body for many days, etc." In the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh too people regularly mentioned that the mobile phone has made it easy for them to keep in touch with their kin.

Posing the use of electricity or the telephone in an either/or fashion ignores the fact that there are many ways in which an artifact (a product of technology) can be used not just one way of using it. Consequently, there is a matter of choice in the way in which an artifact is used. One can go even further than this. It is not just that social relations can influence the way a technology is used, social relations can also influence the way a technology is developed. While social institutions adapt to technological developments, the process of adaptation is reciprocal and technology changes in response to the conditions in which it finds itself as much as it influences them," (Andrew Feenberg, 2002, p. 143). What the deterministic approach to technology assumes that there is just one way in which a technology can be used. As against this, it can be pointed that there are multiple uses, and it is a matter of social choice (struggle) which use or uses prevail.

For instance, the localization of design of cars in India is influenced by the very high incidence of chauffer-driven cars. Or, the availability of cheap household help, who are not part of the family, leads to the architectural design of living accommodation, such that the kitchen is made into a separate room, so that cooking and eating are carried out by different groups of persons. On the other hand, when there is a family member (usually a woman) who does the cooking, then the kitchen may not be separated from the eating space, or both together from the 'family' room. The different social interactions in the two differently gendered structures, influence the design and placement of kitchens within living accommodation. Social relations, then, also play a role in the development of technology.

Technology and homogenization

[If content determines form, then is there only one way in which a technology can be used? And, therefore, only one set of relations by which a technology can be used? This would seem to be Marx's position when he writes, "The steam engine gave us the capitalist..." But what about, in Marx's own position, when the workers take control of the means of production,

of the steam engine and electrical machine, etc? In this case, the same technology/content now exists with two different forms – one of capitalist private property and the other of socialist property.]

As against a view that modern media must lead to a homogenization, based on the power of those who dominate the media, it should be pointed out that, in fact, the development of electronic media has made it possible for smaller, non-national communities to express themselves in ways that were not possible in the time of purely print media (see Arjun Appadurai for the argument that local communities have gained space through electronic media, while national communities dominated the era of print media.) At a world-wide level too, the electronic media, particularly the internet, has been crucial in the development of the global adivasi communities, leading to the formation of the PFII (Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) of the UN's Economic and Social Council. By communicating and information exchange and gathering cheaper, the electronic media gives more scope than earlier for smaller communities to express themselves and communicate with their members and other similar like-minded communities across national boundaries. With all of the social networking sites that have come up, it is now easy for each particular epistemic community to be linked and even take up joint action across the globe.

Commercialization and Value

A third issue is with regard to commercialization. For instance, in a number of communities, including the Nagas, shawls are woven not just for use but for the market too. In the Lao-Thai border region, weaving from having been a domestic craft has become a commercial activity which has transformed the economy of the region, so much so that women said, "The skirts we weave have become the roofs of our houses." Adivasis value nature and the protection of nature for itself. Will payment for environmental services, e.g. carbon sequestration, as envisaged in the REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation of Forests) doctrine destroy the indigenous value for nature?

The World Social Forum (WSF) pointed out in the "Mumbai-Porto Alegre Forest Initiative" declaration, "Society at large benefiting from the broad range of products and services provided by forests must support communities in their efforts to govern and conserve forests" (Point 6, 2005). Can such support include payments, whether for particular services or as royalties, etc? Point 11 of the declaration explicitly opposes such payments, by stating, "The commodification of nature and forests by corporations, governments, international institutions and some NGOs is not acceptable." But in the Philippines, in the course of interaction with the IFAD-supported RUPES Project (Reward the Upland Poor for the Environmental Services they Provide), leaders stated that they had changed their views on the matter and were now willing to consider sale of the services they provide (carbon sequestration, control of hydrological flows, biodiversity) to those who could buy these environmental services (personal discussion with Mario Morales, Chairman of Council of Elders of Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization (BITO); and Amos Beta-a, Project Manager, BITO, November 2006).

What the so-called commodification of nature means is that the indigenous people who produce the environmental services are also paid monetary compensation for their labour in producing these services. This would reinforce, rather than substitute for, the labour that they would in any case perform in producing these environmental services. The recent discussions on REDD, in fact, point to the possibility of linking payments with labour in producing forests as carbon sinks. To paraphrase something written in a somewhat similar context, "Rather than arguing that care shouldn't be done 'for money', we should be arguing for money: for money to support those individuals and organizations in charge of protecting, nurturing, and healing [nature] ..." (Julie Nelson, 2006, p.119). Monetary compensation need not be opposed to care, rather the two can go together and reinforce each other.

