

A CULTURAL MEDIATION APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

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The study of the development and modernization of the so-called "Third World" began after the Second World War. The role of culture in the process of development, however, was not the focal point until recently when the old paradigm of development, characterized by assumptions of high positive correlations between economic growth, capital-intensive technology and centralized planning, began to fall out of favour, and theorists proclaimed a need to go "back to the old drawing board".^{1/}

The purpose of this paper is to describe an alternative theoretical orientation for the study of the dynamic process in which culture interacts with technology as it is introduced along with its attendant constellation of values. It is hoped that the approach outlined in this paper will enable us to attain a better conceptual grasp of the development process and will permit the formulation of strategies that may minimize the chance of failure in the process of development.

Before examining a new approach, it is helpful to review the old paradigm and examine the criticisms it received. The process of social development has been studied extensively by many social scientists who have sought to examine the question of development from their respective academic vantage points.^{2/}

Broadly speaking, their approaches and their principal proponents can be categorized into five main groups:

APPROACH	ATTRIBUTES	ARTICULATORS
1. Historical	Emphasis on broad historical evolution and movement towards modernization	Black
2. Psychological	Relationship between modernization and psychological traits	Lerner, McClelland
3. Economic	Modernization analysed in terms of economic development	Rostow, Hagen
4. Structural	Emphasis on structural components like bureaucracies	Parsons, Einsenstadt
5. Value-centred	Emphasis on values in modernization process	Pye, Verba

Clearly, these are not mutually exclusive categories and there is a certain degree of overlap. For example, the structural approach obviously contains elements of both the value-centred and psychological approaches. However, for convenience, we will treat them as five different categories.

Despite their differences in perspective, the above five approaches together were referred to as the old paradigm for development by social scientists. This old paradigm, which had great influence in the 1960s and the early 1970s, stresses elements such as economic growth, capital-intensive technology and centralized planning. To these scholars, culture did have a place in development, but it was not necessarily a pivotal place. Everett Hagen, for example, was primarily interested in the economic edge of social change and modernization, and he did not ignore the role of culture. In order to understand economic growth, he felt that one had to draw on the cumulative wisdom

of psychology, anthropology and sociology -- in short, on culture in general. He was very interested in the evolution of personality (innovational personality) and its impact on economic growth. What we are asserting in this paper, however, is that, culture should be regarded as a far more crucial factor in social change.

According to Eisenstadt, social scientists working with the old paradigm of development developed two assumptions for their research: (1) close interrelationship of major aspects of "development" including literacy rate, urbanization, the spread of mass media, GNP, per capita income, political participation and empathy, which all together were used as sociodemographic indices to measure the degree of development; (2) development as a common, irreversible evolutionary process leading to a universal "end state."^{3/}

As indicated by Eisenstadt and Schramm, the best phrase describing the sociodemographic indices of modernization was coined by Karl Deutsch who, with the term "social mobilization," described "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded and broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior."^{4/} To many social science researchers, development not only implies a higher literacy rate and per capita income, but also a continuation of change "beyond its own initial institutional premises."^{5/} This assumption was challenged by cases in which there was a negative correlation, instead of a positive correlation, between the institutional ability to sustain growth and sociodemographic indices. In addition, political and economic development of some of the Asian and Latin American nations came to a halt after the "take-off" point.^{6/} Data showed that disintegration of cultural traditions did not always lead to smooth transitions to modernity either; in some

cases, the result was chaos and disorganization instead of peaceful and orderly growth. On the other hand, development does not necessarily conflict with "what is best in the cultural tradition spiritual heritage" of developing nations;^{7/} sometimes traditions and cultural heritage hastened modernization, functioning as dynamic forces in development. As Coulet observes "the alien rationality implicit in modernization must be re-interpreted in terms of traditional existence rationalities."^{8/} The inadequate attention paid to tradition and culture in the development process was largely the result of the simplistic tradition-modernity dichotomy and the unilinear view of development posited by many of the most influential scholars of the 1960s.

