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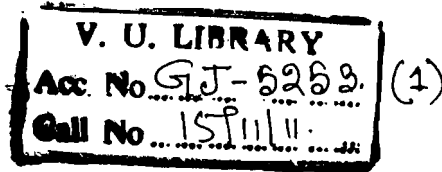
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Reviewing Modernity, Modernism and Postmodernism

RAJASRI BASU

Today, any incident, event or subject is being analysed from a postmodern perspective. Today postmodernism is an institutionalised ideology, which is complex, debatable and influential, at the same time. Postmodernism challenges rationality, objectivity and the idea of ongoing progress, or in other words, all the ideas rooted in *The Enlightenment* and argues whether these ideals can exist at all.

Although it is difficult to trace the origin of postmodernism in an exact manner, normally the period after the end of the Second World War is regarded as the time for the emergence of the postmodern thinking, culture and attitude. Some, however, trace its emergence with the Dada movement of 1920s while some bring it back as late as 1960s with the emergence of 'mods' in Britain and the 'pop music' in US.

Without trying to identify the exact time of the emergence of postmodernism, it can safely be said that postmodernism is rooted in the various anti-establishment movements in US and Western Europe which took place after the Second World War, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. *The Postmodern Condition : A Report on Knowledge* written by Jean-Francois Lyotard, which came out in 1979, is regarded as notable for disseminating and establishing postmodern ideas. Besides a book by Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror*, published in the same year is also important with respect to the theoretical understanding of

postmodernism. In addition, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida and many others are powerful exponents of postmodernism.

Many believe that postmodernism is the ideology of advanced, late capitalism. The highly sophisticated technology and advanced economy have created a society which is decentralised, media-controlled society, where there exists no single centre of power but a panopticism of power-structure–a society in which ideas are simulacra and only inter-referential representations and copies of each other, with no real original, stable or objective source for communication and meaning. Of late, globalization, brought on by innovations in communication, manufacturing and transportation is definitely a force which has driven the decentralized modern life, creating a culturally pluralistic and profoundly interconnected global society. This society is thus characterized by localism, cultural pluralism. Therefore, postmodern scholars argue that such a decentralized, pluralistic society defies the application of grand narratives, which could explain the problems and incidents happening in any part of the globe. Thus post modernism rejects traditional frames of genre, structural and stylistic unity, conventional norms and wisdom. Instead, they value the collage of elements, the play and juxtaposition of ideas from different contexts, and the deconstruction of symbols into the basic dynamics of power and place from which those symbols gain meaning as signifiers.

Thus postmodernism directly challenges the lessons that have been learnt from the Enlightenment or the modern era and introduces completely new ideas which are complex and highly debatable and controversial. Besides there have been academic debates as to whether postmodernism is anti-modern or whether postmodernism is an extension of modernism. However, this paper will not look into the controversies associated with postmodernism but rather will look into the background of postmodernism, that is, the incidents or the situation, giving rise to postmodernism.

II

Whether we call postmodernism as an extension of modernism or antithetical to modernity, we cannot possibly ignore the word 'modern' in any discussion on 'post-mdernism'. Modernity is a term used to describe the condition of being "modern". Since the term "modern" is used to describe a wide range of periods, modernity must be considered contextually. Modern can mean all of post-medieval European history, in

the context of dividing history into three large epochs : Ancient, the Middle Ages, and Modern. It is alos applied specifically to the period beginning somewhere betwen 1870 and 1910, through the present, and even more specifically to the 1910-1960 period. As is the problem of periodization with the term 'modern', so are problems with events that are associated with 'modern'. For instance, rise of bureaucracy, rationality, secularism, alienation, individualism, rise of capitalism, industrialization, linear progression, commodification—all these can be identified or associated with the 'modern era'. Alongside several incidents like, chronologically speaking, scientific inventions, industrial revolution, arrival of the printing press, English Civil War, Age of Enlightenment, American War of Independence, French Revolution, can be regarded as cumulatively responsible for heralding the Modern Age.

It should be mentioned at this juncture, that just as one feature is not the defining feature of 'modernity', so is one incident should not be regarded as responsible for giving birth to 'modernity'. Still we may say that 'modernity' emerged, in the European context, on the values that the Age of Enlightenment ushered in. The most important of these values is human reasoning on the basis of which man can obtain objective knowledge about something.

Although modernity arose in the West, gradually it was able to embrace the whole world. If we consider modernity from the standpoint of the values that modernity emphasizes, we would then definitely be in a postion to identify some of the great positive achievements of modernity. For instance, the modern age appreciates the enormous scientific advancement that makes man rational as well as frees him from superstitions. Achievements in the field of physics have broadened the horizon of knowledge; tremendous advancements in the arena of agricultural and medical and technological science are the defining factors in enhancingthe quality of life of people

But at the same time, there are dark sides to modernity. While no one can deny the positive advancements in the field of physics, ironically, these achievements are responsible for the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II, and the following nuclear arms race in the post-war era. Environmental problems comprise another category in the dark side of modernity. Pollution is one such catastrophe

and one may also include decrasing biodiversity and climate change as results of development. The development of biotechnology and genetic engineering are creating what some consider sources of unknown risks. Besides these obvious incidents, many critics point out psychological and moral hazards of modern life—alienation, feeling of rootlessness, loss of strong bonds and common values, hedonism, and so on.

III

It is true that modern life has been able to give its seal everywhere. While on the one hand, modernization brouht a series of seemingly indisputable benefits to people like lower infant mortality rate, decreased death from starvation, eradication of some of the fatal disease and soon it gave birth to rational thinking, analysis of any event on the basis of reasoning, etc. Not only the people's lifestyle, literature, painting, art and architecture had also come under the tremendous influence of modernity.

In Europe, we come across modern ideas in Sir Walter Scott *(Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.* 1802), Lord Byron *(Don Juan :* Remained incomplete), Goethe *(Faust :* 1808), Charles and Mary Lamb *(Tales from Shakespeare :* 1807) Jane Austen *(Pride and Prejudice :*1813) and so on. Later the works of John Keats *(Lamia Isabella :* 1820), Mary Shelly *(Valperga :* 1823), Percy Shelly *(The Masque of Anarchy :*1832), Alexander Dumas *(The Three Musketeers :* 1844), Charles Dickens *(Oliver Twist :* 1837) Edgar Allan Poe *(The Conqueror worm:* 1837) bore the stamps of modernity.

During the later half of the 19th century, the works of Jules Verne, *(Five Weeks in A Balloon :* 1863), Lewis Carroll *(Alice's Adventure in Wonderland :* 1865), Mark Twain *(The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County :* 1867) are noteworthy. At around the same time, Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and *The Idiot* (1868) came out, which were a bit different from the other literature of this period as the author portrays the characters living in poor conditions with disparate and extreme states of mind, and explores human psychology while analyzing the political, social and spiritual states of the Russia of his time.

In 1869, Matthew Arnold set a cultural agenda in his book *Cultur and Anarchy.* His views represented one of two polar opposites which would be in struggle against each other for many years to come. One side

of the struggle would be represented by the Aesthetic, Symbolist or Decadent movement. The chief participants in the cultural opposition at this time included, on the so-called *decadent* side French poets like Jean Moreas, Paul Verlain, Charles Pierre Baudelaire, Stephane Mallarme and, in Britain, the Irish writer Oscar Wilde ; on the other side were Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin and the tendency amongst the arts toward a utilitarian, constructive and educational ethic. The views of Matthew Arnold, and John Ruskin inspired the Arts and Crafts Movement. This dispute (*art for art's sake versus art for the common good*) would continue throughout the remainder of the 19th century and much of the 20th. The *Decadent* movement is regarded as a transitional stage between romanticism and *modernism*.

Apart form Matthew Arnold, the name of Friedrich Nietzsche needs special mention. Nietzsche produced critiques of religion, morality, contemporary culture, and philosophy, centering on what he viewed as fundamental questions regarding the life-affirming and life-denying qualities of different attitudes and beliefs. Nietzsche's works feature unique, free-form stylization–combined with a wide philosophical breadth— through the use of analyses, etymologies, punning, parables, paradoxes, aphorisms, and contradictions, employed to demonstrate the inadequacies of normative modes of thought.

From 1970 onwards, the linear progression model of society, civilization and history was severely questioned. Writers like Wagner and Ibsen had been reviled for their own critiques of contemporary civilization and for their warnings that accelerating "progress" would lead to the creation of individuals detached from social norms and isolated from their fellow men. Arguments arose that not merely were the values of the artist and those of society different, but that society was antithetical to Progress, and could not move forward in its present form. Philosophers called into question the previous optimism. This had its reflection in French art and painting through the development of two schools : Impressionism and Symbolism. Impressionism is an art from where the painter uses light colours, chooses ordinary subject-matter, and the brushstrokes remain visible. Defying the conventional techniques of painting, the artist of the Impressionist School portrays the subject matter of his painting the way he sees the world. The influence of the Impressionist is thought to have spread

beyond the art world, leading to Impressionist music, and Impressionist literatures. Symbolism is also a reaction to modernity, which also embraces the literary, and the art world, philosophy as well as music. The Symbolist painters mixed mythology and dream imagery for a visual language of the soul, seeking evocative paintings that brought to mind a static world of silence. They used symbol (as such it is called Symbolism), which are not the familiar emblems of mainstream iconography but intensely personal, private, obscure and ambiguous references. Symbolists believed that art should aim to capture more absolute truths which could only be accessed by indirect methods. Thus they paint in a highly metaphorical and suggestive manner, endowing particular images or objects with symbolic meaning. Truly it is more a philosophy than an actual style of art.

This trend which principally flourished in art, gradually influenced poetry, prose, music and philosophy. In fact, the entire intellectual gamut came under the influence of a new thinking, which is critical of the teachings of the Enlightenment, defies traditional norms and contours and opens up absolutely new avenues. France emerged as the birthplace of this new trend, which came to be regarded as *modernism,* and more specifically as Clement Greenberg wrote : "What can be safely called "Modernism" emerged in the middle of the last [19th-Ed] century' and rather locally, in France, with Baudelaire a while later, and not so locally, that Modernism appeared in music and architecture." What is to be mentioned here is that this modernism was not confined only to the world of aesthetics but to social science, psychology, philosophy and so on.

During the 20th century, this modernism evolved as a very powerful idea. The way the world-renowned Spanish painter Pablo Picasso evolved the techniques of Cubism, Surrealism in his paintings (one such famous painting is titled *Guernica*) showed his defiance of all the traditional techniques and conventional norms of painting. In spite of a growing flourish of modernist art and literature it was still viewed as being a part of the larger social movement. Artists such as Klimt and Cezanne, and composers such as Mahler and Richard Strauss were "the terrible moderns." Polemics in favour of geometric or purely abstract painting were largely confined to 'little magazines' with tiny circulations. Modernist innovation and pessimism were controversial but were not seen as representative of the mainstream, which was more inclined towards a Victorian faith in progress and liberal

optimism.

However, World War I and its subsequent events were the cataclysmic upheavals that late 19th century artists such as Brahms had worried about. First, the failure of the previous status quo seemed self-evident to a generation that had seen millions die fighting over scraps of earth—prior to the war, it had been argued that no one would fight such a war, since the cost was too high. Second, the birth of a machine age changed the conditions of life machine warfare become a touchstone of the ultimate reality. Finally, the immensely traumatic nature of the experience dashed the basic assumption that mankind was making slow and steady moral progress, which seemed ridiculous in the face of the senseless slaughter of the Great War. Human rationality, which the Enlightenment emphasized so much, seemed to be totally bankrupt.

Thus during the 1920s, modernism, which had been such a minority taste before the War, came to define the age. Modernism was seen in Europe in such critical movements as the Dada Movement, and then in constructive movements such as Surrealism, as well as in smaller movements such as the Bloomsbury Group. Each of these "modernisms", as some observers labelled them at the time, stressed new methods to produce new results.

By 1930s modernism was able to establish itself, more or less firmly. Not only painting and literature, theatre, cinema, music, architecture— all were overwhelmingly influenced by modernism and tried to break the barriers set by conventionalism. Theatre personality Bertolt Brecht, poet and novelist William Butler Yeats, poet and dramatist T.S. Eliot were important exponents of modernism of this era. Brecht, the very influential German dramatist and stage director through his famous major theatre productions like *The Three Penny Opera (1928)*, *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (1930)*, *The Mother (1932)* created a new style of theatre. He created an influential theory of theatre, the epic theatre, wherein a play should not cause the spectator to emotionally identify with the action before his or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the actions on the stage. Brecht believed that the experience of a climactic catharsis of emotion left an audience complacent. Instead, he wanted his audiences to use this critical perspective to identify social ills at work in the world and be moved to go forth from the theatre and effect

change. Brecht's influence was not confined to theatre only; it spread to the world of cinema too. Renowned film-makers like Nagisa Oshima, Ritwik Ghatak, Jean-Luc Godard were influenced by Brecht's style. Ghatak, the famous Bengali film-maker applied the Brechtian style in his films like *Ajantrik, Badi theke Paliye, Meghe Dhaka Tara* etc. This new style of film-making created a new language of Indian cinema and put it on a new platform.

The Nobel laureate Irish poet W. B. Yeeats did not experiment with "free verse" but was a master of the traditional verse forms. The impact of modernism on Yeats' work can be seen in the increasing abandonment of the more conventionally poetic diction in favour of the more austere language and more direct approach to themes. These were reflected in his *In the Seven Woods (1903), The Green Helmet (1910)* and *Responsibilities (1914)*. Another major exponent of modernism of this period was the American-born British dramatist T. S. Eliot, through his literary technique, stream of consiciousness, experimented with the literary style and defied the traditional norms.

Modernism, thus, by rejecting tradition, created a counter-culture. The most controversial aspect of the modern movement was, and remains, its rejection of tradition. Modernism's stress on freedom of expression, experimentation and radicalism distregards conventional expectations. This, however, often meant startling and alienating audiences with bizarre and unpredictable effects : the strange and disturbing combinations of motifs in Surrealism art; or the use of extreme dissonance and atonality in modernist music; rejection of intelligible plots in literature; or the creation of poetry that defied clear interpretation. Although modernism talked about the rejection of an "elite" culture or a "high" culture, it itself creates a culture which remains totally out of reach of ordinary people. This remained a contradiction which, modernism tried to overcome during the 1960s. In Britain, a youth sub-culture called itself "moderns", though usually shortened to 'Mods', following such representative music groups as The Who and the Kinks. The likes of Bob Dylan, and The Rolling Stones and others combined popular musical traditions with modernist verse, adopting literary devices derived from Eliot, and others. The Beatles developed along similar lines, creating various modernist musical effects on several albums. This is how the "high" culture and the "popular" culture was

sought to be bridged. The second contradiction within "modernism" is that although its proponents often rejected consumerism itself, modernism flourished mainly in consumer/capitalist societies.

Ironically again, when modernism tried to bridge the gap between high culture and low culture, it was criticized on the ground that by doing so, modernism itself has been transformed. Critics point out that, first, a movement based on the rejction of tradition had become a traditon of its own; and secondly, it demonstrated that the distinction between elite, modernist and mass consumerist culture had lost its precision. Some writers declared that modernism had become so institutionalized that it had lost its power as a revolutionary movement.

A somewhat declining trend of 'modernism' saw the emergence of a new vision, a new interpretation, and a new philosophy, which came to be known as postmodernism. The interpretation, analysis and the views of that, however, is a completely different, which does not come under the scope of this paper.

