DECENTRALISED PLANNING: ITS NATURE, SCOPE & LIMITATIONS

V. S. VYAS

Most of the efforts in decentralised planning in this country have taken one of the two extreme stands. Sometimes attempts are made to prepare a plan for a village or a taluka as a replica of a national plan in all its major details such as targets for rates of growth of income, employment, and investment, while some other attempts in the direction of decentralised planning merely list all the felt needs of the area without any reference, or at best with scant reference, to income and employment or to the financial implication of the planned activities. Neither of these two approaches, I believe, is realistic. It is proposed in this note to briefly explain the weaknesses of these approaches, to suggest the scope for decentralised planning and to indicate the nature of such planning. It is also suggested that for various economic and political reasons the decentralised plans, at this stage, should be attempted at the district level and that at present there is a very little possibility of formulating an operationally useful plan below the district level.

LIMITATIONS OF DECENTRALISED PLANNING

The problem of decentralisation in planning has to be faced at two levels—at the level of formulating the broad targets of the plan and at the level of executing the targets laid down. There is a growing body of opinion, even in countries which maintain a collectivist approach to economic planning, that the decision taking for the
execution of various aspects of a plan should be delegated to the managers or the executives. There is no such agreement regarding the decentralisation of the target-making, or on the geographical or administrative loci of economic planning. One approach suggests that the plans should emerge from below, say, from a village, and then should be gradually coordinated at progressively higher levels. The other view is that the plans have to be framed at the national, or, at best, the state level, though the felt needs and the growth potentials of various areas within the state should be taken into account while formulating the state plan. In this country there is a growing body of people who are not satisfied with the formulation of the plan at the national or state level and point out that this type of planning cannot take a proper account of local initiative and the felt needs of the people, and cannot harness local resources to the maximum.

Even while broadly agreeing that there is a need for devolving the planning function on to the lower units of administration, the question which may be asked is whether it is possible to have a fully integrated plan at a level lower than, say, a state. It should be remembered that the powers for economic planning are more or less co-terminus with the powers of administrative sanctions, and this is all the more true in a backward economy where the organs of state at various levels have to play a vital role in initiating and sustaining economic development. Therefore, the plan at a level where the political powers are limited can hardly be complete or integrated. To expect that there can be 300 fullfledged plans, (i.e. if the unit of planning is not lower than the district), and that all these plans can be fully integrated into their respective state plans and later on into a national plan is to ask the impossible. We are confronted with the problems of coordination and integration even when the plans are partial or tentative.

There are other reasons which will deter any attempt at a complete or integrated plan for lower units. In the plans for lower units, the contribution of the non-organised sector and of under-employed resources for economic development is bound to be more
prominent. It is very difficult to assess the availability of such resources and to plan for their mobilisation. Besides, the under-developed economies are usually also un-integrated economies (in the sense that economic stimuli do not receive the responses uniformly or predictably). Therefore, at progressively lower levels, the impact of aggregative policies, for instance monetary policy or fiscal policy, becomes more and more uncertain. Finally, because of the inter-dependence of several activities and the minimum viable size of several projects, a small unit of planning will face certain basic handicaps.

SCOPE FOR DECENTRALISED PLANNING:

This does not mean that there is no scope for decentralised planning. There are three important reasons for devolving the planning efforts on to the units below the state. In the first place, if the economy is to be fully integrated, in the sense noted above, the planning for such integration has to begin at the lower level. For instance, if all the parts of a region have to be made easily accessible a better perspective for planning of transport and communications can be gained at the district level. Similarly, planning for the mobilisation of under-employed resources, especially labour, and conservation and development of natural resources, especially land, can be done more systematically at lower levels. Finally, certain objectives such as protection and rehabilitation of the weaker sections can be achieved more fully by a plan for a small unit than by a national or even a state plan.

UNIT OF DECENTRALISED PLANNING:

This brings us to another aspect of decentralised planning. Even if we relinquish the idea of an integrated plan at lower levels, it is necessary that we take into account the structure of political powers and administrative sanctions which are necessary for the formulation and implementation of a plan. It will be advantageous, therefore, to plan for an administrative unit. Regional planning based merely on geographical homogeneity and ignoring administrative jurisdictions needs to be treated as a special case rather than a general rule.
The planning unit should normally coincide with the administrative unit. The powers of administrative sanctions, the interdependence of several economic activities and the scale of operation of several projects suggest that at this stage we can devolve the plan only down to the district level. If in a state the power structure under the scheme of democratic decentralisation is so devised as to give a taluka or tehsil more real powers than to a district, there may be some point in making the tehsil a planning unit. However due to other considerations mentioned above the district seems at this stage to be a better unit for devolving the plan efforts.

