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REPRESENTING VILLAGE: TEXT AND CONTEXT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN INDIA

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Rather than focusing on the impact of development on the village in substantive terms, this article critically explores the discursive implications of rural development. While taking note of the attendant changes in the wake of state-directed process of planned intervention and social reconstruction, it underscores the manner in which the rural development discourse reconfigures the meanings of village in our social imagination. Irrespective of whether rural development programmes fall short of accomplishing their goals, or succeed in meeting the desired targets, they lead to a certain transformation of the terms in which the village is talked about. The village becomes a marker of social difference in the overall context of development and modernization. It is employed as a term of social classification with connotations of the presence, absence or degrees of development. Yet, rural development is the medium in which village is placed in relation to national development. More often than not, village in contemporary times turns out to be a 'governmentalized locality'.

INTRODUCTION

After independence, the Indian state self-consciously took upon itself the task of modernization and development of society. This was natural in the sense that independence was energized not only by visions of democracy but also by a desire to modernize and develop a society that for so long had been systematically impoverished under the colonial rule. Democracy and development were to be cardinal principles of the post-colonial enterprise of nation building. It was earnestly believed that the state had to play a central role in the development of the society in general, and that of the village in particular.

The modern state projects itself as a positive agency of welfare and social change. Through a plethora of welfare policies and programmes under the broad rubric of rural development,[1] it aims to change the social structure of the village in its entirety. The growing pre-eminence of rural development, however, also means the increasing incorporation and subordination of the village to the state. In the changed context, there is no longer any opposition between the state and the village.

Sociologists and social anthropologists in India have been in the forefront in documenting and analyzing the impact of the state-led development on the village in substantive terms. Yet, much of their academic discussions have centred on the issues of community character, political autonomy and economic self-sufficiency of the village, and the attendant changes in the wake of the state-directed process of planned intervention and social reconstruction. What is somehow missing in these conventional sociological/social anthropological writings on the village is a critical exploration of the discursive implications of rural development. The proposition that the discourse[2] of rural development might shape a particular idea of the village does not seem to have exercised their scholarly mind. They seem to have failed to notice that rural development has not merely been a medium in which the discourses and practices of development are conveyed to villagers but has also significantly shaped the way in which inhabitants of a particular settlement conceive of themselves as constituting a village.

Be that as it may, the relative indifference to the representations of the village was in tune with the methodological temper of the times that privileged ‘field view’ over ‘book view’. Of late, though, even the most articulate proponents of ‘field view’ have come to realize that representations are as much part of social reality as the lived experience. A focus on representations cannot only help us interrogate the uncritical projection of village as a socio-spatial unit—as a mere fact of territory—but also offset the disproportionate attention accorded so far to everyday social organization and behaviour of those who dwell in villages.

Viewed thus, we tend to highlight one particular aspect of the state-village dy-namics, that is, how rural development programmes process the village. Though alive to the fact that the village also impacts the state, we have particularly privileged the statist view of village in the context of rural development. The objective is to delineate the representation of the village in the historical sense of something that is constructed and ideologically deployed. More specifically, we highlight the conceptual joining of the village and development through the mediation of the agency of state, and its outcome in terms of contemporary representations of the village. We argue that the theories and practices of rural development alter conceptualizations of the village for the villagers as well. Not surprisingly, the statist construction of the village seems to dominate other possible frames of its conceptualization and understanding. Parenthetically, while focusing on discursive outcomes of rural development enterprise, we also underline the durability and essentialization of the official-statist categories.

THE NEW DEVELOPMENT SCRIPT FOR THE VILLAGE

As a rule, rural development programmes are accompanied by a certain conceptualization of the village. While conceiving, devising, promoting and administering such programmes, the state necessarily relies on a set of images of the village and the village life. Very often, though, these images of the village coalesce into a typical, generic village, turning all the villages into *the* village for the purpose of rural development. Put differently, rural development discourse encourages the formation of a unified, monolithic village, crying for policy inputs from the state. The *village* of rural development, while transcending the differences of language, region, caste and ethnicity, marks off a common terrain to be developed under the benign guidance of development functionaries.

What characterizes *village* is the common condition of underdevelopment at which development interventions are aimed. This characterization of a social territory in exclusive terms of underdevelopment has significant outcomes. Rural development practices necessitate and perpetuate a kind of ersatz socio-cultural knowledge. An abstract village, devoid and dissolved of all its diversities and particularities, turns out to be the template of rural development. To the extent the village becomes knowable in the wake of its systematic reduction from the diverse into the generalizable; it also assumes a concrete reality for the purposes of rural development. This generic village, thus produced, provides a comfortable framework for rural development agencies within which programmes can be planned and implemented. In other words, the village crystallizes into a distinct social category in the context of the statist project of rural development.