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Rethinking District Administration Perspective of Reforms

ANIL KUMAR JANA

The district administration in India usually refers to a multiple unit of administration representing a concentrated collection of public functionaries for managing the affairs of the government'.[1] When the East India Company decided to take over the entire administration of revenue from the *Nawabs* and *Diwans*, the foundation of district administration was laid by Warren Hastings (11 May 1772) with the appointment of the Collector and District Magistrate, the 'central pillar' of district administration.[2] Hence, the district administration is a product of exigencies under the British rule to discharge the regulatory functions within the districts. At the initial stage, there was no uniformity in the administrative pattern at the districts throughout the country under the East India Company: there were variations between the Bengal and the Madras model. Again, striking differences were visible in Bombay Presidency, the administration of which was vested in the President and a certain number of Councillors, called the President in Council. The Bengal pattern was based on the traditional practices of the Zamindari system prevalent in Bengal while the Madras pattern incorporated such modifications as were necessitated by local requirements. Thus the origin of the district administration in Bengal can be traced to the management of land ownership and taxation system.

The Beginning
The East India Company was also compelled to reorganize the administration of the districts, which had either become defunct or

disintegrated during the closing days of the Mughals. Subsequently, effective management of revenue administration necessitated the maintenance of law and order, and police administration was added to the district administration. The recurrent famines in a larger part of India in the nineteenth century and droughts in the North-Western Provinces brought the conceptual framework of a total administration at the district level directed towards development. The need for positive administrative actions was focused in the report of the Bengal and Orissa Famine Commission (1866) and the Government initiated steps for improvements in agriculture and irrigation and these tasks were also included in the administration of the districts. The collector as the head of the district administration became preoccupied not only with the maintenance of law and order and the management of revenue system, but also concerned with the development of economy and well-being of the people living under his jurisdiction.

The Government also took steps to bring the management of statistical information, specialization in development activities and knowledge of science and technology through establishment of 'special departments' within the fold of district administration. Some native personnel were appointed in the district below the collector without any defined rules of procedure relating to their functioning and conduct until 1892 when they were classified as subordinates. Separate police administration was also created in 1861 with the appointment of the Superintendent of Police under the administrative control of the Magistrate-Collector but the subordinates in the police department were placed under the immediate control of the superintendent thereby eroding the power of the collector. Moreover, Circle Officers were appointed on the recommendation of the Bengal Administrative Committee (1913-14) to look after the development of his circle and coordinate the activities of the technical officers. Though the development functions were brought within the purview of district administration, the major concern of the district administration during the British Raj was the discharge of regulatory functions. The emphasis on development functions is a post-independence phenomenon.

The Initial Dilemma

In a large and diverse country like ours, with an all-pervasive administrative structure created under the British Raj for a different purpose, the question of institution building became a major challenge after independence. Apart

from giving focus on the maintenance of law and order, the traditional preoccupations of the government, the urgency in according priorities on meeting the needs of development and modernization through reducing poverty and enhancing the scope of distributive justice became all the more a necessity. The task of creation of a new type of political and institutional structure became necessary for discharge of a new set of functions for the people of India who fought for Swaraj or self-rule was itself a challenge. But the spillover of the pre-independence structural configurations was so massive and widespread that it became difficult for the emerging Indian leadership to bypass the administrative legacies of the Raj. Thus the same set of institutions – the federal structure, the office of the Governor, steel-frame bureaucracy based on uniform code of civil service and common personnel management, the integrated Judicial system, the district administration and the like – were borrowed and engrafted into the system of administration in India. All these were the products of the British minds and interests. Even the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Land Acquisition Act formulated by the British still continue to prevail. The cumulative effects of all these led to the inconsistencies between the structural design and the functional necessities in administration in general and in the field level administration in particular. This structure–functional incongruity is the basic challenge to the district administration in India, which is yet to be addressed by the policy-makers and bureaucrats, and from which new issues and challenges are emerging to confront the administrative system even after five decades of independence.

The practice of provincial autonomy in the pre independence period could not contribute to the growth and consolidation of the district administration in any meaningful way. With the shifts in emphasis from regulatory to developmental functions, attempts were made to strengthen and expand the activities of the Local Self-Bodies especially the Union Boards in the districts. But these Boards failed to accomplish their objectives in absence of any financial support and supervision. There was also a sharp decline in the role of the District Boards and the rural development departments functioning at the districts gradually took their functions away. Notwithstanding these limitations and inefficiency, the Local bodies continued to discharge a good number of welfare functions in the context of repeated famines and food crises and continued to extend help and

support to the district administration in the management of local affairs. After independence, these bodies continued and even acquired new functions in addition to those already performed earliar thus leading to an administrative dilemma at the district level.

The focus and nature of district administration have changed from time to time in terms of its roles and functions but still today it has been able to maintain its independent identity as the most effective level of field administration in India's administrative structure. The change in its locus standi is the product of interaction between the exigencies of the regulatory nature of its functions and the requirements of development demands to meet the emerging social and political situations. And this change is the source of dilemmas for the development administration and creates larger challenges to the district administration. In independent India, the district administration was built up on the foundations of institutions created by the British Raj. Naturally, at the beginning, there was mutual suspicion and distrust and even hostility in the relationship between the civil servants and the newly empowered political leadership. But with passage of time, acceptability of the district as a convenient administrative unit coupled with the generalist nature of district administration helped the institution survive in the face of challenges of rapid political changes. The nature and content of the district administration have been changed significantly in post-independence period and its responsibilities have increased. The emphasis on development activities was essentially a new dimension in district administration after independence in the sense that development work assumed a regular shape and greater importance, while it was sporadic in nature under the Raj. The continued emphasis on development programmes and its institutionalization at the district level changed the nature of functioning and commitments of the district administration including that of the District Magistrate.

The Growth and Development
The search for a new approach to development began in 1940's and the introduction of the policy of planned development after independence demanded a new organizational set up to ensure people's participation. The organizational methods and structure considered adequate till that period when the public activities were confined to 'the regulatory, policing and revenue fields' became gradually 'inadequate to handle the advance

on the economic and social fronts'.[3] The Community Development Programme was launched with a view to making it a people's programme with government participation but no fundamental change in administration could be traced at the districts. The District Collector had to bear the burden as the chief coordinator and to provide leadership through a District Development Committee consisting of the district official and non-official members. Thus the administrative and organizational pattern followed after independence reflected a sharp dualism: democratic and bureaucratic trends. There was an attempt to introduce popular representation at the district and block levels, while bureaucracy was strengthened and reorganized horizontally under a generalist administrator to ensure coordination and linkages side by side. The district administration, in spite of shifts and changes in emphasis and focus, has moved in the direction of consolidating these two parallel hierarchies over these years.

With the changes introduced in the structure of administration after independence, the district administration was entrusted with the task of development administration, besides the responsibilities of regulatory and coordinating functions. It almost became a uniform institution throughout the country and, by and large, its nature and contents remained almost similar in all the states, except, of course, in respect of development functions of the District Magistrates. The functions have been increased tremendously over the years. The district administration is now overloaded with gradual additions of new responsibilities, which hampers the efficiency of the organisation. The first four decades of district administration in India (up to 1994) can be viewed through a succession of three overlapping phases of its growth and development, each of which may be identified according to the focus:

(a) The first two decades of district administration, specifically the period up to 1970 was marked as the phase of development administration. Development functions were added with greater emphasis to the regulatory functions that already existed with a view to accelerating the welfare objectives. All out attempts were made for achieving multi-sectoral coordination among the functionaries engaged at the districts for speedy socio-economic changes to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, ill health, malnutrition, social oppression and economic deprivation. All these led to the

development of heavy administrative machinery organized into multiple line departments, which ultimately created the problem of coordination. Administrative tension brought challenges to the efficiency and effectiveness in administration.

(b) The second phase started around 1970 with the failure of the Panchayati Raj and the Five-year plans to get rid of poverty and social chaos. Different sectoral schemes were introduced to launch direct attack on poverty, which represented a change towards centralized concept of sectoral development at the grassroots. The approach initiated was essentially bureaucratic and with the decline of panchayati raj bodies, the role of people in planning and implementation of development schemes and projects was missing. The district administration became inward looking and insulated. In the seventies, Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Development Agency (MFALDA) were set up. Subsequently, the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), chaired by the District Collector, was established in all the districts as a part of district development administration. During this period absence of sectoral coordination became clearly visible along with lack of people's initiative and participation, which posed serious challenge to the implementation of programmes.

(c) The last phase starts with the constitutionalisation of the local governments in both rural and urban India. The 73rd and the 74th Amendment Acts were passed in 1992 and subsequently the States passed the Conformity Acts by 1994 (23 April). This phase having greater implications for the district administration is in progress and has raised new issues and challenges that need to be addressed for the smooth and effective functioning of the democratic governance.

Towards Decentralised Administration

The Constitution Amendment (1992) seeks to democratize Indian political system through creating 'institutions of self-government' within the functional domain of the district administration. Through these Amendments a scheme of economic development and social justice based on self-governance has been worked out. The Amendments also include certain exciting aspects

and institutions having far reaching impacts on the structural design and functional outcomes of these bodies. The formation of the panchayats at an interval of five years, the reservation of seats and offices for women and the marginalized sections, the provisions for the constitution of new institutions like the District Planning Committee, *Gram Sabha* (additionally *Gram Sansad* in West Bengal), the State Finance Commission and the State Election Commissioner, the provisions indicating the devolution of a good number of functions to the panchayats through their inclusion in the Eleventh Schedule reflect the new dispensation of the democratization process. But a close scrutiny of the direction and outcomes as evident after a decade raises doubt. It becomes clear that the whole scheme is incomplete and is incapable of accomplishing the functions. The direction of the project (Amendments) is clear and it seeks to make the panchayats 'institutions of self-government', which requires an autonomous situation. This autonomy can only be ensured through total devolution of 3 Fs – Functions, Functionaries and Funds. The devolution of all the three elements – the three Fs - has not been worked out in the states excepting in Kerala. Even in Kerala, the progress in respect of administrative autonomy is not satisfactory.[4] Insufficient devolution of functionaries has the wider implications for the district administration since it entrusts responsibilities on it to get the local bodies functioning effectively. In West Bengal, the State Government is required to 'place at the disposal of the *Zilla Parishad*' and *'Panchayat Samiti '*, the services of such officers and persons serving under it in order to work with the panchayati raj bodies. In addition to these, the Executive Officer, Additional Executive Officer and Secretary of the Zilla Parishad are appointed from amongst the cadres of the general services of the government. Similarly, the Block Development Officers and the Joint BDO are made the Executive Officer and Joint Executive Officer of the *Panchayat Samiti* respectively. The Extension Officer of Panchayats working at the block acts as the Secretary of the *Panchayat Samiti*.

The Democratic Deficits

The devolution index calculated on the basis of the report of the Task Force on Panchayati Raj Institutions by taking the average percentage share of devolution shows that Karnataka with an index value of 100 per cent is ahead of all the states and West Bengal's position is fourth and the

index value is 60.92 per cent among the fifteen states under study.[5] Even the devolution of functionaries to the panchayats in West Bengal is not satisfactory and the process is slow. Here again Karnataka along with Sikkim top the list by transferring the entire functionaries relating to all the 29 subjects included in the 11th schedule while the Government of West Bengal has transferred functionaries to the panchayats pertaining to only 12 subjects.[6] All the officers associated with the functioning of Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis are cadres working under the Government of West Bengal and constitute a part of the district administration. Under our federal system of government, there are only two categories of service cadres, the Central and Provincial Cadres, and there is no cadre for local governments.

The decisions of the First Round Table of the Panchayati Raj Ministers (Kolkata 24-25 July, 2004) for building up a cadre of officials and technocrats for PRIs are yet to be implemented. As a result of the structural lacuna and administrative delays, functional confusions and dilemmas prevail among the district and block level functionaries attached to the panchayats. They suffer from the problem of dual allegiance: they are responsible for their functions to the political panchayats while accountable to their line departments for conduct, discipline, posting and promotion. The Extension Officer of Panchayats (EOP) is recruited and controlled by the panchayat department but attached to the intermediary level of the panchayats. In the line hierarchy he is linked with the District Panchayat Officer who is the head of the panchayat department of the government and is a part of district administration. The principle of hierarchy in public services – Central, State and Local – dominates the behaviour and activities of the bureaucracy and creates tensions in administration. Under such a situation, the effective functioning of the panchayats in preparing plans and programmes for 'economic development and social justice' becomes problematic, which cannot be ignored.

The democratization process has not reduced the role of district administration in regulatory spheres; rather it has reduced the differences between the regulatory and development functions. These have now become complementary to each other for all practical purposes. The Chinese wall does not exist in most cases, which are included within the jurisdictions of the district administration. Supply of food grains under FFW

or SGRY programmes is a developmental necessity while the maintenance of standard in weights and measurement is a regulatory responsibility, but both these concern the district administration equally. Success of the process of democratization depends on people's response to the policy changes introduced in the process. At the same time it is also a challenge for the administration to develop its capacity to make people responsive to the process of decentralization in a positive manner.

Under the new framework of decentralization in rural segments, the *Gram Sabha* and the *Gram Sansad* occupy a place of prominence because these are the institutions, which provide the scope for direct participation of people. The *Gram Sabha* is a part of the national pattern and is the bedrock on which the entire scheme of decentralization has been worked out in the Amendment. In West Bengal there is a provision in the Panchayat Act for meetings of the *Gram Sansads* at regular intervals twice a year to extend the scope of people's direct participation in the functioning of panchayats. The importance placed on the *Gram Sabha* and *Gram Sansads* in the State has led to the institutionalization of these grassroots level organizations. But the rate of people's participation is not satisfactory. Though the percentage of participation in *Gram Sansads* is slightly better than that of the *Gram Sabhas* due to close proximity of the *Sansads* to the people. The reasons cited to explain high rate of absenteeism are varied and diverse. Again, in some other cases panchayats are not sharing the decisions and responsibilities with people and thereby creating a gap between the 'giver' (panchayats) and the 'receiver' (people).[7] 'Institutions of self-government' cannot emerge where these are expected to develop on a foundation of dichotomy between the givers and the receivers. Such a relationship is not at all desirable in a functioning democratic system. Whatever may be the reasons for low level in people's direct participation in the functioning of the panchayati raj bodies even in this state, which has a long tradition of democratic movements and high level of mobilization of people, is alarming and makes it difficult to transform the panchayats into 'institutions of self-government'. The failure is a part of the democratic deficit and as such it is the tough challenge to the policy makers and administration.

The Development Imperatives
It is highly debatable if the process of decentralization has given a boost in

uplifting the powers of the district administration and especially that of the District Magistrate or a blow to it, there is no doubt that the district administration is called upon to perform enormous activities for development in the district. The district development administration has now three main authorities: the Zilla Parishad, the District Planning Committee and the Line departments. Under the West Bengal Panchayat Act, the *Zilla Parishad* is highest tier of the PRIs and is designed to 'function as a unit of self-government' for economic development of the district. Its development functions are both wide and statutory. In addition to its own staff, the State Government is required to appoint Executive Officer, Additional Executive Officer, Secretary of the *Zilla Parishad*. The Government is also responsible for formulation of rules for appointment of other officers and employees of the *Zilla Parishad*. As the executive officer, the District Magistrate is 'responsible for securing coordination between the *Zilla Parishad* and its Standing Committees on the one hand and the district level officers' on the other in respect of execution of development schemes and projects sanctioned by the *Zilla Parishad*.[8] The problem of coordination between the *Zilla Parishad* and the district level functionaries has been minimized to some extent through their statutory attachment with the standing committees of the *Zilla Parishad*. Now the role and initiative of the heads of the line departments are important in successful implementation of the development programmes of the *Zilla Parishad*. Selection of agencies or contractors for execution of development schemes largely depends on the officers of the line departments, which is sometimes resented by the elected representatives with a view to extending favour to their own men. There is always a scope for conflict if the concerned officer is too assertive; and if he keeps his eyes closed, transparency and accountability are lost.