NATURE OF PLANNING AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL:

There are three different ways in which the task of planning can begin. It should be recognised at the outset that whichever approach is selected ultimately will have to be modified in the light of two other considerations. One way of starting plan formulation is to decide on certain targets of rates of growth, e.g., of per capita incomes, and to translate them in terms of investment, employment and demand. Another approach is to first assess the resources, especially the financial resources, of a unit of planning and then to determine how best these resources should be invested in order to maximise returns and continue the process of economic growth. The last approach is more tentative, viz. to plan for a fuller development of existing resources and remove the bottlenecks which might exist due to the absence or inadequacy of social and economic overheads. Planning at the district level has to begin with the latter approach. At the same time, once the plan of resource development has been formulated, its implications in terms of financial and physical resources, as well as its impact on per capita income and employment, will have to be worked out. In other words, the "decentralised sector" of a district plan will have to concentrate more on the provision of socio-economic overheads, conservation of existing resources, development of natural resources and mobilisation of under-employed resources, especially man-power, for economic development. A plan with these priorities will have to be made at the district level. This "decentralised sector" of the district plans will have to be supplemented by the "State" or
"Central" sector in the respective districts; the latter will have to be planned at the state level or the national level. Simultaneously, the physical and financial implications of the decentralised sector will have to be worked out and duly integrated with the state sector or the central sector.

If this approach is accepted the district plans, state plans and national plans will not represent planning at progressively higher or lower levels but they will be complementary aspects of planning within the country as a whole.

PREPARATION OF PLAN:

The present method of preparation of district plans is defective. In most of the states, the village level worker is asked to prepare a plan for his village which is in reality an inventory of felt needs. Village plans are coordinated at the Block level and the Block level plans are coordinated at the district or state level. But before this coordination is accomplished, a financial ceiling for each block is decided upon and the plans of the Block and in turn the plans of the villages are subjected to necessary adjustments in the light of this ceiling. Usually the difference in terms of financial requirements between the plan originally formulated and the ceiling is so great that that the plans have to be entirely recast and the earlier efforts go to waste. Nor is there any criteria for selecting one project and omitting another.

Mention may be made in this connection of the method followed for the preparation of the Wardha district plan at the Gokhale Institute. The preparation of the plan was preceded by a comprehensive socio-economic survey of the district. For the purpose of this survey, the district was divided into small homogeneous regions. From every region a few clusters of villages were selected for intensive survey. On the basis of this survey, four notes were prepared, on land utilisation, irrigation, livestock, and rural industries respectively. These notes were placed before a seminar to which a number of social workers, local leaders, experts in various fields, and regional level Government officials were invited. The block-wise plans were prepared on the basis of this discussion. Later on, these plans were discussed
DECENTRALISED PLANNING: ITS NATURE, SCOPE & LIMITATIONS

at various blocks, with attention focussed on (i) a plan for social and economic overheads (ii) a plan for conservation of resources and (iii) a development plan for rural industries.

Wardha district plan is perhaps the first experiment of its kind. Being the pioneering effort, it had certain special features which should be noted. The plan was assured of liberal financial assistance. So that financial limits did not inhibit its preparation. More important, the role of mobilising local resources was not properly investigated. Second, there was no yard-stick suggested to judge the efficacy of this plan in terms of the committed resources. Lastly, no procedure was evolved to integrate this plan with either other district plans or the state plan. However, it should be reiterated that the procedure evolved for the preparation of the Wardha district plan is essentially a sound one, and all that is needed is to strengthen it by taking fuller account of the two or three problems mentioned above.

विकिनिर्देश आचीलांना प्रकाश, अवकाश अने मध्यस्थानांचे

आपल्या देशातील विकिनिर्देश आचीलांना मातृत्वाचे प्रसन्न त्या अनंत भागी दींचा आहे. नवंबरीमध्ये राष्ट्रीय रत्नांची व अनेक उद्या ताकडा आयोगाचा ग्रामीण भाग घरातील सुधार बोपट विगती वाणींनी धारणाचा प्रयत्न घडणारा तर नाही असे. गाव संघाचा प्रश्नांसोबत हींडा देखील तर सरकारी कार्यालयांनी हक्कांची व हमेशेच्या आपल्या हे जपात भाव वाचविला नाही.