Let us, for example, consider the views of Lerner who has exercised a profound influence on communication scholars. According to Lerner's typology, individuals can be categorized into three classes: traditional, transitional and modern. He analyses the process of development in terms of four significant variables: urbanization, literacy, mass media exposure and participation. Lerner says that everywhere increasing urbanization has tended to raise literacy; rising literacy has tended to increase media exposure; increasing media exposure has promoted wider economic participation, or a rise in per capita income, and political participation, as shown by a rise in voting. Furthermore, he believes that the same basic model reappears in virtually all modernizing societies.^{9/}

Lerner's model postulates a fundamental dichotomy between tradition and modernity which is central to his theory of development. Clearly, this is too simplistic a conceptualization. Not only do the most advanced countries possess certain traditional characteristics, but some of the most "backward" countries display many features which one would normally associate with

modernity. Moreover, the path to self-sustained development is not unilinear; development is not merely a question of eliminating everything that is traditional. To Lerner, development is the transition from tradition to modernity and these two are mutually exclusive categories, although studies of modern anthropologists have uncovered a wealth of evidence to the contrary. In fact, as Eisenstadt pointed out, partial modernization might actually reinforce traditional systems.^{10/} In this regard, Gusfield's observation regarding the theories of Rostow and Lerner is very appropriate:

A significant assumption in this model of change is that existing institutions and values, and the context of tradition are impediments to change and are obstacles to modernization. It is with this assumption that we are concerned....We wish to call attention to the manifold variations in the relations between traditional forms and new institutions and values, variations whose possibilities are hidden by the polarity of the tradition-modernity model of social change.^{11/}

Similarly, Goulet says that it is both impersonal and inaccurate to assume that development is both inhuman and incompatible with traditional values. This mistake is a result of the ethnocentric concept of change held by many modernizers and their resulting biased judgment that traditionalism is static.^{12/}

One can cite numerous examples which demonstrate that tradition and modernity are not always involved in an adversary relationship. Let us take the example of Japan, where industrialism and feudal social structure have united to promote economic development. Such features as obedience to the family and the Emperor, lack of vertical mobility and the subordination of the individual to the community are usually associated with tradition and backwardness. Nonetheless, these characteristics have played a crucial role in stimulating Japan's economic

development. Singer observes that in India the traditional joint family system and many practices associated with it offer some distinct advantages in the organizational individual enterprise.^{13/} The success of some of the leading Indian industrial establishments, such as the Tata and Birla, can be partially explained in terms of the support received through the traditional family structure.

The second assumption underlying the old paradigm of development was attacked because it failed to explain differences among traditional societies and patterns of transition to modernity. As indicated by a Latin American scholar, "[the pervasive development model implies] a unidirectional process with a predetermined point of arrival."^{14/} The assumption left no alternate route, and allowed no other objectives or forms of the "end-state" of development. Lerner may be correct in saying that "the proper work of social science is the finding of regularities in the human condition,"^{15/} but in earlier research on development, regularities and common features of traditional and modern societies seemed to be accepted as the universal truth:

...traditional society was depicted as static, with little differentiation or specialization, a pre-dominance of mechanical division of labor, a low level of urbanization, and literacy, and a strong agrarian basis as its main focus of population. In contrast, modern society was seen as possessing a very high level of differentiation, a high degree of organic division of labor specialization, urbanization, literacy and exposure to mass media, and imbued with a continuous drive toward progress.^{16/}

Common features of traditional and developed societies may indeed be discernible to some extent; it would be dangerous, however, to consider only the common features and neglect the specifics. The important point is that there should be no

universally applicable model of development. Though affected by the changing global environment, each society will eventually shape itself according to its own style and pace. This is not to suggest that there are no commonly discernible historical processes, but in examining the question of development, the confluence of factors that determine the uniqueness of each society must be understood. Here again the role of culture is crucial. The old paradigm of development was therefore said to be a descriptive model of what happened in the West, rather than a predictive model of what would happen in developing nations.

