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## **A Unique Association of Land And Man; Socio-Economical Differences of Two Social Group Living in A Same Village of Illam Bazar Panchayat, Birbhum District, West Bengal**

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### **Abstract**

*The present study attempts to analyse the man-nature complexes and their regional mosaics specifically economic adaptation of two different social groups namely 'Bangal' (the refugees from East Pakistan during the time of partition) and 'Dom' (the 'doms' are a Bengali Hindu caste and local people) living in a village named Khayerbuni of Illambazar Panchayat in Birbhum district. It has been well accepted that the amount of resources available within a country does not feed its total inhabitants due to excessive population in comparison to existing resources, but these two social groups develops their lifestyle according to their environmental resource base as well as economic possibilities. This study focuses on their lifestyle and socio-economic characteristics with the analysis of demographic parameters.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Social groups, Economic adaptation, Environmental resource base Socio-economic characteristics, Demographic parameters.*

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**Introduction:** The term 'association' may be defined as the act of associating or the state of being associated or an organised body of people who have an interest, activity, or purpose in common; a society. From the ecological perspective 'association' may be defined as a group of organisms (plants and animals) that live together in a certain geographical region and constitute a community with a few dominant species. The term was first coined by Alexander Von Humboldt and formalised by the International Botanical Congress in 1910. It is used in different context e.g. psychology, statistics, chemistry, regional planning, social work, community development etc. On the other hand, in the social sciences, a 'social group' has been defined as two or more people who interact with one another, share similar characteristics and collectively have a sense of unity. According to 'Sociology Guide', a 'social group' consists of two or more people who interact with one another and who recognize themselves as a distinct social unit. The definition is simple enough, but it has significant implications. Frequent interaction leads people to share values and beliefs. This similarity and the interaction cause them to identify with one another. Identification and attachment, in turn, stimulate more frequent and intense interaction. Each group maintains solidarity with all to other groups and other types of social systems.

Groups are among the most stable and enduring of social units. They are important both to their members and to the society at large. Through encouraging regular and predictable behaviour, groups form the foundation upon which society rests. Thus, a family, a village, a political party a trade union is all social groups. These, it should be noted are different from social classes, status groups or

crowds, which not only lack structure but whose members are less aware or even unaware of the existence of the group. These have been called quasi-groups or groupings. Nevertheless, the distinction between social groups and quasi-groups is fluid and variable since quasi-groups very often give rise to social groups, as for example, social classes give rise to political parties.

The area has been selected for its uniqueness as a residential unit and socio-economic participation of two social-groups and their unique association with land. One group is refugee population settled under Government sponsored colony known as '*Bangal*'; and the other group is '*Dom*', a primitive community of Bengal. Amongst the two social-groups, '*Bangal*' (migrated people from East Pakistan) has become more prosperous both economically as well as culturally than '*Dom*'. Because they involved themselves in various economic activities while in the other hand '*Dom*' are confined in their traditional occupation; the lack of better infrastructural facilities forced them to adapt such primitive kind of life style dominated by the traditionalism. In order to show the disparity and distinctness, specific indicators have been selected accordingly, which include socio-economic, demographic and aesthetic indicators. A micro level analysis has been done for which village level data is required. The calculations are based on primary data obtained from field survey. The total analysis and interpretation have been compiled with the detail village level data.

**Study Area:** The study area, *Khayerbuni* village is located in the southern portion of Birbhum District of West Bengal in India. The district of Birbhum lies between the latitudes of 23°23'30"N and 24°35'00"N and occupies the western parts of the state of West Bengal. The eastern most extremity of the district is marked by 88°01'40"E longitude and its western most extremity by 87°05'25"E longitude. The river Ajay forms the southern boundary of the district separating it from Bardhaman district of West Bengal. *Khayerbuni* is a small agricultural village, situated on the south-eastern fringes of the *Illambazar*- the nearest market place in Birbhum district. Its north eastern extremity is marked by the *Choupahari* Forest while the southern most part is adjacent to the River Ajay. The *Panagarh-Morgram* Highway passes through the western part of this small village. Total population of the study area is 2135 and it comprises 482 household.