Development with Identity

But is there any scope for "development with identity"? I.e. for a development that is based on and does not erode aspects of indigenous identity?

The first difficulty in answering this question is in deciding what constitutes indigenous peoples' identity. There are some features that come up for discussion: subsistence economy, non-alienability of land, collectivism in economic matters, economic equality and egalitarian gender relations. In political matters: the absence of a permanent bureaucracy and standing army, forms of democracy and consensus-based political process, the exclusion of women from political bodies. Which among these are core characteristics indigenous peoples?

Some of the above characteristics are negative, like the exclusion of women from political bodies. In the 21st century it is difficult to argue that this or any other features that contradict what are now accepted as universal human rights, should continue as features of indigenous society. To paraphrase Kwame Anthony Appiah, Thick relations [e.g. a community or kin group] should not be such as to contradict the principles in thin relations, such as those of universal principles of human rights (2005, p.23).

What about subsistence economy? Given the role of modern health facilities and education, and the influence of global communications a subsistence economy would not meet the aspirations of indigenous development, which is frequently expressed as one of wanting development, however, with identity. There is a shift from economic behaviour aimed at meeting relatively fixed needs to one aimed at maximizing personal or household incomes.

All of the above characteristics were discussed in the Itanagar workshop as possible aspects of indigenous identity. But as proposed (by Virginius Xaxa, personal communication) that the core of indigenous identity should be identified at the level of values. This would imply giving the desired values a higher status than the particular processes meant to realize those values. What this would mean is that, say, egalitarianism could be a core value and not the feasts of redistribution or generalized reciprocity that traditionally realize it. Democracy could be the core value, rather than particular processes (consensus or election) meant to realize it. Just as electoral democracy can take the presidential or parliamentary form, or proportional vs. majority elections, so also it could be compatible with a number of forms

of decision making processes, consensus or elections, elections with a show of hands or secret ballot, and so on. What is important here are the values, which can well coexist with a number of different processes meant to realize those values.

This would then also imply that it would be possible to inquire into new ways of realizing core indigenous values in the current economic and political context. It would also open up space for the critical enquiry into certain practices that might contradict or restrict the realization of these core values. The exclusion of women from political processes or the unequal rights of youth, could both come up for critical review as practices that contradict or restrict the core indigenous value of democracy. What this also means is that identity, like culture itself, must be seen in a dynamic manner. Core values are themselves redefined with changed experiences and in changed circumstances.

The second point that needs to be dealt with is: Is there space for different types of development within globalization, i.e. global capitalism? There is a notion that globalization necessarily means only one type of economic organization, that of the privately-owned capitalist enterprise. But both the organization of the enterprise and of the labour market can vary considerably within the capitalist system.

It is true that enterprises need to make a profit in order to stay in the capitalist market. But it is also true that the market does not really bother about the type of internal organization of the producer/seller and the nature of its labour contract. It could be a cooperative. It could be a typical American-type of firm with a fixation on short-term returns, and flexible labour. It could be a firm with life-long employment for workers, as used to be common in Japan. It could be the TVEs (Township and Village Enterprises) that are owned by local governments in China. Or, even the few collectively-owned villages in China, or the Mondragon cooperatives in Spain. Household enterprises too operate within the capitalist market. In sum, there are a number of varieties of enterprises within the capitalist market.

In a not entirely arbitrary choice we take up participatory democracy, collectivism and egalitarianism as values that indigenous peoples might seek to retain in their development path. Is it possible to fashion a development path and develop enterprises that can build on participatory democracy, collectivism and a concern for egalitarianism?

Participatory Democracy

The embedding of local government organizations in the community on behalf of which it is supposed to act could be an important manner in which some form of accountability is maintained between the local organizations and the community. In the indigenous system, along with the role of elders, there is a continuing role of the village assembly. This, in a sense, is the hallmark of the participatory democracy, as against the representative democracy of the parliamentary system. In the latter, once the Gram Panchayat or Village Committee is elected the community has no further role to play, other than in the next elections. But in the Gram Sabha or various forms of village assembly among indigenous peoples, the people do not function only as voters or selectors. The village assembly oversees the functioning of the Village Committee, and the latter is only the executive committee of the former. It is

another matter that this form of participatory democracy has been restricted in various ways (to the male heads of households, or to permanent residents, and so on). What is important to note here is that the system of participatory democracy can lead to local government organizations being more accountable than in the case of representative democracy.