As pointed out by Ward, development used to be closely associated with "richness" in the eyes of many social scientists.^{17/} Heavily influenced by the industrial revolution in the West, the old paradigm mainly focused on the economic aspect of development, i.e., capital intensive technology, per capita income, etc.^{18/} However, most development scholars today seem to emphasize the need to think of development holistically, a phenomenon impinging on many different aspects of human experience, not merely a question of economic growth. We are witnessing a transition from an "econo-centric" to a "homo-centric" view of social development.^{19/} The "homo-centric" view of social development may be a more realistic approach to development. One cannot, in fact, meaningfully examine the question of development without considering the transfer of technology and knowledge, as well as the interrelated changes in economic, social, political and communication disciplines. To many leaders, and to the peoples of the Third World, these interrelated changes imply power and international status for the nation and better living conditions for the individual; they are therefore desirable. Changes, however, do not occur in a vacuum; they are usually introduced to a developing society where values and systems already exist. Indigenous culture mediates the introduction of technology and the values associated with technology. To a developing society,

new knowledge and technology should be functional; they should stimulate creativity and innovation, and not promote passiveness and imitation. The role of culture in the transfer of technology must therefore be appreciated.

Culture and Development

The importance of culture in development should be examined. However, precisely what is meant by "culture" may be a difficult question to answer. In 1952, two anthropologists undertook the seemingly simple task of defining culture. In their search, Kroeber and Kluckhohn found 154 different definitions, and countless "incomplete definitions" or "statements" about culture.^{20/} Since then, undoubtedly, more definitions have been formulated in various fields of social sciences. The number of definitions reflects the elusive nature of culture as a concept in scientific research. Feibleman has described the problem:

The [culture] do not always have abrupt beginnings and endings, when flourishing, they have indistinct peripheries; and they shade off into one another in a quite indefinite way. We do not always recognize a culture when we see one.^{21/}

Culture can mean social heritage, customs or traditions; or it can mean the way of behaving and thinking with or without the function of providing problem-solving mechanisms. It can even include "all nongenetically produced means of adjustment" or "the sum total of all that is artificial."^{22/} Each of the definitions of "culture" has strengths and weaknesses because the concept is multifaced and complex. For the purpose of this discussion, we will try to give a working definition of culture and its essential elements.

Culture, as described by Feibleman, should be regarded as an open system which is "always in a state of flux, a condition of development, or progression or retrogression, organization or disorganization...."^{23/} In other words, culture is not static. The rate of cultural change may vary greatly from "near static" where there is more conservation of the traditional heritage, to rapid transformation where new values and social institutions thrive. However, culture is still in essence a constantly evolving entity, and as Buckley observed, "social and cultural structures are only the intersections in time and space of process in the course of change and development."^{24/} The locus of cultural evolution lies in interactions: interactions among its members, as groups or as individuals, and interactions with the environment and the outside world. Through interactions, needs are satisfied and new needs are generated; problems are solved and new ones are created; and patterns of behaviour and values emerge and then are revised or discarded.

Of the various artifacts and mentifacts of culture, the importance of values has often been stressed in the literature. Though sometimes considered a subject falling within the domain of psychology, values also have a "predominantly historical and sociocultural dimension" because they are "the products of social living, become part of cultures, and are transmitted along with the rest of culture."^{25/} According to Kluckhohn and Kroeber, values are essential in the understanding of cultures because:

...they [values] provide foci for patterns of organization for the material of cultures.... In fact, values provide the only basis for the fully intelligible comprehension of culture, because the actual organization of all cultures is primarily in terms of their values.

The relationship between cultural values and technology has long been a disputed subject in social science. To some people,

technology means much more than scientific innovations; it is a "way of living, of being, perhaps of becoming," or the "tactic of living."^{26/} It also implies a certain value orientation. According to Lasswell, there is a set of values underlying development which includes power, enlightenment, wealth, well-being, skill, affection, respect and rectitude.^{27/}

The school of technological determinism advocates an omnipotent view of technological influences. According to this theory, once introduced, technology will determine the changes in all interrelated aspects of life, including shaping new cultural values. An example was given by McLuhan who credited the invention of printing technology with the rise of individualism and nationalism.^{28/} Others argued the contrary; they suggested that changes in values, ideology, and organization must come first to nurture technology. The causal relationship between value and technology therefore seemed to be relegated to the status of a "chicken and egg" question.^{29/}

The controversy on the relationship between development and culture can be viewed as an extension of the values versus technology dispute since development inevitably involves the introduction of technology to a society with an existing set of cultural values. According to social scientists working with the old paradigm of development, culture plays nothing more than a passive role in modernization. To them, changes in some socio-demographic indices can lead to the breakdown of traditional values and institutions, and an "end state" of modernity will naturally emerge at the final stage of the development process. Others, however, argue that culture is not passively changed by the introduction of new elements, but actively selects technological changes. Ralph Linton stated, "...the factors which influence the dissemination of cultural elements most strongly are the utility and compatibility with the pre-existing culture

of the elements themselves and the desire of members of the receiving group for prestige and for novelty of experience."^{30/} New cultural elements must be proved useful and compatible to the host culture in order for technological innovations to be accepted. In addition to emphasizing the active role of culture in development, Linton went on to discuss a process of modification and integration:

....By integration is meant the completion of the series of modifications, both in the new culture element and in the pre-existing culture which are necessary to eliminate conflicts and direct duplication of function."^{31/}

Similar arguments were made by other social scientists using different terminologies. For example, Herskovits used the term "syncretism" to describe the process,^{32/} while according to Spicer, the process through which elements of two or more cultural traditions merge is called "fusional integration"; he stressed the fact that complete replacement of the old by the new rarely happens, and the end result of the integration process will not be the same as any of the parent culture systems.

Spicer, Linton and Herskovits pointed out several important aspects in cultural change: (a) the new element must be useful and compatible with the host culture; (b) modifications of both the new element and the host culture are necessary to minimize conflict; and (c) the end result of the integration process will not be the same as any of the parent cultures. There is thus a certain degree of harmonization in the process of cultural change. Indeed, in development, numerous examples can be found which illustrate the abovementioned observations. However, development process as a whole involves a much more sophisticated conceptual framework which cannot be adequately examined or explained by

the theories of cultural integration or cultural syncretism. The role of culture in development, therefore, deserves closer attention by social scientists as well as development planners.

The above review reveals several important points:

(1) Cultures are open systems with constant interaction among elements, as well as interaction of these elements with the environment.

(2) Although some features are common to a certain category of cultures, e.g., developing or developed, Western or Eastern, no two cultures are identical.

(3) Indigenous culture and introduced technology are not dichotomies. They may be incongruous in some aspects, but compatible in others.

(4) Except for a few cases of tribal cultures, indigenous cultures have almost never been totally "replaced" in the process of development. There is always a degree of continuity in change.

(5) Because each culture has its own value systems and distinct sociocultural structure, the path to development also differs from culture to culture.

(6) As a result of interaction between cultural elements the technology introduced, the emerging sociocultural institutions and systems will bear features of both parents, but will not be clones of either.

(7) Although planning is important to the success of development efforts, policies that fail to (a) consider the above-mentioned points, and (b) motivate change with active participation from the people will not be likely to succeed.

An analogy from microbiology may enrich our thinking regarding the role of culture in development. In microbiology, the growth of an organism usually takes place under relatively controlled conditions. Being composed of nutrients and other organic materials, the culture medium not only needs to provide favourable conditions for the organism to grow, but also mediates the growth process through interaction with the organism. Whether an organism does survive in a culture medium, its growth, appearance, and functioning all have to depend on both laboratory controls and, to an ever greater extent, the culture medium. The culture medium, therefore functions as a mediator in the growth of an organism.

Based on the points of interest summarized from the literature and ideas derived from microbiology, we would like to propose a mediation approach to development and change which looks at culture as a mediator in the process of development. The attempt here, is to provide an alternative way of looking at the role of culture in development. Before elaborating on the approach itself, definitions of key concepts would be helpful for our discussion:

Development	a process which aims at bettering the qualities of life both materially and spiritually.
Elements	identifiable features of cultural systems (includes technology as well as different aspects of indigenous culture).
Open system	a complex of interacting elements which also engage in interchanges with the environment.
Culture	an open system in which mentifacts (values, beliefs), behaviour patterns (customs) and artifacts (art works) interact with each other and with other elements of the environment.

Technology	hardware facilities (computer, machinery, etc.), software know-how and ways of organizing human resources (educational and management systems).
Mediation	the process and instrumentalities through which interactions occur.