For example, even in popular common sense discourse, development becomes the idiom through which the relationship between the village and state is articulated. This leads to the incorporation of village into state and the associated conversion of villagers into citizens irrespective of the anticipated outcomes of the rural development programmes (Weber 1979; Ferguson 1990). Along with this a temporal hierarchizaton of the village takes place. Since villages are underdeveloped, they remain in the past or, at best, an inadequate present, while other places (non-villages) have already become part of the future by virtue of their being developed. In this sense, the category of *the villager* functions in the same way as the category of *the native* in anthropology (Cf. Fabian 1983). By being placed backward in time, the village typifies a particular social form and the villagers stand for a particular set of beliefs and values. Place and person fuse in the delineation of the essence of the village, as the village is made to stand for a kind of culture-territory in relation to development.

Arguably, village is not merely an ontological category reflecting the morphology of a society where the vast majority of the people are villagers. Instead, rural development alters the meaning of the village in our social imagination. Speaking of village in the context of rural development rarely refers to the actual villages. An implicit opposition between village and development informs rural development discourse: village is something that is characterized by the absence of development. It is simply a backward place by virtue of its being at a remote distance from development. This is precisely why it eminently qualifies to be the recipient of the rural development programmes. Understandably, the acceleration of rural development programmes has reconfigured the normative accretions of the term village over time. Village as a kind of place (underdeveloped/undeveloped) comes to stand for a kind of people—the villager (backward). The very phrase rural development suggests that villages are in need of development towards some ideal that they have fallen short of attaining.

Even as rural development aims to make development an integral part of the village, it also creates a dichotomy between village and development. Development is concentrated in other places, while villages are places of little or no development. In this perspective, the village emerges in counter-distinction to development even though it is the prime target of development. As a consequence, rural development, while intending to bring development to the village, conceptually segregates it as a social world distinct and distant from development. For the practitioners of rural development, development is the solution and village is the problem. Seen in these terms, while villages are the objects of development and the villagers its recipients, they are also obstacles to national development. This conceptual opposition of village and development, upon which much of rural development programmes are based, thus, leads to a paradox: rural development locates village on the periphery of development, yet, its ostensible aim is to make villages developed (Pigg 1992).

Tsing (1999: 171) perceptively notes, 'A village has to present itself as needy, that is, backward and primitive enough to require a special development attention. At the same time, it must present itself as open to change, such that development attention will not be lost on it'. Even as the village longs for change, it must know that no development programme would come to it if it were not backward. Backwardness is its basis for negotiation with the state in the context of rural development. In this sense, the village always remains a transitional community caught between tradition and modernity. It has to present itself as needing help, and also as ready to change. Even when it is entangled in primordial cultural values, it has to project itself as a village already on the move. In fact, the village becomes the locus of development innovations precisely because it is supposedly tied to a traditional culture that does not support innovative efforts.

This is not to say that the village does not contest and redefine the state: 'the state is not only present in the village but the village also penetrates into the state' (Breman 1997: 59). That is, the dynamics between the state and the village is not unidirectional. As the recent scholarship on development (Pigg 1992; Woost 1993; Tsing 1999; Moore 2000) has shown, it is not merely the supra-local sphere such as the state that acts on the village, but the village too appropriates the state in its own image. Moreover, the village does not seem as opaque and fixed to its inhabitants as it appears to the policy makers and planners manning the institutions of rural development.

Rural development discourse, thus, facilitates the spread of development vision of society as more and more people lay claims to it. At times, the ideologies of development come in handy while segregating the village from the non-village. They also serve political interests and, at times, the polarized images of the village and city become the co-ordinates of political idiom (as in *Bharat versus India* debate). The ways of imagining social difference get associated with political uses of identity as underdeveloped or undeveloped. Indeed, rural development becomes the medium in which the villages also start expressing their location vis-à-vis the historical trajectory of national development. Thus, an un(under)-developed village—an infantilized village (Nandy 2001: 134)—waits to pass its developmental milestones to join the ranks of developed places.