Accountability could be further strengthened by the village government having tax collecting powers. At present funds are provided by the central or state governments. This encourages profligacy or even corruption, since it is not the community's money. Even if some officials are corrupt it is not such a serious matter, as it does not involve the community's money. But if taxes were collected by the local governments, there could be more of a demand for accountability.

Besides tax-collecting it is also necessary to extend the boundaries of participatory democracy. Including women and youth within the general assembly is not a negation of the principle of participatory democracy. Rather, by making it more inclusive, participatory democracy is strengthened. If it were accepted that participatory democracy is an important aspect of indigenous identity, then it provides a basis for its strengthening as an instrument of development and even as of value in itself.

Collectivism

The importance of collectivism in economic affairs as an important mark of indigenous identity or indigenous culture has been noted in a number of the case studies (Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh). From other parts of the world too the importance of collectivism in resource management for indigenous identity is emphasized. E.g. In a book on Mayan Visions, it is stated that "The collective responsibility of communities for their resource base is a fundamental part of the logic guiding indigenous behavior" (Nash, 2001, p. 229).

But many studies have also noted the decline of collective economic practices with the growth of individualized production for the market. There is the new problem of how to balance individualized production for the market with collective management of resources. Where the individualization of access to productive resources has proceeded in a laissez faire manner, this has often resulted in the neglect of common requirements, whether for water or other ecological services, to the detriment of the community as a whole. This problem requires a re-ordering of pubic-individual relations, so that certain critical areas (e.g. the land next to a stream) are reinserted into common property. This has been done in the NERCORMP project (ref.---) by the village buying up what was formerly individual property in order to take that area out of use for production. Where the individualization has not proceeded that far as to threaten areas that provide key local environmental services, then the village, as a collective, can place that area outside the purview of any individualization of resources.

This type of reordering of individual-collective resource access could even extend to extraction of NTFP from common forest areas. Usually indigenous extraction rules only restrict extraction rights to members of a particular community, e.g. all those residing in a village, or, as among the Khasi, all those who are designated as permanent residents of a

village. This extraction rule was quite sufficient in a subsistence economy, where extraction was restricted either to current use or, if for exchange, still within the limits set by subsistence requirements. It ceases to be sufficient in a situation where households have shifted to income maximization modes of extraction, usually leading to degradation of the resource.

The spontaneous solution to this change in modes of extraction and the resulting degradation, has been the domestication of the NTFP. The most valuable NTFP are brought within the homestead, including kitchen garden, or the privately-owned fields. This spontaneous solution harms those who have less or no land. How does one combine incentives to replant and carry out sustainable forms of extraction along with collective ownership? The common forest itself could be partially divided into individual, as has been done in the case of Bolivian extractive reserves, or into group-operated plots, as is the case with the IFAD-Government of Nepal leasehold forestry system. In both cases collective ownership is combined with individual or group extraction of NTFP.

There is no a priori reason why globalization through the market must lead to privatization. The introduction or all-pervasiveness of the market does dissolve the old system of clan or kinship-based access to productive resources. But what new system comes up in its place, depends not on the factor of trade itself, but on the nature of the older system of production relations.

In the examples given above the basic economic activities are carried out not at the level of the community but at the individual household, with a lesser, more enabling role for community organized labour. For instance, there may be community organized labour in clearing forest for cultivation, but all the other aspects of cultivation are organized by the household, with forms of labour exchange. The higher level of community organization does exist in setting norms for distribution of land, keeping certain portions as community reserves, and so on. The higher level also exists in rituals, a level that has been replaced in most of Northeast India by the church. Naga villages, for instance, have built magnificent churches with communal labour, but their economic activities are organized at the level of the household. “It is not cooperation in wealth-producing labour by means of which the commune member reproduces himself, but rather cooperation in labour for the communal interests (imaginary and real), for the upholding of the association inwardly and outwardly” (Marx, 1973, 476).Whatever trade was carried out before the large-scale intrusion of trade, was also at the level of the household. In such a situation of a largely household-based economic production system, it is no surprise that large-scale trade led to privatization.