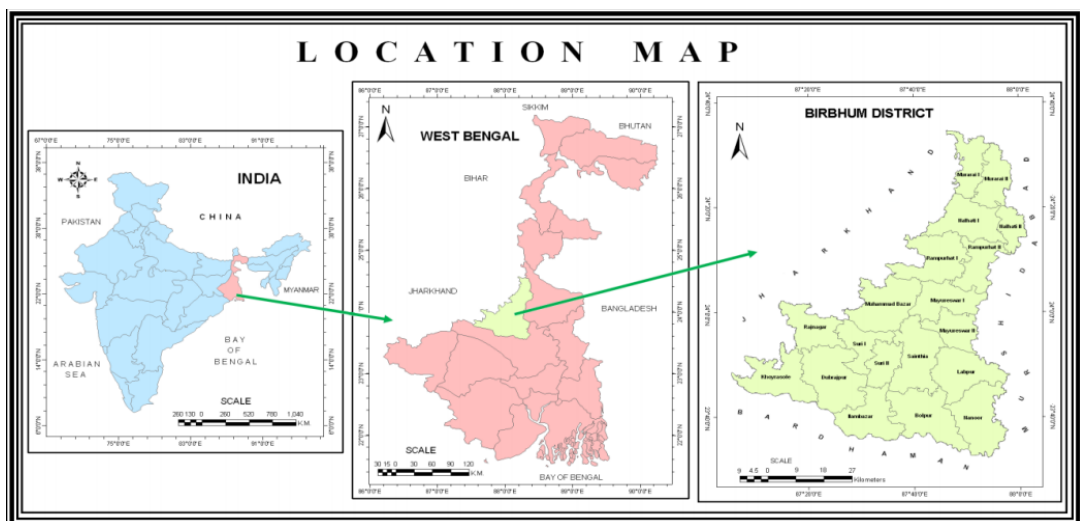
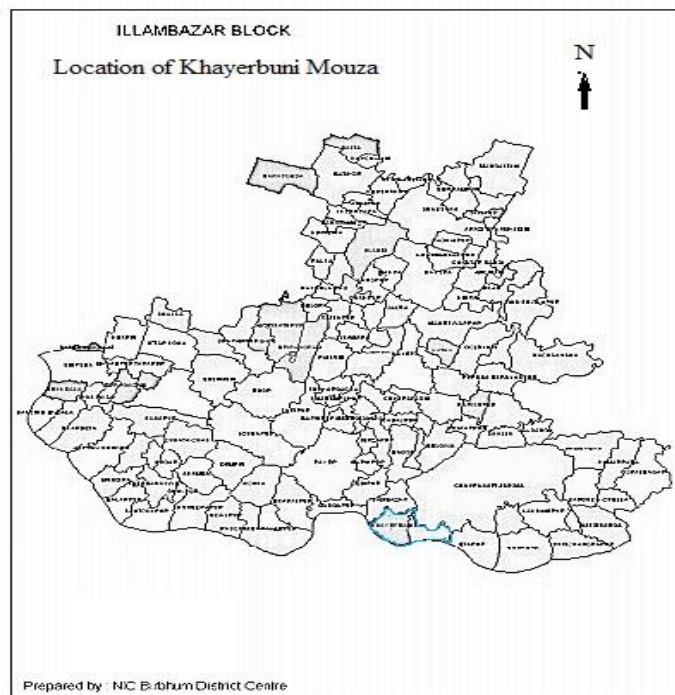


Fig-1: Location of Birbhum District



**Fig-2: Location of Study Area**

### **Objectives:**

The main objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To identify the distinct entity of the village as a territorial as well as social, cultural and economic unit.
- To identify the socio-economic expression of those two community and their interaction with nature.
- To study the human adaptation and modification of his natural surroundings.
- To uncover the problems which emerge out from the above mentioned aspects.
- To suggest some measures by which these problems can be reduced.

**Data Base and Methodology:** This research paper is based on primary data. Data have been collected mainly through field survey. During the period of field investigation the pattern and characteristic of interaction between man and existing physical environment and the socio economic aspects of this area have been studied separately and systematically by using primary and secondary data were made available from different Governmental Concern like District Statistical Handbook, District Human Development Report etc. Analysis of collected data by using various demographic parameters like literacy, occupation and selected prime indicators of quality of life like education, income level etc. have been considered for analysis. In this regards, different cartographic techniques to elucidate the patterns and trend have been made for completion of the work.