The administrative headquarter of the district is located in the Collectorate which is a big establishment having major branches like General, Development, Land and Land Revenue, Finance, Civil Supplies etc. There are a few officers of the rank of Additional District Magistrates and Deputy Magistrates who look after one or more of these branches under the direct supervision and control of the District Magistrate. Though there are some differences among the states in respect of organization at the Collectorates, the main organizational structure is almost common. At the district level in

West Bengal, various development departments are staffed with about 100 posts of class I officers, 150-200 posts of class II officers and more than 500 posts of class III officers. In addition to these, there is a separate staffing pattern and strength of the functionaries in different district level agencies and projects. The augmentation of the entire district administration in the direction of good governance is problematic in itself and uncoordinated and unconnected activities of various departments lead to chaos and confusions in development administration.

There is always the need to develop 'an appropriate balance between bureaucratic system and constitutive system' so as to make the administration capable not only 'to carry out programmes'... but also 'to enlarge a government's capacity to engage in such programmes'.[9] The need for bureaucratic power is a functional requirement for implementation of programmes or projects but it should never lead to bureaucratic monopolization of authority. The observation of the Commissioner of Police (Kolkata) on the mysterious death of Rizwanur Rahman upholding the right of police to intervene in private space of citizens (If police didn't do it, who would? The PWD?) and drawing conclusion, even before any investigation, that the victim had committed suicide is a classic example of monopolisation of bureaucratic power and authority. Like wise, representative or popular authority should not be all-comprehensive. There should a proper balance between the two, otherwise the result may be disastrous. But this act of balancing should not be based on a compromise between the bureaucracy and political leadership, which has now become a common phenomenon throughout the country. Thus there is the need to work out an appropriate delimitation of functional areas of the two in order to restore people's faith in administration. Frustration leads to angst and when people fail to get justice from administration, they try for instant justice. Recent attacks on ration dealers and storming of their shops in remote corners of the state (West Bengal) and the incidents of lynching in different parts of the country no longer cease to be small reports in the media and give vent to people's anger against the system.

The issue that deserves serious attention is the constitutionalisation of decentralized district planning in India. It may be noted that neither the Planning Commission nor the process of centralized planning has any constitutional *locus standi*. On the contrary, the District Planning Committee

(DPC) has been given a constitutional status. The new dispensation has far reaching impacts on district administration since it requires institution building for undertaking the responsibility of formulation and implementation of plans at the micro levels. It also emphasises the participation of people at different levels and stages of planning exercise. The purpose of the Amendment (74th) is certainly encouraging and congenial for democratic functioning but here again the provisions are inadequate and leave room for non-compliance, delays and inter-state variations.[10] There is a lot of nagging questions in respect of the composition, functioning, effectiveness, funding and responsibility of the DPC. West Bengal is one of the first ranking states that passed DPC Act in 1994 and constituted the DPCs in all the districts. The village based district planning was introduced in some parts of the state earliar in the middle of 1980s.[11] But the attempt could not be sustained and had to be abandoned within two years. After the constitution of DPCs, district planning has become an integral part of a multi-level planning system linking the micro to the macro. But it is doubtful if there is decentralized planning at all in West Bengal in any real sense now. Decentralised planning implies the formulation and implementation of an integrated and balance proposal for development on a concrete understanding of the local resources, problems, needs and priorities. To ensure integrated planning and coordinated implementation, the DPC needs to be 'an umbrella organization nesting the plans of individual department and agencies' into the common framework of district planning.[12] Below the district level there is no planning machinery though the panchayats and municipalities are required to prepare their plans for consolidation by the DPC. The District Planning Cell, which functions as the Secretariat of the DPC, is poor in strength and weak in capability.[13] Under such a situation the formulation and implementation of district plans pose serious problems for the District Magistrate and the district administration.

The District Magistrate is both the Secretary of the DPC and the Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad. As the Collector of the district, he looks after the revenue administration as well. He coordinates and supervises the functions of all the district level officers. His office is a centre of both information and communication. In these capacities, the District Magistrate is expected to play three important roles: he assists the DPC in the formulation and implementation of plans and programmes in the district,

he exercises control over a large contingent of district bureaucracy, and also assists the Zilla Parishad and the DPC in the supervision and monitoring of the planning process below the district level. As the head of the district administration, the District Magistrate is responsible for the removal of administrative difficulties, inter-departmental conflicts and undue delays at the district level. This is a challenging task and demands initiative, vision and accommodative leadership on his part and, on the other hand, active cooperation from other district level officers. Seniority and experience may strengthen his capability but he is too burdened to look after all these things of a district. At the district level there are around a hundred committees, with the District Magistrate heading roughly half and the *Sabhadhipati* of the Zilla Parishad the other half. The committee system is always time consuming and costly.[14] The work load at the district level has increased manifold. But the staff strength has not increased proportionately although new programmes and projects require contacts with people. It is very much common now that programmes are approved just a few months before the closing of the financial year and even sometimes running projects are replaced in half done conditions by new ones. The obvious result that follows in such a situations is either no work or bad work or both. Hence, there is the need to continue a programme or to spread over it for a considerable period of time and to allow a certain time-span before withdrawing or replacing the same.

Corruption and Kleptomania
Corruption in society, politics and administration has taken a new shape in the era of liberalization and deregulation. It has grown to such an extent that addressing it seems to be quite insurmountable in India. The nexus between the corrupt politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats visible since the days of Nehru and Patel [15] has entered into all spheres of political system and public life. The earliar forms of corruptions – collusion and nepotism – have been multiplied with addition of new forms and types, notably bribes. The Tehelka, Hawla, Telecom episodes and the Bofors pay-off have extended the boundaries of political-administrative corruption to include allotments of MPLADS, cash-for-query scam, human trafficking cases (involving lawmakers) and the like. The cost of retaining power has resulted in bribery at the corridors of Parliament. The credibility of the police has hit the rock bottom in most of the states. "The moral atmosphere

of the country is not up to the mark. Everyone wants to grab money in whatever way he can. If somebody becomes a Chief Minister he wants to make a fortune not only for himself but also for three or four generations to come. If this tendency persists nobody is going to help us. We have to cure before we, the doctors, cure others." [16] The situation has further deteriorated in the meantime and this is evident from the fact that a daughter of a former Chief Minister has been able to become a Crorepati by earning Rs. 1.5 crore as commission on her first day as an LIC agent from a single deal by exploiting her position. [17]

The judiciary considered to be the last resort for common man failing to get justice from a politicized police, ineffective executive and corrupt politicians, is not free from kleptomaniac and illegal practices. The Transparency International's Global Corruption Report 2007 pointed out that only the lower level judicial officers in India have taken bribes to the tune of Rs. 2,630 crore in 2006. [18] It is a fact that the largest chunk of lower level judicial officials is engaged at the districts and below. No doubt, the judiciary as a whole has now become more responsive which is certainly laudable but at the same time there is the danger of judicial activism. The delicate constitutional balance among the legislature, executive and judiciary needs to be maintained rigidly and hence there is the urgency in demarcating the boundaries between responsiveness and activism. Thanks to a number of judgments and interventions, Indian judiciary has possibly become the most effective in the world but this transformation needs to be based on accountability, social justice and the rule of law. Since there is no mechanism to ensure accountability of the judiciary, the judges will have to develop their own code of conduct so that their actions and behaviour are not called into question. The threat of contempt and the demand for immunity from the ambit of RTI Act undermines the position and prestige of the judiciary. Hence, provisions should be made to restrict the scope to use these as safety valves for corrupt and unethical practices in any branch of governance including judiciary. These have accumulative effects on public life and devolution of powers and authority under such a situation promotes devolution of corruption. From a global phenomenon, corruption is fast becoming a glocal one. It has also become a development issue because it undermines economic development and discourages financial accountability.

The massive launching of development schemes and projects,

extension of welfare programmes and devolution of funds to the district level and below has widened the scope of corruption and misappropriation. Payment of kickbacks for granting contracts for construction of roads, bridges and houses is nothing new. The prevalence of corruption in some departments like motor vehicles, licensing and registration is loudly heard in collectorate campuses at the districts and this fall within the regulatory functions of the district administration. Pushing favours, lavish hospitalities and post-retirement assignments direct the awarding of contracts and taking vital decisions. Employment and appointments have been the traditional source of corruption and now the system has shifted from bureaucracy to the political level with the creation of new agencies and commissions for recruitment. Corruption in educational institutions is a new phenomenon and it is now even backed by political masters. Thanks to the changes in societal value system, the prestige and dignity of the academic even at the institutions of higher learning are judged by the degree of their proximity to the power that matters. The political leaders anxious to establish and enhance their hegemony on everything that fall within their fief find their trusted allies in those persons who lack honesty, commitment and efficiency but command proficiency in the art of cajoling for personal gains. Practice of corruption in sanctioning grants under Indira Awas Yojana or permits for modified ration shop are merely petty cases. There is a public perception that incidence of corruption and moral degradation is more frequent at political levels. The increasing cost of managing political parties and standard of living of party bosses has made the contractors and business houses the traditional sources to keep the ball rolling.

The obvious victims of such galloping rise in 'behavioural degradation and fall in moral standard' at all levels are the district and field level honest officers, and hence the challenge is to protect them by sending a clear message to the persons engaged in corrupt practices and by identifying them at the first instance. There is also the need to protect the honest officials from harassment and humiliation by union leaders and interference from their political masters. Prevalence of 'arbitrary and mindless transfers' of government officials at the dictates of the political authorities poses a serious challenge to the effective functioning of district administration.[19] There is the need for creation of an independent and autonomous authority at the district level for regular monitoring and

implementation of rule of law and easy flow of information. Transparency, openness and dissemination of information may provide a safety net to check penetration of corrupt and unethical practices into the boundaries of the district collectorates. Transparency is low everywhere in administration because the practice of misappropriation of funds and corruption is high. Creation of institutional mechanisms, like Lokpal, Lokayuts, Vigilance Commission etc. is important but these have become ineffective. Civil Service depends much on how the political leadership behaves. When the elected politicians are corrupt, they are unable to clean bureaucracy. No doubt, uprooting corruption is a big challenge but there is the need to fight it out for the survival of the democratic system.

The Emerging Issues

The process of globalization and liberalization has its impacts on every sphere of human life and activity. The district administration is not spared by the global challenges. The administration is finding its difficulty to cope with new situations in a cycle of uncertainty, which prevails everywhere [20]. Uncertainty has arisen from lack of availability and understanding of information pertaining to a situation in which the administrators have to take decisions. It is gradually becoming difficult to comprehend the uncertainties, which makes strategy planning and decision-making critical. Some information are available, some are not. There are time constraints and distortion of data and information as well. The situation calls upon the public officials to develop new techniques and methods to cope with uncertainties in a given situation to enhance their own ability and capability of the system. In a democratic system of governance, popular sentiments and reactions are required to be ascertained by the administrative heads for which a regular mechanism needs to be developed. The very composition of the rural power structure in India does not always favour the transmission of the real images of the villages and there is always the danger of manipulation. Again, the transmission of information may not ip so facto reflect the transmission of people's interests. Notwithstanding the creation of GROs, the images of village development needs and priorities reflect those of the rural elite groups in most cases. This situation may be checked to some extent through broadening the communication base with the non-elite rural people side by side.

New areas of concern have emerged and these are related to

issues like people's participation, women empowerment, environmental protection, protection of human rights including the rights of marginal people, protection of consumer rights and the like. All these demand efficiency, pro-active and human face in administration. New concepts like citizen's charter, enabling authorities and good governance have emerged. The role of the civil society, non-governmental organization and self-help groups have already taken a place of prominence in governance, which the district administration cannot overlook. Civil society, institutions outside the state, has acquired greater significance in academic and administrative discourse on development and has emerged as important contributor to the social and economic development in the Third World. There has been a rapid growth in the number of civil society groups in India recently and these have started functioning well though sometimes the problem of political predilections becomes manifest. The apolitical, non-communal and non-violent storm of protests over the death of Rizwan under suspicious circumstances in Kolkata reflect people's urge to protest the predatory role of the law enforcing machinery and the indecisive position of the government. The effectiveness of the media has been increased tremendously as a result of technological revolution. This is a developing phenomenon. The role of civil society organizations is considered vital in our country where the ability of the Central Government in policy-making in national interest and in securing adequate livelihood for people is called into question. Moreover, most of the State Governments in our country are weak, over politicized and bogged down in internal conflicts and disagreements. They have also failed to sort out the priorities setting short-term gains vis-à-vis long-term necessities in the era of structural adjustment. All these inadequacies and dilemmas have negative impacts on the district administration, which is more sensitive to popular expectations and demands in view of its responsibility for implementation of projects and policies at the field level.

Conclusion

Public Administration in India is at the crossroads and the district administration is a part of it. In fact, it needs an overhauling. To quote an expert in this field, "Administration in India is seamless not the least because of uniform civil service systems and common personnel regulations applicable to and enforced by the departments in charge of finance and

personnel departments. All the development sectors suffer from common problems of functional overlaps, centralization, weak monitoring and coordination, over staffing, skill gaps, corruption, poor budgetary management and unresponsive delivery systems."[21] These are common problems in which the district administration has plunged itself.

As a field level administration it is more exposed to changes and challenges. The complexion and character of district administration has changed though the constituent elements have remained almost unchanged. A lot of positive changes have taken place in district administration in West Bengal. It is gradually becoming pro-active, accommodative and responsive. Now it needs to be strengthened with the practice of rationality and flexibility. The issue of combating corruption and introducing transparency and accountability are related to each other. The functions of the District Magistrate have increased over the years. Conduct of elections has become curiously important since 1977 with the institutionalization of coalition politics in India. Whatever actions and functions are needed, these are directed to him for implementation. Most of the line officers work under the control of their departmental heads and hence they prefer to look upwards. Tensions become imminent in such a situation. Dual system of control always results in organizational chaos and dysfunctioning. The prevalent system of dual control and conflicts at the blocks between the BDOs and the Extension Officers has affected the effective implementation of development programmes.

Hence the District Magistrate needs to ensure a comfortable blending of departmental allegiance and functional accountability of all engaged in district administration especially of those officers who head different departments. As the head of the district administration, the District Magistrate has to play a balancing role in administration. All the district level officials will have to understand the reality and the changing situation: India needs not only good governance but also democratic good governance. In consideration of the social, cultural and economic factors, the districts in India are the appropriate starting points for good governance of the country. Historically, the districts in India have become the hubs of development activities for its own shake and in its right, and unless the district administration is made both responsive and responsible, there will be devastating results for the country as a whole. The shaking off the

regulatory mindset is the most serious challenge that needs to be addressed by internal motivation and commitment in bureaucracy.

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SAFTA : A Landmark in South Asian Economic Relations

PRATIP CHATTOPADHYAY

I

In the background of the recent trend of globalisation in the world economy the external sector in each economy has been receiving a place of primacy in the policy-making process. *In a related development, the world witnessed a regionalization of the global economy.* The might of the European Union (EU), the emergence of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the common market of the South American Southern Cone (MERCOSUR), and a wave of existing and emerging agreements in the Asia-Pacific and Africa, such as the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), among others, are pointers to this fact

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has completed over twenty years of its birth since its establishment on 8 December 1985. From relatively modest beginnings the seven members, comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, have gradually expanded their areas of cooperation to strengthen regional integration in South Asia.

The South Asian region lagged behind in terms of regional co-operation under the economic integration scheme in comparison to North America, Western Europe and South East Asia, and for that reason, countries of this region were at a disadvantageous position vis-a-vis their counterparts belonging to these strong regional bloc. The South Asian region

has been late to jump on the bandwagon of Regional Trading Blocs(RTBs).*It was not until 1987 summit in Kathmandu that the SAARC leaders recognized the need for explicitly entering into South Asian Economic Cooperation(SAEC)*

The idea of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement(SAPTA) was mooted at the sixth SAARC summit in Colombo in 1991 and it came into being in December 1995 during the eighth SAARC Summit in New Delhi.The SAPTA is an umbrella framework of rules providing *step-by-step liberalization of the intra-regional trade by exchange of trade concessions on tariff and non-tariff lines.* SAPTA contains favourable and special provisions for LDCs in the region(Bangladesh,Bhutan,Maldives and Nepal)like duty free area,flexibility in the restrictions on imports by LDCs from other members,etc.During the period of trade negotiation under SAPTA trade increased in the region to $2046 millions from $1925 millions in the first three quarters of 1999-2000.

As mandated by the Ninth SAARC Summit (1997), *a Group of Eminent Persons (GEP)* was constituted to further study, inter alia, ways and means of enhancing the effectiveness of SAARC in achieving its objectives especially in the economic field. It submitted its report in 1999, charting out a roadmap for converting the SAPTA into SAFTA, then into South Asian Customs Union (SACU) and finally into South Asian Economic Union (SAEU) by the year 2020.

The transition from SAPTA to SAFTA could be facilitated with the help of analysing different dimensions of trade co-operation. The magnitude of benefits from SAFTA and their distribution among the member countries needs to be examined. The implications of SAFTA for different member countries should be judged in terms of its income and employment effects, balance of payments implications, income distribution, etc. A detailed empirical analysis of product-wise comparative advantage of each member country vis-a-vis other SAARC countries should be carried out. This would enable a particular country to maximize the gains arising out of the additional market excess that it gets in partner countries under the SAFTA regime

II

The 12th Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) held in Islamabad in the first week of January 2004 has perhaps

been the most successful one in the organisation's chequered 20-years history. Many of the leaders who participated in the summit described the Islamabad meet as "historic". The significant achievement of the summit included the signing of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and the inclusion of the additional protocol on terrorism.

The first tariff reduction under the Trade Liberalisation Programme (TLP) of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) has been effected on 1 July 2006 by all South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation member-states, save Nepal, which has implemented the agreement on 1 August. SAFTA was scheduled to come into force on 1 January but had to be kept in abeyance because of the varying budgetary periods of the member-states. The agreement envisages a phased tariff liberalisation programme. Within two years, the Non-Least Development Contracting States (Non-LDCs) such as India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka would bring down tariffs to 20 per cent, while the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal would bring them down to 30 per cent. Non-LDCs will then bring down tariffs from 20 per cent to 0.5 per cent in five years (Sri Lanka in six years), while the LDCs would do so in eight years.

As a unique measure, the SAARC nations have agreed to accord national treatment to the products of all the seven member countries. The SAARC nations, while making the Agreement, agreed to harmonise their product standards and to recognise and accept on reciprocal basis the testing labs and certification of products located within the region. The framework agreement on SAFTA also covers the trade in services within South Asia to a large extent. The member countries agreed for simplifying the procedures for intra-regional banning, removal of restrictions on investment by member countries within the region, lifting of foreign exchange restrictions for the member countries, simplification of import licencing and simplification of procedures for visa for intra-regional movement for business purpose. The SAFTA Framework Agreement also provides for setting up of SAFTA Ministerial Council (SMC), as well as Committee of Experts (COE). While the SMC is the highest administrative body responsible for decision-making at the apex, the COE will be responsible for dispute settlement between the member countries arising out of the Agreement.

In short, SAFTA would mean free movement of people within the region, free movement of goods and services, development of connecting physical infrastructure, harmonising the general forms of financing, banking and foreign exchange and regional agreement for investment promotion and protection.

III

SAFTA *is aimed* at reducing existing tariffs to less than 5 per cent within a stipulated time frame to boost trade among the SAARC members countries. All the countries have been given the option of drawing up their own negative lists. For example, sensitive products covering agricultural items, textiles, pharmaceuticals and small-scale industries will be exempt from the trade liberalisation programme initially. The aim is to achieve removal of all trade barriers among member countries by 2016.

The scope of SAFTA must be expanded to cover trade in services and investment liberalisation. Another positive fall-out would be the enhanced attractiveness of South Asia as an FDI destination due to the integrated market and liberalised trade. The foreign investors could set up base in one country of the region and cater to the supply chain of the entire region. The reduction in tariff rates would multiply trade and commerce. This would call for a better network of roads and highways, railways and air and shipping agreements, harmonisation of customs regulations, quality standards, easy visa regulations and a dispute settlement mechanism. This would create an enabling framework for SAFTA and its benefits would percolate to the entire business community, leading to poverty alleviation and enhanced economic welfare.

IV

The success of SAFTA ultimately hinges on its generating a substantial amount of trade within the region. Before analyzing the potential of trade creation in the region after establishing full-fledged SAFTA, it would be worthwhile to look at the present degree of trade flow in South Asia.

Studying individually each SAARC country, the scene is almost the same. The export and import volumes have increased in all the countries over the period 1980-96 but as a percentage of their total global exports and imports, they have declined. Only India and Maldives were able to increase the proportion of their total world exports going to the SAARC

region over 1980-96, while the remaining-Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka registered a decline.

The bulk of SAARC countries' export is directed to industrialised countries. Between 1990 and 1996 the share of developed countries to the exports of India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan *decline* whereas in the case of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka it increased vis-a-vis the share of developing countries. Most of the Increase in the share of developing countries as a destination for the exports of India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan has been accounted for by the Asian region. Developed countries still remain prominent as markets for SAARC countries exports as their shares ranged from 55.1 per cent in the case of India to 86.1 per cent in the case of Nepal in 1996. In terms of a source-wise examination of imports the dependences of SMCs on developed countries as suppliers has been high. Their shares are particularly high in the case of India (51.3 per cent). However, developed countries share in the total imports of all the SMCs except for Maldives declined in 1996 in comparison to 1990. *Overall, SAARC countries are more dependent on developed countries as markets for their exports than as sources for their imports.*

V

The reasons for the poor trade flow among the SAARC countries are two-fold : structural and policy-induced reasons. The *structural constraints* stem from the fact that the patterns of production of the countries of the region are more or less the same because of their almost same latitude positions as well as their development stages being at the broad category of developing economies. Among the *policy-induced* reasons for the dismal trade performance within the region are pursuance of the import substitution policies to become self-reliant, lack of awareness about each other's tradable products, the lack of export capabilities in the region and political considerations, which generally ran against any economic co-operation

Some of the goods produced on a large scale in certain SAARC countries do not appear to meet the required consumer demand of the importing SAARC country. For example, Pakistan not being a tea producer, offers a large market for tea exports of Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh. However, a good part of Pakistan's tea requirement is imported from outside the SAARC region such as East African countries because the kind of tea

required by Pakistan (CTC tea) is not produced in adequate quantities in the SAARC region.

Even if trade preferences increase the demand for these products, it is unlikely to be significant as the subregional market is limited, and the demand for agricultural products is generally somewhat inelastic. Market limitation is also the major obstacle to Bangladesh's jute exports while the landlocked nature of Bhutan and Nepal gravitate the greater part of their trade towards India, which is already extending trade preferences bilaterally. In the cases of India and Pakistan, it does not seem likely that trade preferences can overcome the political differences which restrict bilateral trade.

The unequal size of the markets in South Asia appears to be the most important factor obstructing the expansion of trade in the region. Out of the seven South Asian countries, India has the biggest market with 59% of import, 62% of export, 41% of external resource, 79% of manufacturing value added and 68% of manufacturing exports. The market size of six other SAARC member coutries is no match to India. The fear of India's economic domination over the regional markets appears to be a barrier to trade co-operation in South Asia.

An inadequacy of regional transport communication systems has created obstacles to trade flow expansion in South Asia. The SAARC lack regional transportation network like the Asian Highway Project, Trans-Asian Railway Project, developed inland waterways with special provisions for transit facilities for Nepal, Bhutan including a regional shipping line with model transportation system. All these prove that South Asia has weak infrastructures.

Political obstacles have emerged from the interstate relations in South Asia which are characterized by the existence of a number of long standing bilateral disputes Most of the disputes are India-centric. The major stumbling block in the progress of SAARC and SAFTA has been the tension between India and Pakistan. The disputes between India and Bangladesh over the issues of water-sharing and illegal immigrants have often caused irritation in their bilateral relations. The issue of transit is also an important factor so far as Indo-Nepalese and Indo-Bhutanese relations are concerned. Like Nepal, Bhutan is also an landlocked country, and the transit through India to Bhutan would require India's approval. The net

results of these disputes are mutual suspicion and misunderstanding, which tend to move towards a free-trade area.

Informal trade between Pakistan and India has declined over the years due to reduced incentives and a switch over to smuggled Chinese goods, with the figure standing at $545 millions in 2005. A report by Sustainable Development Policy Institute says *informal trade between Pakistan and India has been declining* over the years due to reduction of tariffs by the Pakistan government which has reduced incentive for smuggling, switchover from informal Pakistan-India trade to informal Pakistan-China trade in recent years and government regulations against the use of certain products. There are also signs that the recently signed Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement may have led to diversion from informal Pakistan-India trade to formal Pakistan-Sri Lanka trade in certain products.

VI

Since all the SAFTA countries are developing nations, with higher levels of corruption and bureaucratic delays, the member nations would also have to tone up their respective administrations to be more responsive to the free trade requirements in the region. The member countries would also need to revamp their import and export procedures in tune with the needs of the time. Foreign exchange regulations and restrictions need to be eased as per the needs of true globalisation. For achieving this, countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan will have to do a lot within less than two years' time available. Last but not least, the commitment of the member countries towards achievement of SAFTA goals has to be unflinching.

Joint ventures backed by buy-back arrangement can be established not only in LDCs but in other countries of the region as well. FDI should be invited from outside the bloc in areas involving advanced technologies by all the states of the region. An attempt should be made by India to establish the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) on the borders with Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Bhutan. Border trade, which has not been included in the SAPTA Agreement, should also be brought in its ambit.

VII

Any realistic assessment of the prospects for the growth of economic cooperation in South Asia must have to address several of the following

issues. The *first issue* pertains to role of the state in promoting regional co-operation in South Asia. Given limited political contacts and mutual security concerns arising out of a typical security complement in South Asia, a state-directed approach to economic co-operation is better suited to this region. Given the limited development of transnational market forces in South Asia, any prospect of the growth of regional economic cooperation driven exclusively by the market forces appear bleak. Besides, if regional economic cooperation is left to market forces alone, it would take decades. Therefore, conscious efforts at the political level and demonstration of political will by the South Asian leaders are absolutely necessary for the growth of regional economic cooperation in South Asia.

The *second issue* concerns the development of a *pragmatic economic interdependence* in South Asia. The approach should be gradual and based on the economic capability of each state. The key to the development of a pragmatic strategy to increase economic interdependence among the South Asian countries is to promote intraregional trade by lowering tariffs without delinking from extraregional and global economic relations.

Third, setting gradiose goals for intraregional trade is likely to be counterproductive. Instead, over the next ten to fifteen years. SAARC countries should pursue modest trade objectives and *seek joint development projects of modest scale.* In this context, the SAARC countries should negotiate with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the development of joint projects.

Fourth, conservation of the natural resource base should constitute an integral part of any economic development strategy. Given the integrated environment of South Asia it is essential for the SAARC countries to collectively think of strategies for environmental conservation. This will require policy co-ordination at the governmental as well as grassroots level. Passage of environmental legislation and its strict enforcement dissemmination of a wide range of environmental education can go a long way toward the conservation of the environment in South Asia.

Finally, it is necessary to *establish a South Asian Development Fund (SADF)* in order to provide financial support to regional projects. The fund should not replicate the role of existing multilateral institutions

such as the ADB and the World Bank in South Asia. Besides undertaking
large regional infrastructure and environmental programs. The SADF can
focus on poverty-alleviation programs, provide lending to a comprehensive
human resources development program, finance joint ventures, support
intraregional and extraregional trade by arranging finance for export credit
and commodity stabilization, and support the existing regional institutions.
Resources for the SADF can come from contributions of SAARC countries
as well as from external sources. Needless to say, a successful SADF
would be able to provide the much-needed economic support to regional
projects and thereby strengthen interdependence among the South Asian
countries.

VIII

A recent study concluded that "a consensus has emerged among
researchers that RTA's are trade creating". For instance the intra-regional
trade, which was only 7 per cent in the ASEAN region before grouping
was formed, shot up to 49 per cent by 2003. Similarly, within the North
American Free Trade Agreement, it was only 12 per cent before it came
into being, but it rose to 44 per cent by 2003. Within the European Union,
it was 23 per cent in the early 80s, but went up to 67 per cent in 2003.

In spite of the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement, the
intraregional trade could not go above 4 per cent of the total trade of the
region because of the very limited coverage of the trade basket. With
SAFTA now in place, the region is all set to reap the real benefits of
regional trade liberalisation on the pattern of other trading blocs. That 5,500
tariff lines under SAFTA have been liberalised and are expected to move
towards zero tariff for Non-LDCs by 2013 and for LDCs by 2016 is
welcome. But unless the tariff lines cover items that have a trade potential
and member-countries have small sensitive lists, the very purpose and spirit
of this agreement will be defeated.

It is worth mentioning that India and Pakistan agreed on a number
of proposals at the end of the third round of talks on economic and
commercial co-operation within the framework of the Composite Dialogue
in March 2006. A joint statement welcomed the ratification of the South
Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) by all SAARC member-countries
With the operationalisation of SAFTA from July 1, over 4,000 commodities
will be opened for trade compared to less than 1,000 under the India

'positive list' maintained by Pakistan. To identify problems in transportation of goods by rail, representatives of the Ministries of Railways of both sides held a meeting on the sidelines of the talks. Pakistan and India would constitute a working group to discuss the issues of joint registration of Basmati rice. India would provide detailed proposals for trade in IT-enabled medical services.

IX

The Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh said that Asia needed a comprehensive security framework in the face of terrorism, as the region increased its economic profile globally with India getting linked into a web of partnerships to create a *Pan Asian Free Trade Agreement (PAFTA)*. He told at the opening session of the annual ADB meet at Hyderabad on May 5, 2006.

> Asia, including India, was turning into a major economic player on the world stage. While the West displays considerable resilience and will remain an important driver of global growth, East and South East Asia, including India, are bound to increase their profile and relevance to the global economy. Asia will continue to increase its share of world GDP and trade, both as a source of export supply and as a source of import demand.