We should note counter examples in Yunnan Province of China, where the market has not led to privatization of forests. While in China as a whole the introduction of the “household responsibility system” was followed by the distribution of collective (but not state-owned) forests to individual households, the various indigenous peoples of Lijiang County, Yunnan, other than in the locations close to the town, did not distribute their forests to the households. They argued that they had long traditions of collective management of forests, with well-established norms for regulating access to and use of forests, and did not want to divide up their forests among households.

Some Mexican ejidos and indigenous communities in North America have also similarly developed collective logging enterprises. Further, faced with the threat of competition due to the opening up of the Mexican market, they have also moved up the value chain to selling not logs or even cut wood, but manufacturing furniture of good quality (Land Tenure Center and Institute for Environmental Studies, 1995).

What is needed for such a collective response to the market? The villages must be well organized, in the sense of being able to establish and implement norms of access to and use of resources, along with sanctions for breaking those norms. The collective institution must be able to overcome the 'free rider' problem and institute norms of common property functioning. For such well-functioning collective systems to be sustained in the market system, it is also necessary that there be a basic agreement within the community and between the leaders and the rest on the goals of economic development.

In a sense, what is needed is a 'developmental state' at the micro-level, with a corresponding trust based on an agreement on goals. There are richer and poorer in these villages (and also in the few other collective villages in China, e.g. those studied in Nathan and Kelkar, 2001). But what is common to all of them is that the poorest also gain a substantial measure of the benefits from the villages' economic enterprises, whether in logging or industry. The factors of internal organization of the community to overcome 'free rider' problems and of trust based on shared development goals, are then necessary if village communities are to evolve as corporate institutions within a market system. Indian corporate law, for instance, was amended to provide for what are known as 'producer groups'. Most countries allow for not-for-profit companies. They are not-for-profit in the sense that, while earning profits they do not distribute profits to share-holders. Such not-for-profit companies have the advantage over the usual profit-based companies in that they can achieve a much higher rate of accumulation – that which is otherwise distributed to share-holders as dividends, can be invested to increase production-capacity.

In Nagaland, two examples were noted of villages (the Angami village of Khonoma and the Ao village of Mopungchuket) which have advanced in the direction of setting up village corporate structures, with production resources owned by the village as a corporate body. In Arunachal Pradesh the Apatani intend to establish a corporate collective body to develop tourism and to develop as a centre of organic production.

Tourism or certification and marketing of organic produce would involve economic enterprises that are larger and with more capital than those that an individual household of the indigenous people could mobilize. One way around this problem is to seek or allow outside investment, which, in fact, is what has usually happened. In this, the indigenous people lose out and are turned into just workers in these enterprises.

Another way is for the village itself to become a corporate body and mobilize the larger amounts of capital. As a village it can get various development funds, even loan funds, for this purpose. For instance, the village of Mookaiw, Meghalaya, formed a cooperative and secured loan funds to start a transport enterprise, which now owns 12 buses, 3 jeeps and an ambulance. Again, in the Patangre cluster, Meghalaya, household production of

bamboo has been upgraded by a collectively-owned incense stick (agarbati) enterprise ((both examples in Kyrham Nongkynrih, 2006). Such collective enterprises are able to raise more capital than individuals could and not have to turn to external investors. They also enable the communities to retain their value of collectivity and turn it into a corporate form that is suited to the present-day economy.

Such corporate villages, however, can also have a dark side. Being well-organized and commanding the resources of the village, they can take and implement decisions that are autocratic and restrict individuals' rights. For instance, in collective villages in China, deciding whether a person can be an artist or must work in a factory (Nathan and Kelkar, 1997) or among the Amish in the USA, restricting the choice of schooling, and so on.

While there are benefits from the merging of local government and people's organizations, there are also dangers in this course. It can be very difficult to oppose or even dissent with decisions of such organizations. The discipline necessary for economic success can itself be the very source of social suppression.

Egalitarianism

A manner of economic equality is something that inidgenous peoples have long valued. In fact, indigenous societies have many mechanisms for redistribution which ensure that there is not too much inequality. These mechanisms, however, were fashioned in a system of substance with little or no accumulation and, when applied in the present, often punish those who do better than others and thus can be major factors in inhibiting initiative that results in greater income and/or wealth. But the above-mentioned corporate, collective is one possible way in which accumulation can take place without resulting in too much inequality.