The mediation approach suggests that development can be regarded as a dynamic process in which culture, as an open system, interacts with the introduced technologies. Culture in this process is essentially serving as a mediator. Technologies can be introduced to a culture through planning or direct/indirect interaction with other cultures. The growth of the technology, however, will stop at the initial introductory stage if found to be highly incompatible with the culture. Growth could resume only after changes in the culture or technologies make the two more compatible. But even when the two (culture and technology) are compatible with each other, subsequent development of the introduced technology must come through the mediation of culture. It is important to note that culture provides the basis for people to form attitudes toward technologies and change. These attitudes, in turn, will determine how people interpret change, whether they are willing to change, and how changes will occur. In other words, changes do not occur in a vacuum; they must be mediated by the culture throughout the whole process.

As discussed earlier, cultures are open systems featuring interactions. As a result of interaction, therefore, changes are most likely to occur in both the indigenous culture and the technologies introduced. The direction of change may seem to be predictable in some instances. As Leed^{33/} has pointed out, it is easier to find examples of a society which is integrating a new medium of communication into a culture than it is to find

a new medium which is transforming those systems. Leed cites examples from the Abut where writing is used to carry out rituals of a religious system. The tribal people of Mindanao use writing to support the conventions of courtship. The important point to note there, is that the development pattern and also the emerging and ever-changing set of values and social institutions may vary from culture to culture depending on the features of the mediating culture, the quality of planning, and in some cases, the type of stimuli from the environment. No end state of development, therefore, is implied. Tradition and modernity are not polarized, but are seen as interacting components of the same process. Replacement of the old by the new does occur in the interaction process, but occurs in a gradual and evolving manner unlike what was suggested by the old paradigm -- a complete and drastic change-over of cultural and social systems.

The mediation approach does not rule out the possibility of breakdowns in the process of development. In fact, breakdown of the growth process may occur at several points; it may take place when the introduced technologies are clearly incompatible with the pre-existing culture, and the conflict cannot be resolved through careful planning; or it may occur when planning is poor or absent, outside stimuli are out of hand or extremely difficult to cope with, and conflicts sharpened so that the process can degenerate into a state of frustration and confusion.

Let us consider some situations where cultural mediation has been incorporated into strategies for social development. A clear example is that of Gandhi in India. He sought to propagate new ideals, values and thought patterns, consonant with modern times, but in terms of traditional cultural symbolic systems. He endeavoured to propagate among the Indian masses such concepts as egalitarianism, non-violence and women's

emancipation, all in the cultural idiom and syntax of the people. What measure of success he achieved can be largely attributed to this strategy. Indeed, the measure of his success in blending tradition and modernity is that one finds it difficult to separate the traditional from the modern. One commentator even asked if Gandhi was a traditionalist or a modernizer. The question illustrates the immense difficulty in separating the various streams in reform and social change flowing through the Indian subcontinent. Certainly, his genius lay in uniting disparities, in utilizing the traditional authority of the holy man for social reforms and for political union.^{34/}

The Sarvodaya Movement of Sri Lanka is another example. Started in 1958, it has development activities in over 2,500 villages. Over 250,000 people participate in work camps annually. "Community awakening" and "development through self-help" are fundamental tenets of this movement. So far, the Sarvodaya Movement of Sri Lanka has achieved spectacular success, and scholars such as Galtung and Goulet have shown great interest in it.

The Sarvodaya Movement is basically concerned with human development not conceived solely in terms of GNP and per capita income, but in relation to the growth of the total human personality. The main architect of this movement made this observation:

....Our development goals should point to a balanced growth in both material and spiritual aspects. The individual, the family and the village community should be considered as the basic units of development. Technology is indeed important for social development, but it should be introduced in a manner that would not harm the essentiality of these units.

It is also maintained that the ethos governing political life should be directed towards participatory democracy and in contradistinction to representative politics and bureaucratization. Personal human relationships, and small-scale economic pursuits should constitute the basis of national economy, and every precaution should be taken to safeguard against the domination by institutionalized economies. Clearly, given the ineluctable realities of contemporary life these ideals are as laudable as they are difficult to achieve. However, so far, the Sarvodaya Movement has succeeded in very large measure. A main contributing factor to this success is the judicious use of culture and its attendant symbols to promote change and development.