The 14th SAARC summit held in New Delhi on 3-4 April 2007 opens new avenues of regional economic integration in the region. The member countries of SAARC agreed that SAARC needs to be action oriented than to depend on rhetoric. Thus the regional leaders pledged to take the SAARC from its "declatory phase" to "the phase of action and implementation".

The inclusion of Afghanisthan as the eighth member of SAARC has strengthen the demand of the transit rights of the land-locked countries of the region. The observer countries in this summit, like China, Japan and Korea readily agreed to co-operate with SAARC countries on infrastructure and energy on economic side and on poverty alleviation and disaster management on humanitarian and social grounds. Particularly EU conveyed its willingness to share its expertise with SAARC for the implementation of SAFTA. Moreover, India, one of the big powers in the region, unequivocally

declared in this summit to open its borders for free flow of goods from the LDC's of South Asia like Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives, Bhutan and Afghanistahan by removing trade barriers in the form of zero tarrifs. India has also stated to allow these goods to compete in Indian markets at competitive price by reducing the 'sensitive-list' of Indian items.

X

Even after 22 years of existence of the SAARC, the leaders of the region are usually much more comfortable in dealing with the countries outside the region than within. While the latest phase of globalization must have forced the leaders of South Asia to rethink their relationship vis-à-vis one another and to work for a free trade zone in South Asia,one can still note certain interesting facts about the dynamics of regional economic integration in South Asia.

The *uniqueness of SAFTA* and its departure from the experience of other established and well-known trade blocs like EU, NAFTA etc. lies in the fact that the *success* of free trade zone in South Asia depends on mostly non-economic factors, i.e., geography, internal and international political milieu, societal composition, attitudes of people etc.

Unlike the 'Fortress Europe' scenario of EU where free movement of goods, capital, labour is possible throughout Europe, in South Asia free movement of labour is a distant possibility keeping in mind the tensions between the various countries of the region regarding the problem of illegal immigration.

The widespread corruption, bureaucratic lethargy, elite monopolization of power, illiteracy, unemployment, poverty and such other traits of the political culture of South Asia prevents the percolation of the benefits of SAFTA below the business community.

Importantly the success of SAFTA depends largely on the *kind of framework* of regional co-operation followed by the countries of South Asia, that is, the degree of inclination towards multirateral or bilateral cooperation. SAFTA stands on the spirit of multilateral co-operation in South Asia.Even within multilaterity economic policy can be based on the principle of reciprocity or non-reciprocity.. Although the principle of non-reciprocity is not an accepted one in international economic bargaining., India in its latest declarations in 2007 basically promotes principle of non-reciprocity in its economic relationship with the LDC's in the region.

XI

Simply signing the SAFTA agreement will not get us far; there has to be genuine long term commitment to a free trade area. This obviously has political implications as well. Progress under SAFTA, juxtaposed with the developments under WTO, will have consequences not only for international and intraregional trade in the coming years, but will also have interesting fallouts in the domestic economic and political fields.

It would however be too optimistic to presume that SAFTA would come into being without any problems. Teething problems do occur in such cases, but the same are solved easily only if the member countries are keen to settle the trivial matters with the spirit of give and take. It is well known that it was because of strained relations between the two most important neighbours of the region that the Agreement has been delayed. It is also true that it is mainly because of friendly diplomatic moves by India that Pakistan has been coaxed to shun its anti-India stand on the issue. The member countries have to pledge to go ahead with SAFTA, notwithstanding anything flashy on the diplomatic front. The road to success is fraught with insurmountable difficulties in South Asia. A promise of self commitment by all the members only can make this long-cherished dream come true.

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Modernization and Development : Changing Status of Rural and Urban Tribal Women in Tripura

BISWAJIT GHOSH AND TANIMA CHOUDHURI

One of the most significant facets of tribal life in contemporary North-East India is its conformation with the modern institutions and values which have either developed due to a deliberate attempt by the government to intervene in the state of tribal affairs or are an outcome of the spectrum of changes that the country has witnessed after Independence. Historically speaking, tribes in India have hardly lived in isolation and many of them have shared certain basic social attributes of the wider section of society. In several socio-anthropological studies, the influence of factors like Hinduization, Sanskritization, acculturation, assimilation, etc., is noted in the formation of cultural identities of *Indian* tribes. But at the same time, tribes have also been exposed to several modern factors of change and development like urbanization, industrialization, educational and occupational expansion, politicization, Christian and missionary influence, comnunity and rural development schemes, modern means of communication and transportation. For the majority of tribal population of North-East India, these exposures are no less important. In fact, the life pattern of the tribal community of North-East India is in a state of rapid transition although the rate and nature of change may differ in different types of tribal culture and even within a tribe between man and woman. This paper primarily focuses on the nature and dimensions of changes in

the life and status of tribal women with particular reference to urban tribal women in Tripura—one of the 'seven sisters' of North-East India. It is the contention of the paper that the modern forces and institutions at operation in the urban (and rural as well) areas of Tripura have heightened some gender and class issues quite unheard of in the so-called 'egalitarian' society of the tribals.

Tribal life in Tripura : Place of Women

Tribals form a significant proportion of the total population of Tripura (29.59% in 1991 excluding Chakma refugees)[1] and this tiny North-Eastern state presents a bewildering collection of tribal groups. Out of the 19 enlisted tribes found in the state, eight (i.e., Tripuri, Riang, Noatia, Jamatia, Halam, Kuki, Chaimal and Uchai) are regarded as the original settlers, and they constituted nearly 86 per cent of Tripura's total tribal population in 1981. Tripuris, believed to be the earliest inhabitants of the state, are the largest in number with 56.66 per cent of tribal population, followed by Riang (14.39%) and Jamatia (7.62%) in 1981. Such demographic concentration induces me to restrict my analysis to the society and culture of some major tribes of Tripura. Still, it would be possible for me to comprehend the problem from a comparative point of view. What is more interesting for us here to note that tribal life in Tripura is distinctively marked by some striking similarities. For instance, the first language of over 80 per cent of tribal population in the state is *Kak borok*. Again, they are mostly Hindus (87.04% in 1981) even after retaining many of their indigenous rituals and religious practices. Even for those who are either Buddhists (mostly Chakmas and Mogs who have migrated from Chittagong Hills) or have shifted allegiance to Christianity in recent times (mostly Lushais, Khasis and Kukis), such judicious mixture of tribal and non-tribal religious pursuits is not uncommon. Like many other tribal societies of India and Africa, the practise of shifting or Jhum cultivation was very widespread in Tripura until recently. Even today Riangs, Kukis and Lushais living in the hills have not departed from this traditional production process. There is also some broad consensus regarding marriage rules, property rights, food and drinking habits, dress pattern, housing pattern and similar other activities.

So far as the question of gender roles and more particularly the place and image of women is concerned, there is less scope for variance. In spite of being followers of the Hindu tradition of patriarchy, Tripura

tribals have accredited a place of considerable socio-economic importance to their women folk. Women constitute the economic backbone in each of the tribal communities. Several studeis on tribal women of North-East India reveal that like all hill women, they are physically and socially most fit to lead a life of excessive hardship and exposure (Soppitt : 1885; Hutchinson : 1909; Shakespeare : 1912; Hutton : 1921; Parry : 1932). Social relations between the sexes in most cases are easy and natural; men and women generally meet freely on equal basis. Parry (1932) notes that among Lakhers, people who constantly beat their wives are looked down upon. Among the Lushais, unmarried girls are fairly free before marriage with their favours. Similarly, Soppitt (1885) notes that it is not unbecoming for a young man to work for and please a Rangkhol girl and obtain her favours. The practice of high bride-price prevalent among most of the tribal societies of North-East India has certainly worked in favour of their women folk.

In the traditional *Jhum* economy of Tripura, triabl women usually participated in almost all economic activities though there was some sort of a division of labour on the basis of sex and age (Chakraborty : 1993, p. 13). Ganguly (1993) holds that in the 'Jhumia society' women might not be equal to their male counterparts in every respect, but they are economically less dependent on them. It also makes them less vulnerable to ill-treatment or suppression. It has also been argued that the higher work participation capacity of tribal girls was instrumental in fetching a 'price' for them in marriage settlements (Dasgupta : 1993). This does not, of course, mean that in the tribal society of Tripura, women have been reduced to a position of 'marketable commodity'. Rather, the practice of bride-price prevalent among the Tripuris, Riangs, Jamatiyas or Kukis is an indicative of the higher social status of their women. One pointer to such a condition is the widespread practice of 'marriage by service' under which a youngman has to serve at the girls' residence for a certain period (from six months to three years) to prove his credibility, capability and morality. The tribal society has also vested the right to withhold consent in such marriages to their girls. Long back Hunter (1973) saw Kuki women exerting much influence on family matters. He was also astonished by the fact that Chakmas a hundred years back did not practise child marriage. What Hunter did not notice is that this age-old practice was almost absent among

other tribes too. The tribal society of North-East had not only stood against child marriage, it rather allowed the right to remarriage to their widows. All these, along with the general practice of monogamy and far more stable marital relations, have strengthened the wife's position in tribal households. It is worth mentioning here that Tripura tribals had a long tradition of severely dealing with crime against women. In the first codified criminal law enacted in 1886 by the then Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya, even death penalty was prescribed for crime and violence against women (Choudhury : 1993, p. 28). Reading through these indexes would make one believe that conjugal relation in a triabal family is based on the feeling of mutual dependence, responsibility, love and trust. A woman takes as much care for her husband as she is cared for.

Notwithstanding this, a Tripuri, Jamatiya or Riang woman plays a subordinate role at religious activities and village administration. Priesthood is not granted to the women folk, and they are also denied the right for father's property normally.[2] At the village level, they are debarred from active participation in the affairs of the council. Such gender biases are, however, slightly less in the case of Kuki and Lushai women who can exert some influence on the village affairs. Another exception is allowed in the Noatia community where a lady officer handles adultery cases. It should also be kept in mind that the 'taboos' I have just referred, do not indicate subservience. The rigid codes of behaviour outlined for women in the Brahmanical texts are hardly 'imposed' on Hindu tribal women. In a society where nearly half (965 out of 1000 male in 1991) of the population is women who make their presence felt at the socio-economic affairs of the community, marginalisation of gender roles is a remote possibility.

The moot question that arises in this context is, how are these women faring in modern urban life? Do they still hold on to their traditional rights and duties? Do modernization and development help improve the status of tribal women in Tripura? These queries have become all the more important in the light of our gloomy experiences during the last few decades in several parts of the country. It has been observed that tribals are victims and refugees of development (Singh : 1993, p.7). It is true that the condition of the tribals in post-independence India has, in many ways, worsened and they are the most adversely affected ethnic group due to development projects of dams, factories and mines. But it is equally true that the impact

of these programmes and many others has not been universal on different sections of tribal community. Class distinctions and class exploitations have made much inroads upon the structure of tribal society. A small section of them (both men and women) could take much advantage of the new opportunities for education, employment and mobility leaving the rest into a life of excessive hardship and boredom, work exploitation, unemployment, marginalization and sexual exploitation. At the socio-cultural level, adoption and acceptance of modern or dominant values and practices might lead to the 'deconstruction' of tribal way of life. We need to look at these developments while apprehending the impact of modernization and development on the tribal society of Tripura in general and tribal women in particular. It would also be possible through such micro-studies to suggest regional variation, if any, on the subject. Let me now analyse the impact of major socio-economic changes on the life and status of tribal women in Tripura.

Major Socio-Economic Changes and Tribal Women in Trinura

I. Demographic Chances : Tripura witnessed several socio-cultural, demographic, economic and political changes during the late 19th and 20th century. For quite a long time, this sparsely populated tribal princely state continued with a traditional mode of production characterised by shifting cultivation with hoe and *takkal* (a kind of cutter) technology. The subsistence economy of the tribals could neither generate enough trade and commerce nor pull sufficient revenues to meet the growing demands of the rulers. This necessitated widespread immigration of Bengali peasants of neighbouring Bengal who would introduce settled cultivation in the state to raise the volume of revenues for the rulers (Bhattacharyya : 1990, p. 43). The illiterate natives were also not fit for the administrative jobs of the rulers and this gap was again filled up by the Hindu Bengali immigrants with middle class background. The royal family patronised these East Bengalis with lucrative jobs, business and other professional opportunities in Tripura. As a result of such a policy and the consequent unabated influx of Bengali refugees, the state is now posed with a 'demographic imbalances' (Danda : 1989). Over the last 100 years or so, we witnessed the transformation of a tribal society into a predominantly Bengali society. From 1872 to 1951, the proportion of tribal population in the state came down

drastically from 63.78 per cent to 34.35 per cent, and in 1991, it further declined to 29.59 per cent. A necessary fall out of the enormous growth of non-tribal population is an unappreciably high density of population in this economically backward state. Thus, the average density of population in Tripura became as high as 263 per square kilometre in 1991 which was only 17 at the beginning of this century.

This 'demographic imbalance' has paved the way for several social, economic and political problems that the state is witnessing today. While from one point of view, it has led to the exposure of the 'insiders' to the culture of dominant 'outsiders' and consequent assimilation and acculturation, it has also brought considerable pressure on the social, cultural and economic survival of the tribals in general. At the socio-cultural level, Bengali domination in Tripura has left several imprints on the life pattern of particularly urban tribal women. Community relation in the city of Agartala and other important towns of Tripura is hardly 'communal' in spite of ethnic tensions and hatred generated after the riot of 1980. This is because, urban tribals irrespective of sex, age or education maintain working relation with their Bengali neighbours (Choudhury : 1997, p. 31). Such reciprocity becomes even more clear during each other's social functions like marriage, birth or death ceremonies. It is, therefore, not surprising that urban tribals and Bengalis too share each other's customs and cultural traits. Historically speaking, Tripuri kings preferred such 'cultural renaissance' of the tribes of Tripura in general and Tripuris in particular. Maharaja Bir Bikram in an endeavour to 'Sanskritize' the natives formally brought the four non-migrant tribal communities, namely, the Tripuris, Jamatiyas, Riangs and Noatiyas, into the fold of 'Tripur Kshatriya Samaj'. Again, under the open patronage of royal family, Bengali became the first official language of the state from the mid-19th century though 'Kak-Borok' was then spoken by the majority. The royal tradition and the tribals close to them also accepted several other Bengali social institutions and practices like the clan system, religious observances, marriage rules, etc.. This trend continued and got strengthened later under demographic compulsion. I would take up these areas of cultural change of urban tribal women for discussion later.

II. Changes in Economic Life : One of the major effects of Tripura's demographic transformation was the emergence of a *new* class-based

agrarian society. As the non-tribal economy went on growing in the plains and the exchange nexus (mostly of unequal nature) made its inroads increasingly into the hills, socio-economic divide between the tribals and non-tribals as well as among the tribals themselves became heightened. The state-sponsored agricultural modernization started with the passing of a series of laws prohibiting the tribals from practising shifting cultivation. By the end of 1943 about one-fourth of the territory of the state was classified as 'reserved forests' where no *jhum*ing was allowed. This forced a sizeable section of the tribals to switch over of either to settled cultivation in which the scope of participation of women is less or to cultivate the same land for years resulting in their impoverishment and indebtedness to Bengali moneylenders and businessmen. Problems like land alienation and poverty which even today hunt the rural tribals had their origin in these 'modernizing' efforts. Figures also indicate that tribals at large have remained isolated from the benefits of improved method of cultivation. Today nearly 40 per cent of the tribals practise shifting cultivation although the total area available for *jhum*ing has gone down strikingly.[3] If we take into account the growth of tribal population in the state (from 1,92,224 in 1931 to 8,53,345 in 1991) during the last few decades, we may conclude that dependency on shifting cultivation has in fact increased in real terms. Even in the allotment of surplus lands Jhumias did not receive the officially proclaimed priority (Sinha : 1996).