### **Observation and Analysis**

**Assesment of Socio-Economic Status of Two Social Group:** Socio-economic status means the position of that particular group in larger society, their socio-cultural status and also their engagement in economic activities. The lack of better infrastructural facilities forced them to adapt

such primitive kind of life style dominated by the traditionalism. Amongst the two social-groups, 'Bangal' (migrated people from East Pakistan) has become more prosperous both economically as well as culturally than 'Dom'. Because they involved themselves in various economic activities while in the other hand *Doms* are confined in their traditional occupation. Here, some social, demographical and economical parameters have been selected to analyse the socio-economic status of two social groups.

- Occupational Structure
- Literacy Rate and Level of education
- Income Level
- Social Problems

**Occupational Structure:** Although the village is agricultural village and agriculture is the prime occupation of the villagers, but for these two groups this is not the prime source of income. The reason behind this, historically they didn't own agricultural land. Both the groups traditionally depend on labour based occupation.

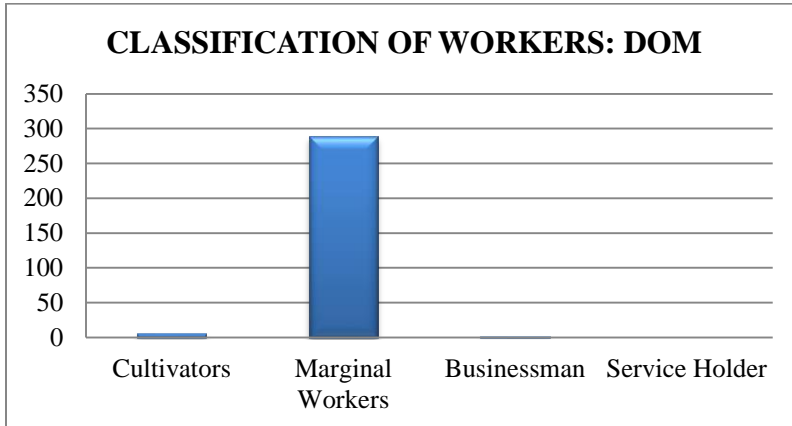
- *DOM (the ancient Hindu Bengali caste settled earlier)*

The *Doms* are a Bengali Hindu caste found in large numbers in Birbhum, Bankura and other districts in the western fringe of the Indian state of West Bengal. Traditionally, *Doms* were basket-makers, cultivators, labourers and drummers. They are poor people; most of them lived below the poverty line and belong to backward classes (schedule caste). They are economically and educationally backward, standard of living is very poor, lack of sanitation and health consciousness stopped their progress.

*Doms* are primarily engaged in transporting sand from the river bed to the truck as the sand of the river Ajay is famous for its use in constructional work. Most of them are working as agricultural labourer during the monsoon. Most of the families are involved in making furniture (locally known as 'mora') and baskets from bamboo straw. This is their traditional work and they are famous for this. Workers in this profession are usually female. Female members of the family are engaged themselves in 'mora' making after the completion of their daily household activities and male members are involved themselves to sale their products in the local market. Participation in business is also negligible; only two persons are engaged in small retailing business.

Total Population	Cultivators	Marginal Workers	Businessman	Service Holder
841	6	289	2	NIL

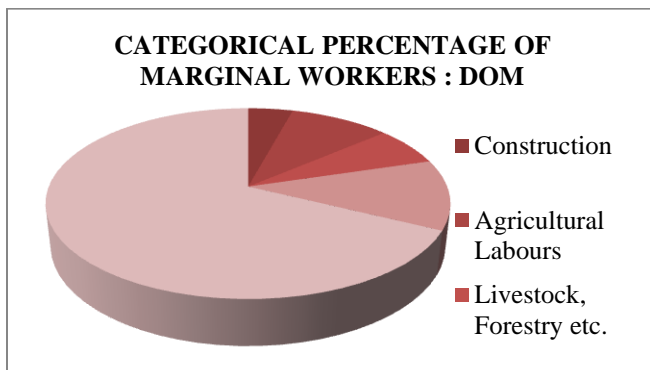
Source: Field Survey



- Categorical distribution of Marginal Worker

Category	Population Engaged	(%)
Construction	16	1.90
Agricultural Labours	36	4.28
Livestock, Forestry etc.	25	2.97
Household Industry	45	5.35
Sand Transportation	256	30.44