Curiously enough, as rural development gains momentum, the representation of the village gets firmly entrenched in the globally unfolding narratives of development. It continues to be seen as characterized by backwardness, superstition, reaction, orthodoxy and resistance to change. The dynamic interface between development processes and village life rather than altering the well-ingrained conceptualizations of the village adds its own weight to the obtaining ones:

> The fundamental dichotomy, for example, is assumed to be between traditional, meaning 'stable', and modern, meaning 'dynamic' as in the discontinuity postulated by nineteenth century officials in India between subsistence or commercial agriculture or between country and town. How complete is the division between urban and rural when few economic or social activities are restricted to one area or the other, and when the same trading, credit and social or religious networks pervade both? (Robb 1983: 2–3)

RE-CREATING VILLAGE

The village may be gainfully seen to be constituted as a category through specific discourses and practices of the state (rural development in the post-colonial context). Theoretically speaking, then, the village, rather than being a pre-given social entity, becomes enmeshed with the act of naming or categorizing initiated by the state. By its very nature, such classification is always political. This underlines the need to pay scholarly attention to the village not merely as a binary sociological description (as in rural-urban) but also to the ideological and political work that it does. The category of the village could very well be deployed as strategic representations in policy debates with definite aims towards advocating rights and mobilizing opinion (as in now-defunct *Rural Quota Scheme* in Karnataka).

More importantly, rural development offers a contested site for the negotiation of identity on the part of the village. No wonder, villagers increasingly tend to define themselves in and through the terms that objectify them in the form of discourses of rural development. Increasingly, it is the uncanny presence of the state in the life of the village that distinguishes the thickening nexus between the state and the village. It seems as if the village derived its own existence from a particular reading of the state.

In fact, recent historical and anthropological scholarship calls attention to the historicity of particular identities and questions the givenness and substantiality of many a long-standing social formations. As against the substantivist understanding, scholars of this persuasion draw upon Foucault and Said while asserting that caste and other identities were invented under colonialism by the operation of certain political and discursive practices and processes. They identify colonial state as the primary source and dispenser of identity. Though this scholarship is primarily concerned with caste and religious identities, the arguments can, and has been extended to the village as well. It was none other than Baden-Powell who wrote, 'as to the villages being unchangeable, their constitution and form has shown a progressive tendency to decay, and if it had not been for modern land-revenue systems trying to keep it together, it may well be doubted whether it would have survived at all' (Srinivas 1996: 10).

In the case of British India, it has been posited that the Indian village is largely a product of the 'rule of records', the pre-eminent governing technique at the disposal of the Raj (Smith 1985, 1996). In their desire to govern India as rigidly as possible, the British inaugurated a massive data gathering exercise. Consequently, it is possible that the British categories of thought influenced the collection as well as recording of information. Put it simply, the identification of the village as a key category, in epistemological terms, was intimately linked to the construction of India in a particular image during the British rule. In the process, a reification of the indigenous institutions, village in our case, took place and the Indian village was flattened and stereotyped. That is, techniques of rule have always included the ideological so far as it gave rise to new categories of thought and analysis. So far only Inden (1986, 1990) has applied this line of analysis exclusively to the construction of the Indian village.

In general, during the colonial rule, people were measured, classified, and quantified through censuses and other information gathering exercises. The compilation of massive data necessitated an analysis in intelligible terms (to the rulers, at least). This, in turn, led to the invention of categories and these categories were applied per force to the statistical data. Because governing practices entailed the counting and categorization of people in terms of collectivities, people began to see and organize themselves in terms of those very categories (Appadurai 1993; Kaviraj 1992). Modern governing practices thus reconstitute the meaning of community for one and all.[3] Once constructed, such identities continue to exert seminal influence in the post-colonial context too. After all, people continue to be counted by census, and are regularly enumerated and surveyed. If the categories make the people, then the how and why of this making should not stop with colonialism but could be extended to development discourse as well (Cf. Upadhya 2001: 32-58).

In other words, the state can be seen as constituting *essentialized* communities. In the long run, these communities become actors in the political arena in their own right and thus further reinforce and perpetuate their received identity. Examples can be cited of the essentialization of such identities as the *rural*. Thus, there are cases where those areas that would classify on all the accepted indices of urbanization as the urban prefer (and at times manipulate their way through officialese) to officially remain rural so as to attract more funds and other gains that come by virtue of being rural (Pandey 2003: Fn. 8). Similarly, in the state of Karnataka, rural has been used as a basis of the government policy of positive discrimination (mainly quota in jobs). Also, there are instances where this essentialized rural identity has led to massive mass mobilizations on a variety of issues (Gupta 1999).