आपलं विकिनिर्देशकरूनांनी अशा निर्देशात अशी आपल्यांची हल हवानाची जगी. अंततः तो आमजोन धातुच्या समन्वयात कसा तर कर्जातील अशा आपल्यांची गोष्ट तोडून दिसून असे. आतापर्यंत धातुच्या अनेक मातृत्वाच्या शक्तीतून शक्तीतून आपल्यांना निर्देश करावी. ती शक्तीतून धातुचा अनेक मातृत्व शक्तीतून शक्तीतून आपल्यांना निर्देश करावी. ती शक्तीतून धातुचा अनेक मातृत्व शक्तीतून शक्तीतून आपल्यांना निर्देश करावी. ती शक्तीतून धातुचा अनेक मातृत्व शक्तीतून शक्तीतून आपल्यांना निर्देश करावी. ती शक्तीतून धातुचा अनेक मातृत्व शक्तीतून शक्तीतून आपल्यांना निर्देश करावी. ती शक्तीतून धातुचा अनेक मातृत्व शक्तीतून शक्तीतून आपल्यांना निर्देश करावी.
વિભિન્ન આધયાન માટે કેદા શું હોઈ શકે છે શુભકાલ સાતા અને વહીવટી મંજૂરીપણીને ઉપર વલ્લું ચિહ્ન લેતા વહીવટી કેદા આધયાન માટે પણ કેદા નથી રહે તે જ ઘણા કેટલા થયા છે. આ માટે આધયાનનું હાસ આપણે સુખા મૂઢા નીચે લાઈ સારી સાધનને. હે હે રાખવા લેખકની સ્વસ્થીવર્તીનું ઘાના હે લે થોડા ખચા કાર્યના સાથે આધયાનનું કેદા સાધારણ. પરિપ્રેક્ષ્ય સાહેબી ભોજનરાજ એ "વિભિન્ન વિશાળ" વા સામાજિક અને આર્થિક તત્ત્વો, વારથીન સાહેબીની જાતી, કેરળ સાહેબીની વિશાળ અને અધ્યાય સાહેબીની સામાજિક પ્રામાણિક ઉપર ઘણો છાપ મુકાવશે તેમને. સાહેબી ભોજના વિશ્વાસ કાર્યો બધાની ભેંઝકા હોવા આ વિશ્વાસ વહીવટી જાતી અને તંકાં આધયાનના કાર્યને રાજ્યની સાહેબીની રાજ્યની ભોજનરાજ અને રાજ્યની ભોજનરાજ બધાની અધીનના રીતે ઉપર કે નીચે સાહેબ ભોજનરાજ ન રહેતાં આપણા દેશ કેદાની ભોજનરાજ પૂરક અને તેની રહેશે.

ભોજના ઘટના માટે પુતળી જાગે રાજ્યની નાસ્તુ વચ્ચે વિષય ભોજના આધયાન માટે કે પહેલી અખંદ હોય હતી તે સાચીના છે અને તે દીકાલ વિષયોના માટે પણ અપનાવી શક્ય છે. ભોજના ઘટના પહેલી આધયાન વિશાળ સામાજિક-આર્થિક મેળવવાનો પડાશો સામી અધિક કંટ્રોલ કરવાની આધારે હતી. આ મેળવીની આધાર કની પણ તેમજ વિશાળ સામાજિક વિશાળ પ્રાથમિક ખચા છે. આ માટ વિશાળ નીચે ભાપા તેમજ કાર્યના આપણે હતાં. આ તના તાલભ્ય કાર્યરાષ્ટ્રીય ઘણા શા પણ વિશ્વાસ ભોજનપત્ર ભોજનરાજ તેમજ કાર્યના આપણે હતાં. આ રેટી ઉપરાંત આપણે વિશાળ વ્યવસ્થા ભોજનરાજ ત્રસ્તી સાહેબીની રહેશે. તેમ ઘણા તે આદર્શ સંગીત હોવાયી આ પહેલા વળું સંગીત પણ કાર્યના રીતે આપણે ઉપયોગ કરશે સાહેબ.
RECENT PERIODICALS

Arthaniti.


Artha Vijnana


The Indian Economic and Social History Review

The Indian Economic Journal:


Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics