

TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT: A NEW ROLE FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

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ABSTRACT

Everett Hagen, a twentieth century American Economist, in his theory of 'transition to economic growth' has discussed why certain societies are economically backward compared to others. He has also examined the forces which play an important role in their economic upliftment. According to him, primitive societies like tribal societies are backward because of the traits like 'high need affiliation' and 'high need dependency'.

When the modern technologically progressive society blocks the progress of these backward groups, exploits them beyond a limit and treats them as a subordinate group, the later feels a strong desire to uplift its economic stature. This motivation eventually leads to entrepreneurship and their development.

The current paper tries to empirically test the Hagen's theory in the context of tribal society of Valsad district in Gujarat. The paper investigates why despite the presence of preconditions for development; tribal societies have not developed as suggested by Hagen's theory. It also examines the role which the NGOs can play in tribal development.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first section introduces the theme and objectives of the paper. The second section discusses the Hagen's theory in detail. The third section investigates whether the findings of the theory apply to the tribal societies of the selected region or not. The fifth section suggests measures for the development of the tribal regions with special emphasis on the role of Non-Governmental Organizations.

Key Words *Everret Hagen, Traditional Society, Tribal Development, Economic Backwardness*

1. Introduction

The paper is an attempt to empirically test **Everett Hagen's**¹ theory of **Transition to Economic Growth** in the context of tribal regions of Valsad District of Gujarat. Hagen had classified the economies into two parts, a '**peasant society**' and a '**technologically progressive society**'.

The paper makes an attempt to discover the similarities between the '**tribal society**' and the '**technologically-backward peasant society**' of Hagen's theory. It basically examines whether or not the tribal society also displays '**high need affiliation**' and '**high need dependency**' which according to Hagen are the typical traits of the backward societies. The paper also tries to test the validity of the two popular laws described by Hagen, '**the law of subordinated group**' and '**the law of social blockage**' in generating the preconditions for the development of the backward societies.

Finally the paper suggests that the voluntary agencies can play a key role in generating the forces necessary for transition of the tribal economy into a more developed one.

The most important difference between a **peasant society** and a **technologically progressive society** according to Hagen is that of "**basic motivation**".

In contrast to the technologically progressive society with its **high achievement desire**, **high need autonomy** (need to be independent of others) and **high need dominance** (need to be a leader), the peasant society is characterized by a **high need affiliation** (need to please friends and to have their affection, to cooperate with them), and **high need dependency** (need to feel inferior to someone, to have ideas and attitudes approved by persons regarded as superiors).

Due to **high need affiliation** and **high need dependency**, the people of the **backward society** start getting **dominated by** the people having **high need autonomy** and **high need dominance**.

The principle or the law that the group driven by an urge to regain or maintain the rightful social status will carry out the revolutionary actions which complete the transition to continuing technological advance is called "**the law of the Subordinated Group**" by Hagen.

He then states his "**law of social blockage**". According to the **law of social blockage**, when the traditional channels of enhancing the social position are not available to a particular group due to the fixation of class position by the tradition, the only apparent alternative of a social rise is through increase in economic power. Such '**social blockage**' will encourage the socially backward group to devote more energy to economic development.

During an Ethnographic Study, the tribals of Valsad seemed to be displaying the traits of **high need affiliation** and **high need dependency**. They have also been dominated by the non tribal groups since ages. Their social position is as poor as their economic condition. In this sense, both the **laws of subordinated group** and **social blockage** should have operated. However, unfortunately this has not happened.

The paper is an attempt to explore the reasons for the failure of these laws to operate in the tribal regions of Valsad district of Gujarat state. It tries to examine whether the voluntary agencies with their inherent advantages would be more effective in making these laws operate in tribal regions or not. Finally the paper suggests some measures to stimulate the operation of these laws so that the development of these tribal regions becomes possible.

2. Hagen's Theory of the Transition to Economic Growth:

Professor Everett Hagen, in his theory of economic change has distinguished between two kinds of societies, the peasant society and the technologically progressive society. A similar classification has been made by **J H Boeke**² in his theory of social dualism.

Hagen has described following characteristics of a typical 'peasant society'.