The point is not whether the identities thus ascribed or achieved are false or unreal. The significance lies in the fact that people are persuaded, coerced, tempted and mobilized on the basis of such constructed identities. Sociologists ought to explore as to how the identity called 'rural' has undergone shifts in its inflections. Suffice it to say that one's identity as the rural, or from the village, is also a tool for making claims on the resources of the modern state and a way of negotiating with it. In other words, the discursive constitution of social identities need not overlook the concrete political or economic structures within which such construction takes place (Harriss 2004: 147).

In this reading, the village ceases to be a mere territorial and demographic entity. It transcends the social morphological dichotomy (of the country and the city variety) by getting enmeshed with the varying modes of its representation: the specific ways in which it is ideologically approached, theorized and written about. The act of representation itself becomes constitutive of what is represented. In this sense, village as a universe of shared meaning having its own holistic logic, no longer remains an empirically given fact. Rather, the apparent boundedness and coherence of the village can be seen as something *made* rather than *found*. Impliedly, it may be possible to argue that rural development discourse privileges one particular construction of the village while marginalizing other possible constructions. Somehow, much of the literature on rural development has not focused on this profound ideological shift in producing ways of looking at the village. Very often, the concern with the actual outcomes in terms of policy objectives and other empirical targets make the ideological effects of such programmes go unexamined and unrecognized.

VILLAGE AS A GOVERNMENTALIZED LOCALITY

The projection of the village as the template for nation building and a laboratory of 'directed cultural change' (Dube 1964) meant that those very virtues that had recommended the village to the nationalists now became the sure signs of its backwardness and stagnation. The supposedly unchanging stability of the village called for external impetus for change in the form of state-led rural development. The village had to be regulated now, so as to be developed. A series of carefully designed programmes had to be put in place for this purpose. It had to be ensured that these carefully devised programmes did not run aground while encountering the 'benighted traditionality of the village'.

The village, as the site of state-sponsored development vision, now appeared as an identifiable object to development administrators and bureaucrats. In the process, it also became an inalienable part of the official ideas and categories. Whether villages are projected as homogenous or united communities or socially stratified ones, their representations have always been vulnerable to the official categories of knowledge. More importantly, success or failure of a rural development programme is immaterial so far as it leads to certain transformation of the terms in which villages are talked about.

The pre-eminence of the state has, however, resulted in the gradual loss of the defining characteristics of the village as a social universe. In an interesting study of a village in Tamil Nadu, Daniel (1984: 61–104) demonstrates how the statist definition of the village has marginalised the villager's notion of the village. Contrasting *Ur* and *Kiramam*, he shows how Tamil villagers conceptualize the former as distinct from the latter. A *Kiramam* refers to the revenue village, and thus, to a political unit created for the purpose of taxation and the organization of local government. Administratively, it is under the jurisdiction of the taluk, which is governed by the district, then by the state, and ultimately by the national government. There is no ambiguity about its boundaries, as *Kiramam* refers to the bounded, standard, and universally accepted spatial unit. The government determines what a *Kiramam* is, and it is the same for everyone. There is no contextual variation in the use of the term *Kiramam* even though it is abstract and distant.

While *Kiramam* is a term whose meaning is really context free, universal, and fixed, *Ur* is a person-centric term that derives its meaning from the contextually shifting spatial orientation of the person. In the words of Daniel (1984: 104), '*Ur* is not so much a discreet entity with fixed co-ordinates as a fluid sign with fluid thresholds'. *Ur* is always in relation to a given person or *jati* that is known to have established a special relationship of substantial compatibilities with that particular *Ur*. In the reckoning of the villagers, *Ur* is culturally more significant as soil substance of an *Ur* mixes with the bodily substance of the human inhabitants of that *Ur*. In essence, *Ur* is an indigenous concept of territory. Villagers invariably draw the boundaries of the *Ur* with reference to 'ritually vulnerable spots, flow and transit of substance, shrines of the sentinel deities, the points at which roads or the village streams enter the village, the haunted tamarind tree at the edge'. In fact, 'the villager's concern is not only with what substances enter the *Ur* and affect its inhabitants but with the effect of these alien substances on the substance of the *Ur* itself' (Daniel 1984: 79).