The Sarvodaya Movement is concerned with awakening both the personality and society. The two, needless to say, are intimately linked. In stressing the need for personality and community awakening, the architects of this movement have sought to utilize Buddhist terminology which is indeed a vital constitutive element of traditional Sri Lankan culture. According to the Buddhist tradition, personality awakening rests on the cultivation of four main qualities: Metta, friendliness to all and respect for life; Karuna, compassionate action which would result in the alleviation of suffering; Muditha, joy emanating from altruism; and Upekkha, or equanimity. These traditional values, which are familiar to the general public, are reinterpreted in terms of modern social developmental goals in the way that Gandhi interpreted some of the traditional Hindu concepts in India.

Similarly, in the Buddhist tradition, four factors were stressed as contributing to community awakening and purposeful community action: Dana or sharing; Priyavachana or amiability

in communication; Arthacharya or developmental activity; and Samanathmatha or equality.

Great critical acumen is not required to discern that these concepts are broad enough to be interpreted in whatever manner modern developmental advocates and social workers deem fit. What, in effect, the authors of the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka have done is to use culture as a means of propagating a modern message of development based on self-help. In a world characterized by a complex nexus of social, economic, and technological forces operating at the regional, national and transnational levels, the approach of the Sarvodaya Movement might appear to be overly simple. However, in this simplicity lies its attractiveness and its potential.

In contrast, the Iranian revolution illustrated the failure of development. As with most other revolutions of a comparable nature, a plurality of factors contributed towards its precipitation. Mowlana made the following observation:

The Iranian revolution of 1978-79 grew naturally from native soil. The impetus for revolution has been traced to many factors such as the political and economic conditions, foreign interests and the challenge to traditional social structures. Cumulatively, these factors contributed to what could be best described as a conflict between the official culture of the government and the ruling elite which represented and promoted Western influence and the traditional cultures of the masses rooted in Iranian national and religious traditions.35/

With the rapid exploitation of oil resources and the increasing accumulation of petrodollars, Iranian society took the path to disaster. The elite made use of the wealth to import not only new technology, but Western ways of life as well. However, the majority of the people still depended on agriculture and observed

traditions, and in their eyes, the introduction of new technology was a direct threat to the culture they cherished. The importance of introducing technological innovations into the culture was overlooked, resulting in great social and cultural dislocation and in a sense of anger in the masses of people which culminated in the revolution.

One of the major criticisms of the old paradigm is its disregard for the role of culture in development. Since cultures were regarded as closed systems, a change in the direction of the dissolution of the old system during the introduction of technologies was predicted. With the dissolution of the old system, a given one-way flow of information and central planning thus seemed adequate, and the end-product would naturally be copies of Western societies. Many would agree that the old paradigm still applies, at least in part, in some of the developing nations, but not in all of them. What the old paradigm failed to recognize is that each sociocultural system is an open system unique in its own way and that the constant interaction among forces in the system helps to maintain a quasi-stable state. As mentioned earlier in this paper, replacement of one force by another does occur in an open system, but rarely occurs in the arbitrary fashion described by the old paradigm. A few sociodemographic indices may be important, but they have to be examined against the sociocultural framework to be of any significance. The specific characteristics and needs of an indigenous culture must be taken into consideration.

Now that the dominance of the old paradigm has come to an end, the picture in the Third World is far from rosy. Because of lack of consideration of sociocultural structure in a developing nation, the introduction of technology has often served the already-privileged and thus widened the gap between the

classes. Even in other contexts, the gap between developed and developing nations is still far from closed. The immediate concern now is not more technology, but equal distribution of wealth and information. Additionally, the one-way flow of technology and information has caused panic at the loss of cultural identity in developing nations. Statistics give a grim picture. For example 80 per cent of the television programmes presented in Latin America were produced in the United States and commentators predicted that viewers would forsake their traditional values and absorb the stereotypes and prejudices portrayed by these programmes.^{36/} Researchers like Nordenstrand, Varis and Schiller have shown how this phenomenon is related to global patterns of domination and the dependence theory.^{37/} This fear of cultural imperialism undoubtedly erected more barriers to development.