Source: Field Survey



- BANGAL (Refugees settled by the Government)

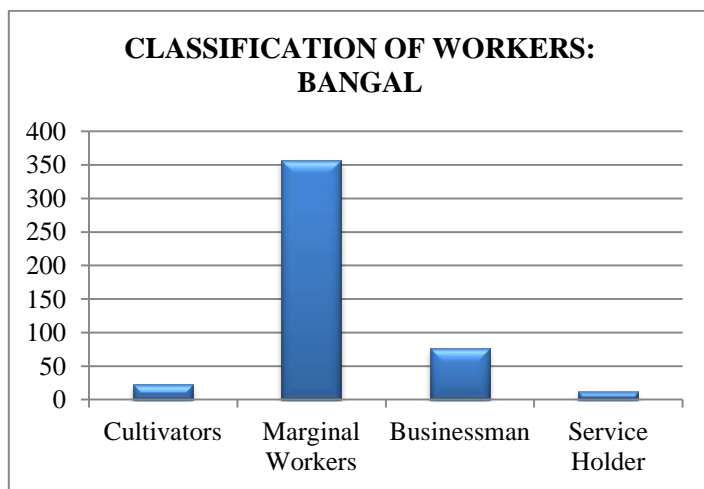
The partition of India in 1947 had led to the division of the erstwhile Bengal Province of British India into two: the state of West Bengal in India and the Bengal part of Pakistan, which came then to be known as East Pakistan. Partition of India in 1947 on religious lines is the main stimulant for cross-border migration from Bangladesh to India. There has taken place a significant change in the occupational status of the migrants. Persons who had cultivation (in their own farm) as the profession while in Bangladesh, but are now involved in domestic small scale industry like boiled

rice making, puffed rice making etc. Many of them are self-employed and engaged in small business activities. They started with a very small capital, but as they had developed a good grasp on the local market economy, gradually this profession flourished in the migrated families. These people are hard-working, disciplined, economically active and educationally advanced. They changed the economic scenario of the region by creating new opportunities.

These people are economically more active and versatile than the previous one. They are migrated from their homeland and had to choose different occupation for the survival. Primarily they started with the rice making because it requires minimal capital. Woman members of their families are also participating in rice making processes. With the passage of time they engaged themselves in various business activities like motor garage, small grocery shops, small food stall, saloons, small retailing outlet etc. Most of them are marginal worker working as electrical and motor mechanic, driver etc. These jobs are very demanding and earnings are also respectful. They are educationally more active than the previous group.

Total Population	Cultivators	Marginal Workers	Businessman	Service Holder
1294	23	357	76	12

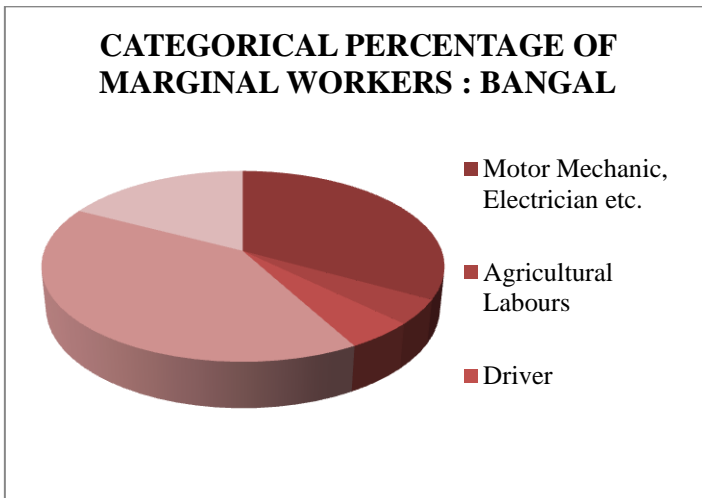
Source: Field Survey



- **Categorical distribution of Marginal Worker**

Category	Population Engaged	(%)
Motor Mechanic, Electrician etc.	118	33.05
Agricultural Labours	15	4.20
Driver	17	4.76
Household Industry	145	40.62
Workers in food stall, retailing shop etc.	62	17.37