Characteristics of the peasant society:

1. There is little migration into or out of each village.
2. The occupation of the majority of the people is small-scale agriculture, although there are few craftsmen and traders.
3. The family form is usually the extended family.
4. The society has little contact with the foreign countries, though some minimal trade and transfer of ideas takes place.
5. The elite and the villagers of a peasant society live literally in different worlds and have extremely few interests in common.
6. The peasant society is characterized by crude concepts of the physical world, a rudimentary state of the physical sciences, primitive methods of production and low literacy level.
7. Land ownership, religious position, military position, service to the king- all these are highly respected whereas both villagers and elite dislike trade and business.

In a **technologically progressive society**, people believe that the world can be made to yield increasing fruits by the exercise of their intelligence. They also know that their position in society can be improved by their own efforts. The most important difference between a peasant society and a technological progressive society is that of basic motivation. In contrast to the technologically progressive society with its high achievements, **high need autonomy** (need to be independent of others) and **high need dominance** (need to be a leader), the peasant society is characterized by a **high need affiliation** (need to please friends and to have their affection, to cooperate with them), and **high need dependency** (need to feel inferior to someone, to have ideas and attitudes approved by persons regarded as superiors). With this motivational pattern, the rate of technological progress is likely to be slow. The lack of Schumpeterian entrepreneurship in the peasant society is direct reflection of the value system in such a society. According to Hagen, in such a peasant society one's attitudes towards other people do not depend on their capability or needs but upon their status. The peasant does not seek the most efficient worker to help him in his field. He simply employs members of his family without question. In the technologically progressive society, by contrast, the tendency is to seek best man for the job.

All these characteristics of peasant society, Hagen concludes, are inimical to rapid technological change.

How can the change be brought in a peasant society?

Hagen agrees with most analysts of economic development that the entrepreneurial function is fundamental in the process of economic change. He admits that technological progress is not something which will gradually accelerate but is something which will change with a surge. Hagen suggests five possible forces tending to cause changes in the structure and functioning of peasant society. However, the most important force according to him is **“social tensions among the elite.”** It is possible that “high need achievement, aggression and dominance may exist among the elite of a peasant society and the effects of the possible tensions among the elite groups may lead to exploration.” Hagen firmly believes neither the peasants themselves nor the dominant elite will provide such leadership. The characteristics of the groups which would provide the source of Schumpeterian entrepreneurship are that they are a “relatively elite group”. But they are from “the lower echelons of the elites” (which to a great extent are analogous to the modern day educated middle class). The dominant group or the elites from the upper echelons have no incentives to go into risky financial ventures. Hagen has cited examples of the members of the groups in the lower echelons of the elite who turned vigorously to economic development at a certain time in history.

... a group does so only if it feels that its social status has been suppressed below it's due or is in danger of suppression. Presumably, the feeling arises from an actual reduction of historical status or a threat of reduction. In England, the agricultural revolution which preceded the industrial revolution was carried out by the members of the landed gentry- but they were a country group to whom the urbanite group of gentry manifested a sense of superiority. The industrial revolution itself was carried out by Scots who had been conquered by the English and whose religion was looked down upon by the Church of England gentry and by non-conformists in England itself. The intellectuals of Russia, the Antioquians of Columbia who have been looked down upon as “country cousins” by the urbanites of Bogotá and immigrants in many countries, not fully acceptable by the local society, provided other examples of the vigor of such lower echelon elite in their reaction to social subordination. The example par excellence is provided by Japan.

This principle that only a group driven by an urge to regain or maintain the rightful social status will carry out the revolutionary actions which complete the transition to continuing technological advance is called **“the law of the Subordinated Group”** by Hagen. The members of the innovating group, Hagen continues, must have the **‘combination of the world view and motivational structure’** which results in the vigorous attack on their problem rather than resignation to their fate.

He then states his **“law of social blockage”** which is very similar to that stated by Arthur Lewis. According to the law of social blockage, when the traditional channels of enhancing the social position are not available to a particular group due to the fixation of class position by the tradition, the only apparent alternative of a social rise is through increase in economic power. Such a ‘social blockage’ will encourage the socially disadvantaged group to devote more energy to economic development.

Hagen seems to be saying that if people are to have economic growth, they must “want it”- in the sense that a sufficient number of sub dominant elite are motivated toward economic activity of a sort bringing technological progress and economic growth, while the motivation of the rest of the society should be such as to permit technological progress to spread throughout the society.

On the question of imported technical knowledge, Hagen suggests that it may help but not much. The mere availability of the technical knowledge of other countries does not permit a society to by-pass that long cumulative growth of scientific and technical knowledge. The reason for this is that science is not simply knowledge but also an attitude toward the physical world. The people of underdeveloped countries cannot learn science and advanced technology as they might learn a foreign language. "For they will not apply science in their thinking until basic change has occurred in their world view, motivations and values."

In any case, "a complex of production techniques in one society cannot simply be copied in another as one man might wear another man's clothes". For relationships within a factory or other production organization also depend on the culture of the society. The production process may have to be altered, if it is to function efficiently in a society with different patterns of behaviour. Finally Hagen suggests that an external threat to a nation as a whole may be a powerful force towards development, especially if combined with internal factors in planning the country towards the technological change. This kind of combination of internal and external pressures, in Hagen's view explains the relatively rapid transformation of the Japanese society from a stagnant one into one with sustained technological progress.

For the development of the peasant society, Hagen has emphasized more on the changes in non-economic factors like social, psychological and political factors as compared to economic and technical. He suggests that the individual's view of his relationship with the world must change radically, scientific knowledge and the scope of experience must widen, occupational values must undergo basic alteration and class relationship must alter in their social, economic and political aspects. Hagen considers it extremely difficult, though not impossible, for the entire set of changes to take place within one generation.

3. Hagen's Theory of Under-Development: Its Relevance and Applicability to the Tribal Economy of Valsad District

Hagen, in his theory, points out that there are two types of societies, a technologically advanced society and a peasant society. The basic thrust of his theory is on bringing out the distinguishing features of the peasant society and exploring the reasons for its underdevelopment.

We may begin with the points of similarities and differences between the peasant society and the tribal society in general and that of Valsad district in particular.

Similarity between Hagen's Peasant society and the tribal society of Valsad district:

1) Limited migration:

Just as in Hagen's 'peasant society', there is very limited migration in and out of the tribal villages of Valsad district. During the field survey, it was found that the tribal people of Dharampur and Kaparada talukas of Valsad district did not go to cities for work although much better wages were offered to them at the towns like Pardi, Valsad and Nashik. The tribals here are highly attached to their people and places and hence reluctant to migrate outside their villages. Only when no work is available in the

villages during the summer, they go to other places. Even when they go to the cities, they return back to their villages only after 10-12 days and go back only when an urgent need for money arises again.

2) Small-scale agriculture:

Just as in the 'peasant society' in Hagen's theory, the occupation of the majority of the rural tribal population in Valsad is small-scale agriculture. In Dharampur and Kaparada, the most backward tribal talukas in Valsad district, 79.4% & 90.3% of the total working population respectively is engaged in cultivation and agricultural labor, whereas there are very less craftsmen and traders. The sense of business and trade has not yet developed among these tribes. Thus there is not much difference between the peasant society and the tribal society here.

3) Joint families:

Just as in the 'peasant society' in Hagen's theory, most tribals in Valsad live in joint or extended families.

Pointing towards the advantages of the joint families among the tribes in India, **Vidyarthi**³ says, "All the members of the family; husband, wife, parents and children work together to form the unit of production. The children are generally assigned the task of grazing the cattle or accompanying their mothers for digging out the roots, collection of firewood, picking up the Mahuva flowers or certain fruits in the nearby jungles. Youth generally do the most important work by taking part in agricultural operations like preparing the fields, sowing, harvesting etc. The old men stay at home and watch the crop. The grown-ups take part in all important and strenuous jobs whereas women and old people are usually given light work."

4) Isolation:

Similar to that in the 'peasant society', there is very little contact with the outside world in the tribal society as well. An important feature of the tribal society in India according to **Sharma**⁴ is its aloofness and isolation. There are three barriers which keep the tribal people cut off from the outside world. First is the language barrier. Second is the geographical barrier and the third is the socio-psychological barrier.