One major consequence of these developments is the growing gender disparity among tribals, a phenomenon quite unheard of in the traditional set up. As such, settled or plough cultivation marginalized the traditional role of women in agriculture who now face a taboo to handle plough. On the other hand, too much of crowding on the restricted amount of *jhum* land forced particularly those Jhumias (Rianqs and Halams) who live in the remote forest to eke out a bare living, Both these factors have negatively influenced the work participation rate of tribal women. Thus, Table 1 shows that from 1961 to 1991, the work participation rate of tribal women particularly has declined from 48.26 per cent to 18.81 per cent. For the male tribal workers too, there is a decline (– 9.52%), but it hardly equals the decline rate for women (–29.45%). In 1961, the gap between male-female work participation rate was 6.5 percent; in 1991 it stands at 26.43 per cent.

Table 1 : Work Participation Rate of Tribals

Census Year	Male (%)	Felame (%)	Net (%)
1961	54.76	48.26	51.51
1971	52.54	9.55	31.04
1981 (Main)	52.62	19.02	35.82
1991 (Main)	45.24	18.81	32.03

Source : *Census* Report, 1961-1991

The distribution of tribal women workers in different occupations (Table 2) further reveals that there has been a sharp fall in the percentage of cultivators as well as household industry workers along with a proportionate increase in the number of agricultural labourers during the last three decades.

Table 2 : Major Economic Activities of Tribal Women

Sl. No.	Activity	1961	1971	1981	1991
1.	Cultivator	83.07	64.59	55.83	54.24
2.	Agricultural Labour	02.79	28.32	37.08	36.59
3.	Mining, Live Stock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantation and allied activities	1.12	3.73	1.86	2.22
4.	Household Industry	10.96	0.56	0.51	0.49
5.	Trade & Commerce	0.11	0.10	0.14	0.24
6.	Other Services	0.95	1.84	2.54	5.28

Source : *Census* Report, 1961-1991

This is a clear indication of the fact that the condition of tribal women has in fact deteriorated after agricultural modernization. In a state where the pace of industrialization and other gainful economic activities is yet to gain momentum, a decline in the proportion of traditional activities is hardly accompanied by a compensatory expansion in other sectors. Table 2, however, shows that these women have made some gains in the 'other services' category of employment. But in view of the fact that these 'other services' are confined mainly to urban areas, the share of a vast majority of mostly illiterate rural women in it is virtually nil. Does this not imply that along with a heightened gender disparity, modern tribal life in Tripura is also typically characterised by a rural-urban divide. Let me now turn to

these ugly face of social development.

III. Urbanization and Related Social Changes : Urbanization is a new phenomenon in Tripura although a tiny urban society did exist even during the late 19th century. Initially this small urban community consisted mainly of the royal notables, the parasitical elites related to the king and officials of the princely administration. This 'enlightened! tribal community of Agartala had little or no cultural linkage with the rural tribals. The ruling elites of Tripura belonging to the Tripuri community perpetuated a policy of dualism among the advanced and backward (or hilly) section of the natives. This dualism visibly persists even today although of late the pace of urbanization and modernization has gained momentum in the state.

Table 3 shows that the percentage of urban population in the state has increased from 6.7 per cent in 1951 to 15.30 per cent in 1991.

Table 3 : Rural-Urban Composition of Population

YEAR	Total Population		Tribal Population	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1951	93.3	6.7	98.96	1.04
1961	91.0	9.0	98.85	1.15
1971	89.57	10.43	98.78	1.22
1981	89.02	10.98	98.69	1.31
1991*	84.45	15.55	98.26	1.74

* Excluding Chakma Refugees

Source : *Census* Reports

But only a small proportion (1.74% in 1991) of such a population is tribal. Among them (nearly 50% of whom are women), first generation migrants are very few. This implies that there is very little addition to the list of urban tribal elites who by virtue of their connection with the royal family could enjoy the privilege of city living for long. In this connection it is worth noting that among the urbanites Tripuris outnumber any other tribal group and most of them live in Agartala, the capital of Tripura. Thus, in 1981, out of a total of 7668 urban ST population, 6694 (87.30%) were Tripuris and 6100 (79.55%) of them lived in Agartala alone. Classified data for the 1991 Census are yet not available; still it appears that over 60 per cent of urban ST population lived in the city of Agartala at that point of time. These figures further substantiate our earlier conclusion about the class

and community character of the tiny urban tribal community. If we look into the community character of tribal professionals (Doctors, Lawyers, Teachers,. Bureaucrats, and Musicians) in the state, it will further be revealed that over 90 per cent of them are Tripuris. For the common hilly tribal population, urban living and the facilities arising out of such a living are still ostentatious matters. Nevertheless, after 1981 there is a slight change in the urbanization pattern of the tribals. This trend suggests that tribals are increasingly migrating to towns other than the city of Agartala. This might be an early indication of the expanding class base of urban tribals who have taken advantage of the development programmes of the Left Front Government during 1977-1987. I would now concentrate on the impact of such urbanization and other related socio-economic processes on the tribal life in general and tribal women in particular.

a) Literacy Growth : While the urbanization pattern of the tribals has remained uneven even today, it has been a mixed bag for their women. So far as the question of literacy is concerned, urbanization has distinctly contributed to their rising level of education. Schooling facility for the tribal girls at Agartala was available more than 100 years ago and the royal family had the credit of doing so. As a consequence, tribal literacy in urban areas was always high in the state and there is much fillip to this in recent years (see Table 4).

Table 4 : Percentage of Literacy among Tribal Population

	1971	1981	1991
1. Total Literacy in the State	30.98	42.12	60.49
2. Total Tribal Literacy	15.03	23.07	40.37
3. Tribal Female Literacy	6.04	12.27	27.34
4. Urban Tribal Literacy	58.67	78.81	86.27
5. Urban Tribal Female Literacy	50.53	65.21	76.30

It has been reported that in 1995 the literacy rate for Tripuri women at Agartala was as high as 98 per cent (Choudhury, 1997). Interestingly, the urban tribal literacy in the State in 1991 (86.27%) was even higher than the total urban literacy rate (83.09)% in the same year.

The enrolment rate for ST girl students in schools has increased by 6 per cent on an average during the last decade and the drop out rate too has come down (Deb, 1993). For the rural tribals, on the whole, the literacy

growth rate is still sluggish. Quite surprisingly, however, the Lushai women have achieved a commendable target by educating nearly 64 per cent of them in 1981. This may be attributed to the expansion of Christianity among them, a phenomenon noticed among some other tribal community of North-East India.

b)   Occupational Mobility : The high literacy rate of the urban tribal women is found to be instrumental in influencing their job prospect, dress pattern, food habits, religious beliefs and practices, concern for health and family welfare, political awareness and the like. I particularly noticed a rising trend of employment among urban tribal women in the expanding service sector of Tripura's economy. Census statistics also show that from 1961 to 1991 the work partictpation rate (both Main and Marginal work) of tribal women in urban areas has increased from 5.37 per cent to 16.84 per cent (see Table 5).

Table 5 : Female Tribal workers — Rural / Urban
(Main and Marginal Combined)

YEAR	RURAL	URBAN
1961	48.67	5.37
1971	9.58	6.75
1981	28.07	10.88
1991	25.38	16.84

Source : *Census* Reports

One additional point needs to be clarified here. For the urban tribal (both men and women), who mostly represent the advanced section of the Tripuris, 'work' means gainful employment in government or semi-government sectors. They would rather not accept the job of a 'labourer' than to remain unemployed. By contrast, rural women are increasingly forced to join the rank of agricultural labourers. This contrast also signifies the formation of a .new middle class identity of the urban tribal women which in no way match with their traditionall 'hard worker' type of identity.

c)   Marriaqe and Family Pattern : The social organization of the urban tribals also reveals some contrasts. In the traditional set up, the family was the real working unit for all socio-economic activities. But the structural nuclear families of the urban tribals are rather units of consumption. In one survey, the average family size of urban Tripuris is found to be around four

(Choudhury, 1997). Although technically speaking a family of four can also be a joint household, urban tribals today mostly maintain separate household and kitchen for all practical purposes. The changing marriage practices of urban tribals also bear the imprint of local Bengali culture. The social evil called 'dowry' is growing fast among them and this has undermined the traditional status of tribal. women in the state. Even for the tribals living in remote areas exorbitant dowry demands of prospective grooms are not uncommon today. Urban tribals have almost given up their age-old marriage customs like bride-price, marriage by service, observing 'clan exogamy and omens, serving liquor to the bridegroom party during marriage ceremony, calling 'ochai' (tribal priest) to perform marriage rites, etc. I had the opportunity to observe some Tripuri marriage ceremonies at Agartala where except the wedding platform called 'sapang' (constructed with bamboo and bamboo splits), most other activities appeared like those of the Bengalis. This could partly be attributed to the large scale use of Bengali priests in tribal or even increasing occurrences of love marriages have induced the urban tribals to incorporate flexible changes in their marriage rules.

d) Dress Pattern : Changing dress pattern of urban tribals constitutes another major area of their culture change. Traditionally tribal women used to wear 'Riya-Pachra'[4] in which just two pieces of cloth are used to cover up the upper and lower parts of the body. Today, the urbanites have introduced some modification in it by replacing the 'Riya' with blouse or shirt with a 'Dopatta' (Livingstone, 1996). Even this modified type is seen being used in cultural or religious occasions. They have rather become accustomed to several kinds of mill made cloths like sharee or salwar-kamize. Only the first-generation migrants are seen somewhat habitual to the use of traditional dresses at households.

e) Dialects : Dialect represents the core of any culture and any change in it speaks of the strength of the process of acculturation. It was astonishing for me to note that a good number of tribals at Agartala do not properly know their mother tongue, 'Kak-Borok', and they instead converse in Bengali in daily life. Even those who know it hardly insist on using it in public. Such a state has arisen partly due to the fact that until recently 'Kak-Borok' was not used as a medium of instruction in schools. Also for these tribal elites, Bengali or English medium of instruction offers better

scope for career mobility.

f) Food habit and Preparation Style : Dietary habits in different region:
of the world have been determined mainly by the local availability of foods.
The urban tribals too have had to alter their food habits and its preparation
style. Rice was a staple food for them and it continues to be one. They
have neither given up their likings for vegetables, roots and leaves, bam-
boo shoots, dry fish, and pork. But it appears unbecoming of them to
continue likings for items like insects, slug, snail, tadpole, etc. Urban tribal
women have also imbibed the Bengali way of preparing spicy food. When-
ever *any migrant* settles down in Agartala, she makes it a point to learn
the Bengali cooking secrets. The impact of modern mass media on such a
changing habit cannot also be ruled out.

g) Religious belief and Practices : As a result of the combination of
factors mentioned so far, the religious belief and practices of the urban
tribals are developing some unique patterns. Like other urbanites, tribal
women today control the domestic part of religious activities. They also
now worship female goddesses like Laxmi, Kali, Saraswati, Durga, etc.
and offer them ingredients similar to those offered by the Bengalis. On the
contrary, 'Ochais' are hardly involved to drive away evil spirit or witches.
These changes are certainly positive for the women and they on the whole
signify changes in the institutional character of religion in urban life. But it
would be erroneous to hold that urbanization and exposure to modern
plural life do away with primordial male dominated practices. They are
rather synchronized to accommodate changes necessary for a mobile
middle-class society.

Conclusion

This paper speaks of the volume of changes that the tribals, and particularly
urban tribal, women in Tripura have faced and are facing today. There are
several other concomitant changes which I have not discussed. For instance
, educated urbanites show utmost concern for family planning and modern
medical facilities which are rarely available to the women at hills. Again,
politically the urbanites are most articulate or expressive of their opinions.
This largely reflects middle-class character, manifestations of which are
also seen in their dress pattern, food habits or religious activities. But for a
common man or woman in the hills of Tripura political allegiance is always
expressed on some ideological line. Successive electoral victories of the

Left parties in the hills during the last five decades in spite of ethnic tensions generated after 1980 can be cited as an indication of this.

These changes clearly suggest a distinct dualism in the value perceptions and life pattern of urban and rural tribals in Tripura even if ruralites cannot always remain aloof from these changes. The proportion of tribals living in urban areas is still negligible. Yet the processes of modernizaton and development that the state has witnessed after independence, have hardly benefitted the vast majority of poor rural tribals. It is apparent that the urban tribals, who mostly represent the advanced section of Tripuris, would try to adjust themselves with the wider socio-political reality. It is necessary for their class background to incorporate the cultural traits of the 'Bhadralok' majority in daily life. But it sounds unhealthy that under demographic compulsion and consequent struggle for existence in an economically backward state, the rural natives and particularly their women folk have been singled out for a life of excessive hardship, poverty, unemployment, work exploitation and the like. In the traditional subsistence economy of the tribals, gender disparity was a marginal possibility although they mostly followed the Hindu tradition of patriarchy. But today rural tribal women stand marginalised in the growing 'modern' economy of Tripura.

Our analysis and the evidences cited in this paper also smack of a class and culture divide between the rural and urban tribals which the modern institutions and forces could not dissipate. This is not to suggest that the rural tribals are an undivided lot. There are distinctions on the basis of community and religion. Also the politics of tribalism that gained prominence in the hills from seventies is led by a rising group of educated youth of middle-class background. But the 'enlightened' urban tribals have little cultural link with the 'backward' rural tribals who maintain a 'traditional' life style. This dualism is so wide that some even question the 'tribal' character of the urban elites. One would have expected the marginalised rural tribals to migrate over to urban areas where the prospect of a better living (particularly availability of job / work) is apparent. But apart from some male seasonal manual workers (mainly rickshaw pullers), the city of Agartala (or other important towns) did not witness any mass exodus of impoverished tribals. This trend particularly declined after the ethnic riot of 1980. As a corollary, the class and community character of the urban

tribals did not change much even after many years of India's independence. In this context, the failure of modern development oriented strategies becomes evident from the fact that they favour essentially those who are already developed. It is true that urban tribal women have also lost some of their traditional rights and honour. But the gains that they have made in the sphere of education, employment or personal mobility are significant considering the plight of rural tribal women.

It is, however, unfortunate that politicians and administrators are yet to address these questions of gender, class, community or rural-urban disparities among the tribals themselves. To the tribal elites questions like relative deprivation and backwardness are empty slogans. It is not possible for them to revert to a previous state of tribal isolation and cultural separation though they often sympathize with the politics of tribalism in the state. They would rather utilise these platforms to push zealously ahead towards secular gain and wider social advancement. This is more or less equally true of other ethnic or political movements spearheading in modern India.

NOTES

1.   Chakma refugees, who accounted for 1.36 per cent of Tripura's total population, were originally included in the list of tribals to make the figure rise from 28.44 per cent in 1981 to 30.95 percent in 1991.

2.   There are some exceptions to this general rule. A father, for instance, may gift some land to his married daughter or daughter-in-law under the 'marriage by service' rule. Among the Lushais too the father may distribute some property to his daughters. But sonless fathers are generally oblighed to distribute property among daughters.