Source: Field Survey

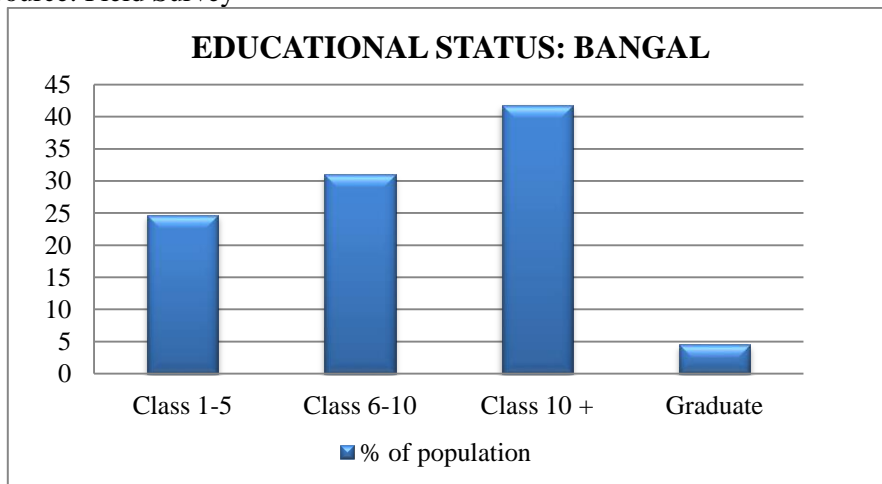


**Literacy Rate and Level of Education:** Education is a crucial requirement for the sustained growth of a developing society and lack of it is largely responsible for the backwardness and exploitation of the weaker section of the society. Thus, education is one of the prime indicators of social as well as cultural development. There have been differences in literacy rate and educational standard between these two groups.

- Bangal:** These people are more conscious about their development, progress and standard of living. These help to improve their educational status. The literacy rate and educational situation is satisfactory. More than 72% males and 55% females are literate. The overall scenario of education can be examined by the following table.

Educational Qualification	Class 1-5	Class 6-10	Class 10 +	Graduate
% of Population	24.73	30.99	41.81	2.47

Source: Field Survey

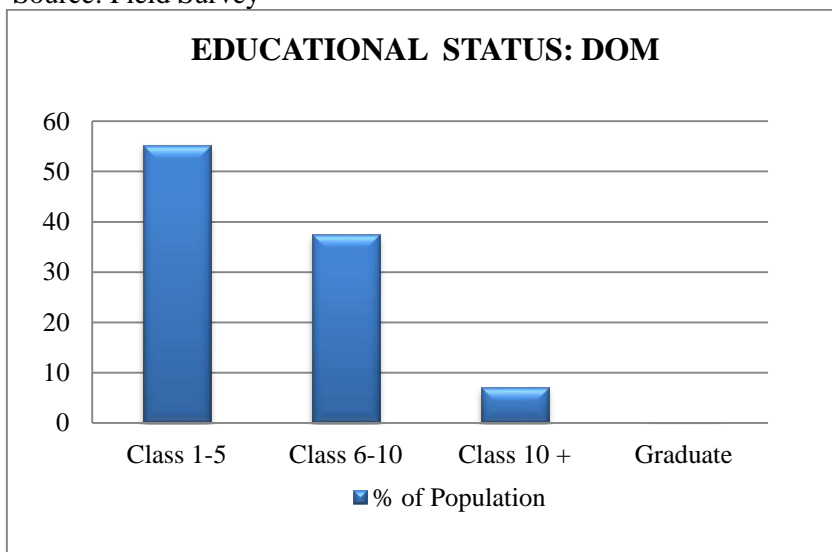


The percentage is healthy at the primary (24.73%); upper primary (30.99%) and secondary level (41.81%) respectively shows that this group is serious about basic and elementary education. On the other hand there is a decline in percentage at the Graduate (2.47%) column. Male members are as forced to leave their education because of their occupational necessity and female members are for their household activities and early marriage. Insecurity of jobs after completion of higher education is responsible for such decline in percentage.

- *Dom*: The demand for education among these people; the poorer section of the society is much lower than the rest of the society. They have to work hard in order to cope with their daily living and education is not in their priority list unless it is linked to vocational training.

Educational Qualification	Class 1-5	Class 6-10	Class 10 +	Graduate
% of Population	55.29	37.46	7.02	0.24

Source: Field Survey



In case of this group the percentage is high for primary stage (55.29%), moderate for upper primary stage (37.46%), and alarmingly low for secondary (7.02%) and higher education (0.24%). The reason for that these poor families prefer their children to help in making an earning rather than sparing them for school. Female participation in this regard is negligible.