Nowadays the newer concepts of development are advocating self-reliance, participation, equality in the distribution of information and wealth, and integration of the modern and the traditional.^{38/} The desire to initiate change from the bottom social stratum has led to models such as the "problem solving" approach by Havelock^{39/} which placed its focus on the receiving end of the one-way information flow i.e., the peasants and the villagers. It suggested that the users were aware of their needs and knowledgeable about the situation they were in, therefore, "user-initiated change" was encouraged and highly regarded. On the other hand, concepts such as "appropriate technology" emerged when the use of ultra-modern technology was clearly not the answer to the problems of developing nations. Many of these new concepts and models for development grew out of field experiences, and therefore seemed to be more realistic than the claims by the "old paradigm." But the key to the problem in development still lies in the role of culture; it announced the end of the old paradigm and it may also point to the

direction of a new paradigm which in time will prove the adequacy of the newer concepts.

The advantage of the mediation approach lies in flexibility in allowing all the major factors to function and interact. This approach avoids repeating the major weakness of previous organic models or the cultural integration process Linton, Spicer and Herskovits described, because it looks at culture as an open system, instead of treating it as a static, closed system.^{40/} The old paradigm typically predicted the decline of traditional media with the rise of modern mass media. Some of the traditional folk media does seem to be declining in the Third World, however, in many developing nations, folk media such as bag puppet shows and storytelling have now been integrated with mass media and have even become part of popular television programmes. The old paradigm would have predicted the disappearance of arranged marriages in India but in fact, the traditional way of finding a spouse persisted with an added touch of modernity: newspapers came to serve the function of matchmaker. In both the above examples, there was little conflict between the indigenous culture and the introduced technology. Through the interaction of the two, a unique practice evolved which is not entirely Western, but not entirely indigenous either. The mediation approach suggests that since each society has its own needs and features, it will be up to the people to define development and to decide the priorities and strategies instead of imposing one universal development model on all societies.

As pointed out earlier in this paper, the thrust of the mediation approach is interaction. It suggests that interaction between an indigenous culture and technology as both natural and inevitable. What is implied here is that development strategies which seek to integrate the indigenous and the

modern not only stand greater chances for success, but will also reduce concern with cultural imperialism since the indigenous culture is never "removed" or "replaced," but actively interacts with new technological innovations.

With development strategies seeking to incorporate the indigenous with the modern, gaps between the privileged sectors and the masses could also be narrowed. In many of the developing societies, modern means of communication failed to reach the majority of the rural population because of illiteracy or geographical distances. Even if mass media succeeded in reaching the intended targeted groups, the message failed to come through because the audience had a different frame of mind. By incorporating the modern and the indigenous means of communication, development messages will stand a greater chance of reaching and being accepted by the target groups. When the information gap between the elite and the masses narrowed, the chances that gaps in other areas also narrow will be enhanced.

Interactions in an open system also bear significance in the process of decision making in planning. The old paradigm suggests a trickle-down, centralized way of planning. The newer concepts suggest bottom-up users initiated changes. The mediation approach respects the needs, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of the users; it also suggests a much more active role for the people and planners of the Third World than what was suggested by the old paradigm. However, it does not suggest that all the changes should be initiated by users because in many cases, the users may not be aware of, or feel the need for an alternative to their present ways. Changes, therefore, may best be brought about through communication between the planners and the consumers. Only when development is the outcome of interactions, will an appropriate growth of technology take place.

One important aspect of interaction with an open system occurs with other elements in the environment. As defined earlier in this paper, "environment" includes both the natural setting and other cultures and societies. Impact of the natural environment on an indigenous culture may be inevitable, but in history, some cultures had managed to stay rather isolated from other cultures, e.g., Japan and China. Success in development in some of these isolated societies has led to the recent contention of self-reliance in the development effort. While it is obvious that total dependency can rarely bring about development, it is also doubtful whether total self-reliance can be an ideal strategy either. The best example may be found with China, where, after decades of isolation from Western technologies, some achievements have been made towards development. But overall, China remains a poor and backward nation. The current policies of the "four modernizations" represent an eagerness to step up interaction with other societies and cultures to come out of isolation.

Conclusion

This paper advocates a closer look at the mediation function of a culture and more research on indigenous communication. This does not mean, as indeed some chauvinists of developing nations seem to urge, that we should romanticize and uncritically glorify everything that is traditional. An essential requirement in this endeavour is, as T. S. Elliot said, to discover the presentness in the past and the process through which the present finds itself in the past.

NOTES

- 1/ Wilbur Schramm, "End of an Old Paradigm?" in Wilbur Schramm and Daniel Lerner, eds., Communication and Change (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976).
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