5) Poor technology, Scientific backwardness and Illiteracy:

The 'peasant society' is characterized by crude concepts of the physical world, a rudimentary state of the physical sciences, primitive methods of production and low literacy level.

In the same manner, the tribal society in India too, functions with very crude and obsolete technology. Talking about the simple technology used by the tribal population, Vidyarthi states that the "tribal people have a very simple technology which fits well with their ecological surrounding and conservative outlook. The tools used by them are either self-made or are acquired from the local manufacturer. This results in inefficient, inadequate or even wasteful exploitation of natural resources. Consequently, they are able to produce the bare minimum which is necessary for sustenance, that too with great difficulty. An economic surplus is rarely seen."

Almost all the sample tribal households of Valsad district cultivated through very obsolete technology and were able to cultivate output that was not even sufficient for their self-consumption.

Further, just as in Hagen's peasant society, the level of literacy in the tribal society was absolutely low. The illiteracy rates are as high as 80% to 90% in the tribal villages from where the primary data was collected for the present study. 84.7% of the total sample tribal households are illiterate.

6) Prestige to the ownership of land and social ceremonies:

Ownership of land and performance of religious rituals are believed to provide lot of prestige in the Hagen's 'peasant society'. The tribal society in India in general and Valsad in particular also show the same feature.

According to Vidyarthi, Land and cattle are considered to be important components of wealth in tribal societies. These two provide prestige to the owners.

The tribals of Valsad too spend a significant percentage of their annual income on social ceremonies like *Mavli* and *pachma*. The expenses during marriages, festivals etc are also quite high.

7) High need affiliation and high need dependency:

According to Hagen, the people in a 'peasant Society' are characterized by high need affiliation (need to please friends and to have their affection, to cooperate with them) and high need dependency (need to feel inferior to someone, to have ideas and attitudes approved by persons regarded as superiors).

According to Hagen, in such a peasant society one's attitudes towards other people do not depend on their capability or needs but upon their status. The peasant does not seek the most efficient worker to help him in his field; he employs members of his own family without question

The tribal population of Valsad district also reflects quite a high need affiliation. Due to low level of technology, small size of the economy and relative isolation, mutual dependence among people here becomes necessary. Most of the people in tribal villages here have common economic interests, e.g. the young boys go for grazing the cattle together especially for defence and security. At the time of transplantation of a crop, they transplant each other's farm on a reciprocal basis. Whenever someone is short of raw materials or is in need of some tools, neighbors or kinsmen provide the help.

They help each other by giving their agricultural implements and help in construction of each other's houses.

Just like the tribal population in the other parts of the country, tribal population living in the remote villages of the Valsad district is also very timid, shy and apprehensive. The tribals here are afraid of the forest officers, non-tribals and consider themselves inferior to others. Such High need dependency also exists.

8) Low levels of motivation, lack of innovations and entrepreneurship:

The people of Hagen's 'peasant society' do not really believe from within that the world can be made to yield increasing fruits by the exercise of their intelligence. They also don't believe that their position in society can be improved by their own efforts. The motivation levels, according to Hagen, are extremely low in the peasant society and as a result, the emergence of the entrepreneurial class and innovations are almost absent.

Same is the scenario in the tribal society in India. In this context, Vidyarthi observes that the rate of innovation is quite low due to which the tribal economy is more or less stable and hardly makes any progress.

Mustali Masvi⁵ observes that many tribals continue with the occupation of their ancestors, without bothering to learn anything new on their own. They even don't like to learn anything from others. Many of the Bhils of Panchmahal district go as farm laborers to other developed areas of Gujarat like in Kheda and South Gujarat but do not learn and apply the scientific techniques used there to their own farms. However, it is possible that the poor economic condition of the Bhils might be the main hurdle in the implementation of these modern techniques of agriculture to their own farms.

Majority of the sample tribal households seem to depict low level of scientific orientation and risk preference.

Economic Motivation, Risk preference and Scientific Orientation among the sample tribal households of the Valsad district:

After discovering several remarkable resemblances between the peasant society in Hagen's theory and the tribal society of Valsad district, an effort has been made to find out, whether the sample tribal households in the study also illustrate the same attributes of low economic motivation, risk preference and scientific orientation or not.