**Income Level:** To understand the income level of the two different social groups, a sample survey was made separately, taking 500 samples from both the group containing workers in different category. In case of ‘Dom’ population; out of the total working population, more than 85% belongs to the lower income group (Rs.1500 - Rs.4000 per month). They are basically unskilled marginal workers. Only 15% of people belong to medium income group (Rs.4000 – Rs.5500 per month), nobody belongs to high (Rs.5500 – Rs.7000 per month) and very high (Rs.7000 + per month) income group. On the other hand for ‘Bangal’ population, more than 42% belongs to the lower income group. They are basically unskilled labourers including workers engaged in construction, roadside hotel, poultry firm, cottage industry, small retailing shop etc. Healthy portions of almost



28% belong to medium income group including motor mechanic, electrician, driver, transport worker etc. Almost 18% belong to high income group including small businessman and 12% belong to very high income group including government employees, private sector employees, big businessman etc.

**Social Problems:** One of the main characteristics of settlement pattern of rural Bengal is that the community wise distribution of settlement into small pockets within a village. This leads to social segregation. Dom people lives in such a pocket and detached from rest of the society. This is one of the prime reasons for their backwardness in education, lower standard of living, poverty etc. Cultural interaction with other groups is necessary for overall development of a social group. In this case this is missing. That is why their lifestyle is dominated by traditionalism. Lower standard of education, lack of awareness, absence of social and moral values create different social problems which affect day to day life of the woman and children. The curses of dowry system, alcohol consumption, domestic violence, inter and intra caste conflict affects the cultural environment of the study area especially in those settlement pockets where these 'Dom' people live. There are so many social problems which affect the 'Bangal' population too. Various social problems such as partition of joint families, formation of nucleus family, alcohol and drug addicted youth etc. It is very hard to express it quantitatively.

**Conclusion and Suggestions:** So, from the above discussion, it is concluded that there are plenty of differences between these two social groups. While adjusting to their environment, these two groups make their own choices. 'Dom' people adapting such an economic lifestyle in which the interaction with physical environment is maximum involving labour based economic activities extracting resources from the Mother Nature. On the other hand, the 'Bangal' people are more interacted with the socio-cultural environment involving skill based economic activities such as tailoring, mechanic, electrician etc.

Major problems that affect these two social groups are given below.

- Lifestyle dominated by traditionalism, standard of living is very poor especially in case of Dom population. Lack of infrastructure, medical facilities, sanitation, drinking water, education and negligence leads to the primitive type of lifestyle.
- In this area disguised unemployment is also present. Those people who engaged themselves in sand transporting may not get the job for the whole year. During the rainy season the work has stopped.
- In case of refugee families, Land is allotted to them for residential purposes. They need more land for business or commercial purposes. But for economically weak families it is very difficult to buy a new plot for commercial uses.
- This area is educationally backward, lack of consciousness and poor economic condition leads to drop out and child labour; especially in case of Dom people. After completion of higher studies, lack of jobs is equally important problem for youth belongs to Bangal population. Suggestive steps are to be taken to improve the present situations which are given below.
- To eradicate the disguised-unemployment, adequate arrangements should be made e.g. capital and rolling capital should be provided to them; new materials and inputs should be given to them in low price and relevant infrastructure and facilities should be created for that.
- Sanitation, health and water supply facilities should be improved.

- Problem of commercial land can be solved by the Government. Construction of a market and distribution of rooms to the needy families on easy terms and condition can solve the problem.
- Education, moral values as well as social consciousness should spread rapidly as it brings a revolutionary change in society. In this mission, the participation of Non-Governmental Organisation is equally important. They have to take a major role.

To solve all problems the Government has taken many steps. But the Govt. has not become able to mobilize successfully its developmental plans, despite its constant efforts. All the developmental scheme and implementation from Govt. are being mishandled by them or even if the schemes are implemented the major share of the benefit would beat the hands of the rich classes. Different beneficial Govt. schemes regarding their all-round development should be performed in harmony with local level knowledge participation. If proper co-ordination between local fecundity and planning intelligentsia is possible to synchronize then long term developmental flower will be bloomed up. There is enough potentiality of natural and human resources, now main task of the planner and common man is to use all of these in proper way.

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