3.   'The Survey of Jhumias of Tripura, 1987, indicates that a populkation of 2,88,390 still practise shifting cultivation and they subject 25,000 to 30,000 hectares of forest land for such cultivation.

4.   'Riya' refers to the piece of breast cloth and 'pachra' is used to cover up the lower part of abdomen. Traditionally, each tribe preferred particular colour for these dresses to distinguish them.

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ICDS : A New Horizon in Health Empowerment A Study among the Santal Mothers of Nadia, West Bengal

SAMITA MANNA

The United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims "All Human Beings are Born Free and Equal in Dignity and Rights." But in reality women are not equal to that of men in ecercising power, taking part in decision making process, sharing equal rights in every aspect of life. The customs and the laws are prepared for the domination of the male folk. Women's rights are human rights and women are human too but they are stigmatized as inferior to men.

The later phase of 20th century witnessed many changes in the strategy to deal with the problems of the women. Some of those changes were truly radical in its essence, since they aimed at bestowing more power in the hands of the so-called excluded sex. But if we accept the zero sum concept of power, it is very difficult task to put the question of women empowerment on the agenda— as it means concomitant disempowerment of the so-called dominant sex. It is even more difficult to make it a slogan in a country like India where hierarchy is the fundamental value as opposed to equality [or in Beteille's (2001) analysis, 'universality'].

Though there are some basic differences between western feminism and Indian feminism (Chitnis 1988), the idea of empowerment soon got popularity in this country and was accepted as the new goal of women movements. Of course it can be assumed that all sections of the population have not welcomed it at once. Religious dogmas are still now preventing

individualism and liberty. The position of women in India is very much related to its peculiar social morphology. It is truly said that Indian state is democratic but Indian society is highly undemocratic (Saberwal 2001).

> The gender relations in India are understandable more in terms of the culture of hierarchy than that of inequality. Some of the notable mechanisms of the culture of gender hierarchy in India are the norms of son preference, daughter is meant for the other family *(Kanya to parayadhan)*, parental obligation to marry off the daughter *(Kanyadan)*, 'Sati' as the ideal of wife's devotion husbans *(pativrata)*, motherhood as the measure of womanhood *(matritva)*.

The peculiar norms, values and practices which guide and regulate individuals' behaviour were once formulated and enforced by the dominant sex. Not only in India but throughout the world, submissiveness, chastity and softness are regarded as fundamental qualities of women and thus they were confined to their own world, often referred to as the 'province of women' (Finch 1996). Therefore, the root of pervasive gender inequalities lies in the fact that the normative structure of society not only deliberately inspired gender discrimination, but the practice of gender discrimination in almost every sphere of life was reinforced by the actions of the women themselves (Manna and Patra : 2001).

In contemporary discourses empowerment is referred to as a process by which the powerless groups are bestowed with power. Thus it connotes some sort of rearrangement in existing power relations of the society or group. From this point of view the process involves both the sexes. Sharma (2000) has rightly envisaged the 'exclusionary bias' in women's empowerment approach as it is imposible to bring sufficient changes in the women's position without changes in the attitude of the men. We, therefore, require a compulsory course on women studies in the school curriculum right from the primary level.

It is better to visualise women's empowerment from four angles. These are economic empowerment, political empowerent, health empowerment and social empowerment. Though some sociologists (Falks. K 1999) do not recognise social empowerment as a separate dimension as it is directly or indirectly included in other three dimensions, we feel the

need to discuss social empowerment separately. Firstly economic empowerment means women's freedom or autonomy in taking decision related to the economic activities of the group, particularly of the family. Epstein (1996) has pointed out that in traditional literatures and scriptures there was no concept of working women, which reflects the customs of upper strata of the then society. It is true that women's economic dependence on men was and is the cause of their general subjugation in society.

Before the colonial rule women's employment in the service sector was virtually absent. It is perhaps due to this reason that the various social reform movements brought the women in the forefornt (Srinivas : 2003) of the national movement for freedom. But women's participation in these movements could not bring much relief for the women. Nothing, other than their employment could remove them from their traditional subordinated position. This has largely been realized today in the sense that a large number of women are in the employment sector today. It is well accepted that economic self sufficieng has the potential or enhancing the self-sufficiency and confidence or women.

But it is wrong to say that their economic self-sufficiency is equivalent to economic empowerment. Even to-day there is patriarchal control over the women's own income. So the question is not mere inclusion of the excluded. Secondly, despite the sporadic efforts to involve women in politics, their participation in the state or national politics is very insignificant. The entire domain of party politics is in the true sense controlled by the male politicians. The proponents of reservation argue that if seats are reserved for them in elections at different levels, their participation will be ensured. The argument is apparently convincing. But a deeper analysis shows that without reducing partriarchal dominance, women in the local panchayats, municipalities, assemblies or parliament will be simply proxy figures. And as a consequence the functioning of the respective institutions will be affected. Indian politics has sufficient experience in this regard. Women's political empowerment, portrayed not statically but by their activities, can be effective in minimising the gap between the two sexes.

Thirdly, health empowerment means the power of the women to take decisions related to their own health. In contemporary discourses their economic or political empowerment has got much importance but

health empowerment of the women is still a less discussed topic. Health is defined in the Constitution of the World Health Organisation as "a State of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity". (Smyke : 1991). Therefore, the concept of health is not only related to the biological or physiological conditions of a group, but also includes various socio-cultural factors affecting a community. The policy of integration for the tribals with the mainstream of population has given rise to a number of new problems in tribal society which were absent in their forest life. It is said that the process of modernization has destabilised their own world but has failed to integrate them with the socio-political life of the mainstream of population (Haimendorf, 1980). Payne (1991) has mentioned :

> It is not difficult to imagine the ways in which poverty might affect health, both physical and mental well-being ... There is a powerful relationship between socio-economic status and poor health....

In the early 1970s a new wave of feminism was started in Europe and North America with various feminist approaches to make all-round development of women. Gradually, it engulfed the whole world where India is not an exceptional one. Health empowerment is a part of women empowerment through which reproductive right of women would be protected and ensured.

Gender discrimination in health care practice is almost a universal phenomenon which is related not only to the economic and political empowerment of the women but also the culture practices and heritages of the community as such.

The mass approach to the solution of the health problems as such is essential but this is to be balanced by the individual approach that includes supervision at the individual and family levels. This is particularly true in case of the rural people who are mostly illiterate, ignorant and less aware of the modern medical technology. In order to control this problem, the Government has implemented Integrated Child Development Service, which has become an important programme to extend the medical facilities to the poor people at the grassroot level, has some specific objectives :

> 1. To improve the nutritional and health status of the children in the age group of 0-5 years;

2. To lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the children;

3. To reduce the incidences of mortality, malnutrition and drop-out of the school-going children;

4. To develop effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development; and,

5. To increase the capabilities of the mothers to take care of the general health education.

With this objectives the Integrated Child Development Service had been launched in the rural areas of Nadia during 1980–81. A group of voluntary workers, *Anganwadi* workers and helpers are working silently at the grassroot level in the villages overcoming many difficulties and problems including tremendous financial hardship. It is true that the major thrust of this scheme is to look after the health of the mother and child but the *Anganwadi* workers have also to take the responsibility of the non-formal pre-school education of the boys and girls belongiong to the age group 3 years to 6 years. Though the *Anganwadi* workers are suported by the supervisors and Project Officers, the Integrated Child Development Service mainly depends on the *Anganwadi* workers for the implementation of its **Six package of Services** at the individual level. These services are:

1.   Supplementary Nutrition
2.   Health Check Up
3.   Primary Health Care/Referral Service
4.   Nutrition and Health Education
5.   Immunisation
6.   Non-formal Pre-school Education.

Supplementary Nutrition is provided 300 days in a year not only to the children belonging to the age group '0–6 years', but also to the nursing (up to 6 months after delivery) and expectant mothers for their nourishment.

The aim is to supplement nutritional intake by about 200 calories and 8–10 gms. of protein for children below 1 year, about 300 calories and 15 gms. of protein for children between 1 year and 5+ year of age and about 500 calories and 25gms. of protein for pregnant woman and nursing workers (*Annual Administrative Report, Nadia,* 1993–94).

In order to assess the situation at the grass root level, a study was

undertaken in some selected areas of the district of Nadia wherein attempts were made to find out the impact of ICDS on the Santal mothers (Pregnant and mothers having children up to 5 years). These Santal families are not the original people of this land. They came mainly during the period. They have settled mainly in Haringhata and Chakdaha Blocks of Nadia District. A few families have also been settled in Nakashipara. All the Santal mothers of these blocks have been studied. Table I shows the villagewise distribution of the sample.

The participation of the tribals, however, in this programme according to most of the *Anganwadi* workers, is not satisfactory at all. They opine that the tribals, in general, are less aware of the importance of immunisation of the children and pregnant mothers. Mini Soren, an *Anganwadi* worker of Mohanpur village, who belongs to a tribal community (Santal), says that due to their lack of awareness the Santals in that village, often do not avail the facilities which the Government has decided to offer through Integrated Child Development Service.

Table 2 shows the records regarding the participation of the pregnant mothers in ICDS, which were collected from six *Anganwadi* Centres in six different villages in Haringhata Block. Out of these villages only in Biharipara one pregnant Santal woman had been given TT1, one had been given TT2 and one woman had been given folifer tablets in the year 1995. In other villages no pregnant santal woman had been provided with these essential treatments or meduicines through Anganwadi Centres. As in 1995, ICDS had not been started in Junglegram, Teghari, Jivannagar and Rautari village of Chakdaha Block, no Santal woman had been given TT1 or TT2 or folifer.

In 1996 a comaratively moderate picture has been found in case of the Santal pregnant women in Balindi, Mohanpur and Mollabelia of Haringhata Block (Table 3). Particularly in Balindi village a good number of pregnant women (11) have been given TT1 and TT2. In fact, these two doses are given at a definite interval for the immunisation of the expectant mothers against tetanus. Unfortunately, one woman in Mollabelia has refused to take the second dose.

Actually, it is observed through the study that the expectant mothers are not much anxious for their delivery. They are very close to nature and generally do not take any special care for their health and do not pay any

special attention to it. Motherhood comes to them as a natural phenomenon like other physiological processes.

Increase in the number of the Santal pregnant mothers, who have taken TTI, TT2 and folifer tablets from different *Anganwadi* centres of Haringhata Block, has also been noticed in 1997 (Table 4). Altogether, 22 Santal women have been given first and second doses of TT to prevent tetanus. In 1997 also, a good number of pregnant women of the Santal community have been given TTI and TT2 in Balindi of Haringhata Block.

Table 5 and 6 shows that in 1998 and 1999 the programme has received more or less similar response from the pregnant Santal mothers of different villages under Haringhata Block. In these years a few pregnant Santal women in Junglegram. Teghari and Jivannagar of Chakdaha Block have been immunised against tetanus and have been given folifer under this scheme.

Immunisation of the children belonging to the age group '0–5 years' is done, in most of the cases, not by the *Anganwadi* workers themselves as these centres lack proper infrastructure at present. The importance of these *Anganwadi* centres for the immunisation of the children, however, lies in that *Anganwadi* workers insist the parents of the children to go to the nearest health centres for imunisation.

Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) was started in Nadia District durting 1980–81. Since then different villages were covered under this scheme. Table 7 depicts in detail the impact of ICDS programme on the Santal mothers and their children. It opens new avenues and brings a new outlook and redical consciousness among the beneficiaries. The findings of the present study show that at present a good number of Santal mothers are being benefited from this scheme. The poor tribals who were previously dependent on the traditional medicines are now availing the modern medical facilities. Their awareness has also been increased. If participation is considered as a step towards empowerment, then tribal mothers have achieved their goal to some extent.

Table 1
Block and Panchayat wise Distribution of Sample

Tribe	Area	Municipality Block	Panchayat	Village	No of Respondients	Total
S A N T A L	R U R A L	Haringhata Block	Haringhata I	Balindi Ganguria Subarnapur Laupala Dighapara	10 10 9 5 4	38
			Haringhata II	Haringhata Farm Mohanpur Kapileswar	35 24 17	76
			Fatepur	Fatepur Brahmapur Bihariapara	19 15 12	46
			Mollabelia	Mollabelia Nischintapur	33 23	56
			Birohi	Birohi	6	6
		Total	**5**	**14**	**222**	
		Chakdaha Block	Mohanpur I	Teghari Junglegram Narapatipara Jibannagar Koutakpur	16 9 8 7 4	44
			Mohanpur II	Basantapur	9	9
			Ghetugachi	Joykrishnapur Chotojaguly Gobindapur	6 5 5	16
			Rautari	Rautari	17	17
		Total	**4**	**10**	**86**	
		Nakashipara Block	Bikrampur	Barmandanga	16	16
		Total	1	1	16	
	Total	**3**	**10**	**25**	**324**	

Table 2

Participation of the Pregnant mothers in ICDS 1995

Tribe	Block	Panchayat	Village	Centre No	Centre Started in	TT1	TT2	Folifer
S A N T A L	H A R I N G H A T A	Mollabelia	Mollabelia	80	1994	–	–	–
			Nischintapur	72	1994	–	–	–
		Haringhata 1	Balindi	–	1994	–	–	–
		Haringhata II	Mohanpur	33	1993	–	–	–
			Haringhata Farm	25	1993	–	–	–
		Fathepur	Behariapara	55	1994	1	1	1
	Total					**1**	**1**	**1**
	CHAKDAHA	Mohanpur I	Junglegram	–	1998	–	–	–
			Teghari	–	1998	–	–	–
			Jivannagar	–	1998	–	–	–
		Rautari	Rautari	–	1996	–	–	–
	Total					–	–	–

Table 3
Participation of the Pregnant mothers in ICDS 1996

Tribe	Block	Panchayat	Village	Centre No	Centre Started in	TTI	TT2	Folifer
S A N T A L	H A R I N G H A T A	Mollabelia	Mollabelia	80	1994	2	1	–
			Nischintapur	72	1994	11	11	11
		Haringhata 1	Balindi	–	1994	7	7	7
		Haringhata II	Mohanpur	33	1993	–	–	–
			Haringhata Farm	25	1993	–	–	–
		Fathepur	Behariapara	55	1994	–	–	–
	Total					**20**	**19**	**18**
	CHAKDAHA	Mohanpur I	Junglegram	–	1998	–	–	–
			Teghari	–	1998	–	–	–
			Jivannagar	–	1998	–	–	–
		Rautari	Rautari	–	1996	–	–	–
	Total					–	–	–

Table 4
Participation of the Pregnant mothers in ICDS 1997

Tribe	Block	Panchayat	Village	Centre No	Centre Started in	TT1	TT2	Folifer
S A N T A L	H A R I N G H A T A	Mollabelia	Mollabelia	80	1994	5	5	–
			Nischintapur	72	1994	–	–	–
		Haringhata 1	Balindi	–	1994	9	9	9
		Haringhata II	Mohanpur	33	1993	7	7	7
			Haringhata Farm	25	1993	–	–	–
		Fathepur	Behariapara	55	1994	1	1	1
	Total					**22**	**22**	**17**
	CHAKDAHA	Mohanpur I	Junglegram	–	1998	–	–	–
			Teghari	–	1998	–	–	–
			Jivannagar	–	1998	–	–	–
		Rautari	Rautari	–	1996	–	–	–
	Total					–	–	–