4. Findings and policy implications

The above discussion provides enough evidence to believe that the tribal society in the selected district is very similar to Hagen's conception of the 'peasant society'. Once it is established that the peasant society and the tribal society are very similar to one another, we need to find out whether or not the forces suggested by Hagen for the economic development of the peasant society would operate in the backward tribal regions.

The '**law of Subordinated Group**' and '**the law of Social Blockage**' which according to Hagen are instrumental in bringing economic change within a peasant society, did not seem to be working in bringing any sort of change in the tribal society though the preconditions required for these laws to operate are very much present.

A very large percentage of tribal population is a subordinated group. Most of the non-tribal population looks-down upon the tribal ways of living. The attitude of the forest officials is also very discourteous and belittling towards the tribal population.

Similarly, the tribal population commands lowest position in the social structure and is considered among the most socially backward groups. These facts are enough to generate “**social tensions**” among the tribals and motivate them for vigorous action for some drastic changes and economic improvement. The fact that they are a suppressed and a socially backward group should have been enough to motivate them to bring some radical changes in their economic lives. However, this has not happened.

The main reason for the non-operation of these ‘laws’ in the tribal society is the absence of the elements like motivation and self-worth among the poor tribals.

On the lines of Hagen’s advice for the development of the peasant societies, it is suggested that **the tribal population will have to change its view about its relationship with the rest of the world. It will have to develop respect for its own culture, traditional skills and ways of living. It will have to abandon the High Need Dependency (Feeling of Inferiority) and cultivate the habit of accepting the economic and social challenges which the rest of the world throws at it.**

For introducing such changes in the values and the thinking pattern of the tribals and for inculcating scientific attitudes and new occupational values, the only option is to implement the recommendation made by **McClelland**⁶. He has suggested the ways of “persuasion, education and early character training” as the keys to achieve these objectives.

Such basic changes as mentioned above can occur only when a relatively progressive section from the tribal population itself takes up the challenge of introducing these changes within the entire community. The voluntary agencies can play a very vital role in achieving this goal.

The voluntary agencies can take up the responsibility of “character training” of the tribal population. After understanding the culture and psychological dimensions of the timid and backward tribals, these NGOs can play a vital role in removing their unreal fears of unknown, complexes and the tendency of resignation & fatalism. They can take up measures to infuse confidence, self-respect, enthusiasm, motivation and grit among the tribals. Proper education would certainly help and facilitate the process of ‘character training’. Once such character training is imparted successfully, the preconditions for the “social tensions” will be laid down and if not all, at least some inherently progressive section from the tribal population itself can be expected to take up vigorous economic activities whose impact will soon spread in the rest of the tribal community.

Just as the NGOs functioning with the techno-managerial approach take help of qualified engineers and professional managers and the mobilization NGOs draw upon the politicians and academicians for support, the NGOs with an approach for ‘character training’ may take help of sociologist, psychologist, anthropologist and experts in the field of tribal-culture and tribal-psychology.

‘Character training’ should become an important supplementary activity. Unless the tribal population itself doesn’t want to grow, neither techno-managerial inputs nor their mobilization and unification would serve the purpose.

Just as mere character training is bound to fail in the absence of economic programs, mere economic programs are also bound to fail in the absence of ‘character training’.

Another important policy implication of Hagen's theory for tribal development is that if we try to apply the urban technology within the tribal areas, it will not succeed much due to the entirely different culture of the tribal society and different behavioural patterns. As a result, some indigenous technology which is in line of the tribal culture and understanding will have to be developed.

At the end we may agree with Hagen in that "it is extremely difficult, though not impossible, for the entire set of changes to take place within one generation."

We may summarize the policy suggestions emerging from Hagen's theory for tribal regions as follows:

1. The tribal population will have to develop respect for its own culture, traditional skills and ways of living. It will have to abandon the inferiority complex (High need dependency). This would require persuasion, education and character training. As changing the values of the people require a human touch, voluntary agencies are more suitable for this task.
2. Indigenous technology which is in line of the tribal culture and understanding must be developed. The technology, which is beyond the absorptive capacity of the tribal people, should not be imposed in the tribal regions.

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