Despite the fact that *Ur* and *Kiramam* are neither semantically isomorphic nor mutually substitutable, villagers misleadingly represent *Ur* as *Kiramam* in their routine practices. Irrespective of whether this isomorphism between *Ur* and K*iramam* is apparent or real, it becomes evident that, in terms of scope and political significance, *Kiramam* has been overshadowing *Ur*. This reinforces our argument that, in our times, the state has also become a dispenser of socio-political identities. This means that the process of labelling (be it of territorial units or social groups) by the state contains the potential of unleashing new solidarities that the labelling might itself engender (Wood 1985). In this sense, to label a given human settlement as a village is rarely just a taxonomic or classificatory exercise. The village becomes much more than a semantic slot or a lexicographic gloss; it acquires substantive content.

Very often, the statist organization of the village leads to the severing of contemporary and historical connections to a place. Pre-existing identities are rendered weak and fragile, and at times, are broken to be re-established on the basis of people's relationship to an actual or potential state activity. The designation [of the village] thereby acquires a logic in which specified kinds of behaviour and interaction are demanded or expected. People cease to be what they were. Even when they remain the same people, they come to establish their identity in strikingly new ways. For example, during the United Front government at the centre (1989–1991), the then Deputy Prime Minister Devilal had announced some discounts at the government-run five star hotels in Delhi for people hailing from the villages. Nonetheless, the latter (beneficiaries of these discounts) had to convince the hotel manager that they really belonged to the village through 'appropriate' village ways and rustic behaviour, such as wearing a dhoti, or smoking a hookah, or walking inside the hotel with an *angochha*. Similarly, the participants and beneficiaries of the state-sponsored rural handicrafts exhibitions, rural *haats* and *bazaars* and the village fairs like Surajkund, have to conform to the statist representation of the village. Thus, there are situations where people (even the real living villagers) have to be authenticated as 'villagers' according to someone else's (most importantly, the state's) understanding of the village.

There are innumerable cases where particular settlements have used all possible means to retain their labels of the village even when all the census-based indicators would qualify them to be designated as towns. Such cases are widely distributed across the country. For the State of Rajasthan, Atal (2003) notes this process as far back as the late 1960s. Very often, people manipulate their way through officialese and political establishment to technically remain as 'villagers' (rather than 'town-dwellers' or 'urbanites') so as to attract more development funds from the state, and partake of other gains such as income tax rebate, the highly subsidized supply of public utilities, which are meant for them by virtue of their being villagers. Based on D.N. Dhanagare's personal communication, Pandey (2003: fn. 8) underlines this process for the State of Maharashtra. Similarly, in the State of Goa, the locality of Taleigao, which was formerly part of the Panjim Municipal Corporation, has been re-designated as a village Panchayat. In fact, the preliminary analysis of the 2001 census data reveals this widespread tendency (except in the State of Tamil Nadu) where former municipal towns have been officially re-christened as villages for the official purposes. Observers have described these tendencies as constituting a peculiar syndrome of 'turning urban, staying rural' (Sivaramakrishnan 2002). A village is so much its own and so much not its own.

STATE AND THE ESSENTIALIZATION OF IDENTITY

As a matter of fact, administrative categories have implications for social identities. Villagers come to conceptualize their socio-cultural boundaries in the wake of administrative categorization. For example, the essentialization of people's identity as villagers (or rural) has been articulated in various farmers' movements in the country. These movements have attempted to articulate their interests in terms of an opposition between the country and the city. Twisting the populist contention about the failure of development to reach the poor, they would highlight the failure of development to reach the village (countryside). They would posit a sharp and irrevocable divide between the country and the city—the rural *Bharat* and the urban *India*—which in turn is built on a critique of the strategy and implementation of development (Gupta 1999: 74–101). For our purposes, the political-ideological construction of a unitary rural *Bharat* emanates from a certain essentialization of the identity of the village in the context of post-independent development. Furthermore, this essentialization of the village gets ideologically charged where 'one pole (the village/*Bharat*) is authentic, good, moral, just, true, responsible, the other (the town/India) is inauthentic, foreign, evil, unjust, immoral, false and irresponsible' (ibid.: 66). Thus, we see how the village forms part of a certain Manichean discourse, and facilitates the representation of farmers as a unitary category irrespective of social divisions and hierarchy characterizing the latter.

Similarly, in the State of Karnataka, one's identity as a villager, was, till recently (when the Supreme Court struck it down), a basis of positive discrimination in the state government jobs (Rural Weightage Scheme). Leaving aside the legal-constitutional validity of the 'Rural Weightage Scheme', we can clearly see that the *raison d'etre* of the Scheme is the facile equation between the village and the backwardness (or underdevelopment). It is to be noted that since the provision for quota is constitutionally meant only for the 'backward' (socially, educationally) classes/castes, the village automatically and effortlessly gets designated and identified as a backward place needing the benign favour from an external agency like the state. This corroborates our point that no development programme or external intervention (mostly the state) would come to the village if it were not considered to be 'backward'. In fact, as said earlier, it is the essentialized backwardness of the village, which invites and legitimates the state intervention in the context of rural development.