Since the accumulation is collective there is not that growth of personal wealth that is viewed negatively. There may be inequality in incomes, which may be related to various types of jobs done and incentives to perform them. But unlike in the standard capitalist system, growth does not have to mean the accumulation of individual wealth, which is the biggest source of inequality. Through corporate villages growth of capital can lead to accumulation of collective wealth.

Along with that, these collective villages can also devote more of the surplus to social welfare for its residents, including the provision of a social minimum. These corporate villages will have to meet market requirements of being able to produce cheaply and make a profit. But the part of the profit that would otherwise have been the income of capitalists, as dividends, can be used for the welfare of village residents. Thus, along with a negation of individual wealth as the only way of capital accumulation, there can also be a greater measure of social welfare in a collective village. This would help meet two cherished values of indigenous peoples, collectivity and a measure of economic egalitarianism.

In Conclusion

Current development practice emphasizes the importance of participation. This requires that there be an integral connection between the community, its local organizations and

development initiatives, which need to be carried out not in a paternalistic manner for the community but by the community itself, including consultation with women as members of the community..

In this context traditional organizations of indigenous peoples, have the strength of participatory democracy, with the supremacy of the village assembly. At the same time, in order to strengthen their representation of community interests it is necessary to gender and extend the tradition of participatory democracy to remove traditional exclusions.

Further since they operate in the context of a shift from subsistence to accumulative economies, with the necessity of increasing productivity both in order to increase incomes and in order to compete in the markets within which indigenous communities exist, it is also necessary to transform the norms or institutional rules on the basis of which traditional indigenous organizations function. In particular, it is necessary to set up social norms that enable and foster intensification and productivity increase. The studies show that in the process of development, traditional or modified indigenous councils of elders often retain a guiding role, while the executive role is played a board of younger, more educated members from the community.

Indigenous peoples' economies are undergoing a transformation from subsistence-based production to accumulation, from production for need to labour for maximizing income and from extensive to intensive development. In any such change as that from subsistence to accumulation, or from extensive to intensive development, it is inevitable that the norms of social and individual action consonant with that development, may not be accepted or internalized equally by all members of the community. In the case of the indigenous communities studied it is seen that women and young men are the main agents of change. Women, through the micro-credit system, play an important social role in developing systems of thrift and increased productivity. At the same time, a strong tradition of collective action among indigenous peoples makes it easier to make the necessary changes in norms.

The manner in which this change from subsistence to accumulation is occurring among indigenous people, however, is basically of a market-driven laissez faire type, with the community losing control over the transition processes, and even losing its identity with the growth of individualization of access to resources. Though the tendency is for the individualization of access to resources, this, however, is not a given. There are many forms of access to resources (individual, collective, cooperative, etc.) that can be compatible with the requirements of efficiency in market-directed production. Thus there is scope for choice even within market systems.

This would then also imply that it would be possible to inquire into new ways of realizing core indigenous values in the current economic and political context. It would also open up space for the critical enquiry into certain practices that might contradict or restrict the realization of these core values. The exclusion of women from political processes or the unequal rights of youth, could both come up for critical review as practices that contradict or restrict the core indigenous value of democracy. What this also means is that identity, like culture itself, must be seen in a dynamic manner. Core values are themselves redefined

with changed experiences and in changed circumstances. In this paper, core indigenous values that have been taken up for discussion are democracy, particularly as participatory democracy, collectivity and egalitarianism.

What the above also means is that it is important not to view the economy as a machine and that too one in which only one solution is possible. There are multiple solutions or multiple equilibria. What solution or equilibrium results is the result of the particular balance of forces existing. While economic systems change, as in the transition from subsistence to accumulation, and economic relations too change in this process; there can still be aspects of the previous economic relations that could be carried over into the newly constituted economic relations. The search for accumulation and higher productivity, can also be carried out in economic relations that are carried over from the previously existing situation. In a sense, there can be a path influence on the development of economic transitions – building a market economy from an egalitarian tribal base, may lead to a somewhat different structure from building a market economy from a feudal/caste base.

Note

1. In this paper we use the terms Adivasi, Scheduled Tribes and indigenous peoples interchangeably.

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