The statist vision of rural development requires the village to give up its sense of autonomy and community. It exhorts the village to ally its destiny to that of the nation-state. True, the village does not always conform to the wishes of the state. It has its own ways of bypassing, appropriating and transforming the development impulses emanating from the state. In many ways, it keeps alive the locally autonomous concerns. But then, the modernizing zeal of the modern state is too strong to leave the village to its own devices. No wonder, the community represented by the village slips away in the developmental fantasies of the state and the village becomes the playground for the pompous ideologues of varying shades and colours.

Apparently, the village is an administrative unit that operates around a well demarcated given human settlement. We have seen how the meanings of the village keep fluctuating over, within and around shifting clusters of human settlement. However, once the village becomes the diorama of national development, the villagers are persuaded, cajoled and coerced into becoming citizens of a modern state. The village also becomes the site for the manufacturing of disciplined citizens. No wonder, since independence the post-colonial Indian state has enormously multiplied its development efforts in the village. At times, rather than developing and disciplining the existing settlements, the state endeavours to create its own ideal villages, for example, the social justice villages in Tamil Nadu, or the Ambedkar villages in Uttar Pradesh.

CONCLUSION

Rural development remains a top-down project for expanding the scope of state administration, notwithstanding the rhetoric of people's participation. It aspires to bring villages in line with the desirable national standards of development. The stereotyping involved in rural development programmes transforms 'people into objects—as recipients, applicants, claimants, clients, or even participants' (Wood 1985: 13). The rhetoric of rural development, thus, has a peculiar effect of marking the village as backward and underdeveloped.

Even otherwise, official-statist-administrative categories, once they gain currency, develop a dynamics of their own. They get essentialized in course of time and acquire the potential to undermine the pre-existing bases of people's identity. However, the undermining of people's earlier bases of identity does not necessarily lead to situations of conflict. In the particular context of the village, people have responded to the statist construction/s in innovative ways to further their instrumental interests while continuing with their old ways of identification with the village in magico-religious and kinship terms. This collective splitting of the self in relation to the village is likely to be quite widespread. The phenomenon of 'turning urban, staying rural' could be seen as another such instance of the split collective self. Nonetheless, this need not be the norm. Ethnographers have also reported instances where the long-existing ritual universe of the village appropriates the statist construction of the same in strikingly new ways. For example, in Mel Ceval village of the Tirunelvelli district of Tamil Nadu, the president of the (village) Panchayat offers the first goat (in the name of the village) to be sacrificed to the village goddess Muppidariyamman at her festival (Fuller 2002: 271). Such situations might not be very uncommon in the country.

However, one should not be misled in believing that the ritual-social universe of the village has successfully weathered the statist interventions. On the contrary, there have been enough ruptures in that universe, and the grip of the village over its ritually low members has sufficiently loosened. More than ever, the social position of the low caste members is predicated less on their ritual integration in the cosmic universe of the village and more on the protection afforded to them by the state. Rather than negotiating their ambiguous ritual position within the village, they would prefer warming up to the promises of citizenship of a modern state. Processes like this would not have been set in motion, had the state not intervened in the village; and, one of the most powerful interventions has definitely been the enterprise of rural development. In any case, the hegemonic influence of the statist construction of the village through the medium of rural development seems to have led to the loosening (and, may be, the possible disappearance) of the ritual-symbolic construction of the village.

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Notes

1. By 'rural development programmes' we refer to interventions guided, or more usually, implemented by the state (or by aid agencies though routed through the state agencies). In the Indian context, such interventions generally include policies and attempts made for alleviating the socio-economic conditions of the poor in the villages or developing backward areas (NIRD 1999: 123).
2. By discourse we mean the aggregate of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena, that ensemble of speech acts, utterances, interactions and practices that together constitute a shared arena of public conduct for a collectivity of people. Discourse helps frame issues/problems by highlighting some aspects of a situation rather than others. We have used 'discourse' in the vein of an intellectual framework referring to theory and practice, an interwoven set of languages and practices.
3. Much of the literature in this tradition focuses primarily on the colonial state. However, Kaviraj (1992) finds this construction inherent in the very nature of modernity. So, for him, any modern state has a role to play in the constitution of substantialized and essentialized communities.

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