Table 5
Participation of the Pregnant mothers in ICDS 1998

Tribe	Block	Panchayat	Village	Centre No	Centre Started in	TT1	TT2	Folifer
S A N T A L	H A R I N G H A T A	Mollabelia	Mollabelia	80	1994	2	1	–
			Nischintapur	72	1994	–	–	–
		Haringhata 1	Balindi	–	1994	4	4	4
		Haringhata II	Mohanpur	33	1993	4	4	4
			Haringhata Farm	25	1993	4	4	4
		Fathepur	Beharipara	55	1994	3	3	3
	Total					17	16	15
	CHAKDAHA	Mohanpur I	Junglegram	–	1998	3	3	3
			Teghari	–	1998	1	–	–
			Jivannagar	–	1998	2	1	3
		Rautari	Rautari	–	1996	–	–	–
	Total					6	4	6

Table 6
Participation of the Pregnant mothers in ICDS 1999

Tribe	Block	Panchayat	Village	Centre No	Centre Started in	TT1	TT2	Folifer
S A N T A L	H A R I N G H A T A	Mollabelia	Mollabelia	80	1994	1	1	--
			Nischintapur	72	1994	--	--	--
		Haringhata 1	Balindi	--	1994	1	1	1
		Haringhata II	Mohanpur	33	1993	9	9	9
			Haringhata Farm	25	1993	5	5	5
		Fathepur	Behariapara	55	1994	3	3	3
	Total					19	19	18
	CHAKDAHA	Mohanpur I	Junglegram	--	1998	3	3	3
			Teghari	--	1998	2	2	2
			Jivannagar	--	1998	3	2	3
		Rautari	Rautari	--	1996	--	--	--
	Total					8	7	8

Table 7
ICDS and the new avenues

ASPECTS	IMPACT		Percentage
Pregnant women's Consciousness	i)	Doctor's advice	40.74%
	ii)	Identified as disease	9.88%
	iii)	Visited subcentres/ PHC/Hospitals	80.21%
	iv)	Place of birth (home)	67.83%
	v)	Child death (living 286)	33(0-5 years)
	vi)	a. Death within one month	39.39%
		b. Death within one year	60.61%
Child immunization		Not taken	12.24%
		Taken	87.76%
Nutrition Food during Pregnancy			4.32%
Family Planning		Adopted	18.21%
		Not Adopted (total 324 mother)	81.79%
Conscious about Child's Healthcare			42.51%

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Polarisation in an Agrarian Economy : A Case Study of Dinhata Cooch Behar

SURYA NARAYAN RAY

Introduction

The dynamic struggle between capitalist farmers and wage labourers has historical significance. It has been seen that since the 1970s, immiseration of the poor and the enrichment of large landowners have been polarizing agrarian class relations the world over. The spread of commercial agriculture has created two classes— capitalist farmers and wage labourers. The Green Revolution has further accentuated this process of polarization. This phenomenon of further pushing the marginal farmers into the ranks of a rural proletariat who would then be engaged as wage labourers, has been noticed the world over. This would change the land holding pattern, make effective use of the agricultural land, improve productivity, resulting in a booming economy thereby bringing profit to capitalist farmers and decreasing the land and income available to the growing numbers of agricultural wage workers.

This paper seeks to portray the complex picture of the agrarian political scene in India. In India, it has been seen that historically capitalist farmers and wage workers have never been the only or even the principal actors in the agricultural sector of the economy. Independent cultivators having their own household labour (bullocks, tills) are likely to remain a larger and politically more influential economic class than wage workers or capitalist (large land owners).

According to the polarization thesis, the proportion of land under

the control of small and middle holders would decrease with a corresponding increase in landholding of larger and politically more influential upper caste. According to the immiseration aspect of the polarzation thesis, the income of the agricultural wage workers will decrease as will the proportion of population living below the poverty line. Another important facet about the socio-economic-cultural aspect of the Indian landscape is its sheer complexity. In comparison to the developed countries, the Indian society is much more varied and segmented. Different conditions in different regions of India give rise to different situations across the country. Hypothetically say if similar conditions were to exist in West Bengal and Punjab, then these would give rise to different situations in the said states. This precisely is the reason why the national data cannot be interpreted according to the same characteristics, because these data result from different combinations of variables.

Sample Profile

It is very difficult to collect data on rural employment. We have chosen village as a unit of interaction among households. In the subdivision of Dinhata in the Cooch Behar district of West Bengal, the villages are all class villages and there is no such village which can be termed as labour line or farmer line. In the rural economy, irrigation emerges as a good differentiator among the villages in terms of land and other inputs used and output raised. So, the percentage of irrigated area to the net cultivable area is taken as a good differentiator.

On the basis of the secondary data on the percentage of irrigated area to the net cultivable area, two villages have been selected. The first village is Satkura, which has the percentage figure of irrigated area to the net cultivable area as 72.5%, which is much higher than the subdivisional average. The second village is Singimari, which has the corresponding percentage figure of 24%, which is much lower than the subdivisional average. The logic behind this selection of villages is to obtain the average picture of the agrarian economy of Dinhata.

Data Analysis

The Sample is made up of 418 households with a population of 2128. The average family size is about 5. The sample has been analysed according to the landholding size of the sample population. This has been shown in Table-I below.

Table - 1
Household and Population of the Sample

Land Group	Households (Numbers)	Households (Percentage)	Population (Number)	Population (Percentage)	Household Size
Land-less	160	38.28	671	31.53	4.19
Up to 2 acres	164	39.24	783	36.80	4.77
2-5 acres	72	17.22	489	22.98	6.79
Above 5 acres	22	5.26	185	8.69	8.41
Total	418	100.00	2128	100.00	5.09

The table throws up the stark reality of the rural economy. In the sample, 38.28% of the sample population are landless and almost all of them lie below the poverty line. 39.24% of the sample population have land holdings up to 2 acres. This reveals that 77.52% of the huseholds in the sample are marginal or sub-marginal. This figure is very high. If we consider farmers having 2-5 acres as small farmers, then it can be seen from the table that 17.22% households belong to this category. So, it can be said that landless, marginal and small farmers form the bulk of the sample. Only 5.26% of the sample populaiton have more than 5 acres of land.

From Table II it is revealed that in the sample as much as 77.52% of households occupy only 29.26% net cultivable land and only 5.26% of the households occupy as much as 30% of the net cultivable land.

Table - II
Land Holding Pattern of the Sample

Land Group	Net Cultivable Area (acres)	Net Cultivable Area (acres)	Land per family	Land per capita
Landless	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Up to 2 acres	163	29.26	0.99	0.21
2-5 acres	227	40.76	3.15	0.46
Above 5 acres	167	29.98	7.59	0.90
Total	557	100.00	2.16	0.38

From Table III, it can be seen that 53.58% of the employed labour force are able to cross the limit of 180 man-days of employment per agricultural year. According to Kar and Ray (2007), this means that 46.42% of employed labour forces are unable to cross the employment of 180 man-days or an earning of Rs. 30 per day per family, if we assume a daily wage rate of Rs. 60.

Table - III

Employment of all Occupational Groups

Sl. No.	Occupation Group	No. of Employed Labour Force	Total man-days of employment	Mean Man-days
1	Farmers	311	63993	205.76
2	Tenant farmers	8	1661	207.62
3	Agricultural Labourers	363	67565	186.13
4	Non-Agricultural Labourers	59	13614	230.75
5	Service holders	19	6270	330.00
6	Village Artisans	28	6100	217.86
7	Village Traders and Shopkeepers	35	9941	284.03
8.	Bidi-Workers	15	3557	237.13
	Total	838	172701	206.09

Thus, it can be seen from the sample analysis that in a rural economy like Dinhata, the concentration-cum-polarisation thesis has little or no bearing. the proportion of land held under the control of small and middle holders is very large as compared to the land holdings of larger and politically more influential upper caste. According to the immiseration aspect of the polarisation thesis, the income of the agricultural wage workers will decrease as will the proportion of population living below the poverty line. In this regard, an important aspect is thrown up from the sample study. If we make a comparison between the agricultural and non-agricultural sector in our sample, then we can see that more than 81% of the employed labour force of our sample are engaged in the agricultural sector, while the same

for the non-agricultural sector becomes 18.62%. Again, out of the total man-days of employment, the contribution of the agricultural sector is 77.14% and for the non-agricultural sector, it stands at 22.86%. Thus, the income and employed man-day generated from the agricultural sector has not decreased, but instead it forms the major portion of the employment generated from the rural economy. From Table III, it is revealed that in terms of mean man-days of employment generated, the agricultural sector lags behind the non-agricultural sector of the sample. The mean man-days of employment in the agricultural sector is 195.33 man-days and for the non-agricultural sector, the figure is 253.09 man-days. Thus, the non-agricultural sector has larger employment generation capacity than the agricultural sector, but has not evolved fully like the agricultural sector. That is why the employed labour force are unable to cross the employment of 180 man-days or an earnings of Rs. 30 per day per family, if we assume a daily wage rate of Rs. 60; because the agricultural sector cannot generate the required employable man-days. This again goes against the grain of the immiseration aspect of the polarisation thesis that the proportion of population living below the poverty line will decrease.

If we compare the picture of the rural economy of Dinhata with an agriculturally developed state like Punjab, then it can be seen that though the agricultural output per head in Punjab has increased, Punjab does not support the hypothesis that improved agricultural performance will help to reduce the incidence of poverty (Ahluwalia : 1997). Punjab has experienced a dramatic growth in agricultural output per rural person but there is no evidence of a downward trend in the incidence of poverty. There is also no other evidence than factors operating independently of the effect of changes in the level of output per head have affected the incidence of poverty.

Ashok Rudra *et. al.* (1969) have suggested that in Punjab increased output per head has not reduced the incidence of poverty. This can be explained by the heavy migration of labour from the East into rural Punjab, in response to growth of labour demand. Their consumption is higher than it would have been if they had not migrated. 'Trickle down' benefits have taken the form of increased employment benefiting migrants from the other states rather than increased wages benefitting the pre-existing poor. It can be stated quite confidently that migrant *purbeas* (migrant labour from the

East) with the improved incomes are even less likely to engage in polarizing social action or political participation than Punjabi wage workers engaged, for the most part, in more desirable employment.

The small farmers have participated actively in the Green Revolution in terms of inputs, yield rates, cropping patterns and have derived significant incomes from dairying, poultry and wage income. In Gujarat, family farms have gained ground as landless workers have become owner-cultivators. This has contributed to declining inequality in consumption expenditure. In Kerala, small differences exist among roughly equal holders who employ increasingly secure and well-paid workers. This has caused alienation and indifference resulting in lowered efficiency and production. All these have further eroded the acceptability of the polarisation-immiseration thesis.

Conclusion

In drawing up the conclusions from the above analysis, it becomes imperative to translate the objective determinants of a national economy into the subjective determinants of a regional economy. The findings of this paper, though conducted in an ambiguous manner, has important political implications concerning the objective determinants for the future of agrarian relations in India. Even after a decade and a half of globalisation, India is still a developing country and rural India is primarily agrarian (Ray : 2006). In the historical perspective, the polarisation thesis has been associated with the expectation of agrarian radicalism in national politics. However, the findings of this paper negate the polarisation immiseration thesis. But no reading of objective determinants can anticipate the future of agrarian relations. Objective determinants are necessary but not sufficient conditions of social actions. Objective determinants do not necessarily translate automatically into social formations possessed of political consciousness and capable of social actions. Macro aggregative do not take into account subjective determinants that precipitate and guide political participation and social action. In a regional economy like Dinhata, subjective determinants predominate, for instance, like capitalist farmers and family farms benefitting from state policies of higher commodity prices and lower input costs, dissatisfied marginal cultivatiors, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers who migrate to the city in a transitional economy and exploited landless labourers who resist oppression leading to unofficial civil wars (Ray : 2006). Therefore, the translation of objective determinants into

subjective determinants will take place at the regional level rather than at the national level.

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Religion or Reason? : Towards a Plea for Alternative Stance

SOUMYAJIT PATRA

The enlightenment Philosophy vehemently attached earlier providentialism and initiated an era of declining religious influence. Since then rationality, among a section of population, has been spead in such a way that the concept of god is questioned. The author has argued that the need of the day is a religion-free society.

In a classic analysis of democracy in America Tocqueville attributed the success of democracy in that country to the flexibility of religion which incorporated the spirit of liberty in its own ideological foundation. By democracy he meant equalisation of conditions that means equal opportunities for every groups and communities for self-realisation and self-actualisation. It implies that an environment favourable for cultural pluralism had developed slowly in that part of the world. What Tocqueville had in mind is, perhaps, that the appeal of religion is so strong and that without its support true democracy in civil society is impossible!

It is true that every religion in the world has some integrating and moralising principles which aim at inculcation of universal values. These values have evolved in course of cultural evolution of mankind and, in the analysis of Fuerbach [1957], we have attributed divinity to these *socially* created values. But obviously there is a difference between 'riligion as ideology' and 'riligion as belief'. What Tocqueville could not foresee is

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that though the spirit of liberty is a feature of religion in America, religious fundamentalism is growing there. Giddens [1993 : 483] observes "The growth of fundamentalist religious organizations in the United States is one of the most notable features of past twenty years or so. Christian fundamentalism is a reaction against liberal theology and against in-church secularization ...." As a consequence, "Fundamentalism is much more prominent in the United States today than in other industrialized countries" (ibid : 485).

Despite the fact that the immigrants of America had some sense of equality, some skills and technical knowledge, American society is not free from religious fundamentalism. Here in lies the danger of religion as faith. It seems that every religion has some elements which give rise to religious fanaticism and destructive dogmatism–whether it is Hinduism, or, Islam or, Christianity.

Sociologists like Andre Beteille finds elements of democracy in Hinduism also. It always favours, Beteille [2000 : 202] argues, cultural pluralism and the "polymorphous structure of Hindu society and its pluralist, not to say polytheist; cultural tradition porvide congenial condition for the growth of democracy." The argument is that Hinduism never inspires cultural assimilation of different groups rather it accommodates them maintaining their identities like a 'salad bowl'. As an ideology it is all right. But in practice a "segment, a caste, a religious category–carries not only social bonds" but also carries "animosities and antagonism, directed at other social segments" [Saberwal 2001 : 201]. Even Beteille [2001 : 306] in a recent article has somehow changed his position and pointed out that "Hinduism is changing". This change is against its so-called traditional liberal spirit which is evident from its "tendency to define itself in opposition to other religions, notably Islam" [ibid : 306]. This tendency has an origin in the 'reformist –revivalist movements' of the nineteenth century which sought to homogenise what Panikkar [1998] calls "disparate and caste ridden Hindu order".

It is often said following the tradition of some classical sociologists that religion unites the people and increases solidarity among them. This is true so far as the followers of the same religion or the 'insiders' are concerned. There is at least an element of distrust, among the 'silent majority' [Banerjee : 2002] towards the followers of other religions. The

problem is that it is not a mere passive feeling, sometimes it takes violent forms. Saberwal [2001 : 201] correctly opines that where "identities which lay claims to sovereign truth are caught in antagonistic relations, the ensuring conflicts can be devastating". One can remember the similar Simmelian analysis that emotional involvement with the group is positively related with the intensity of conflict. The consequence is fundamentalism – in Tocqueville's American Christianity and in Beteille's Indian Hinduism.

"God is Dead" in the Last Analysis

Enlightement philosophy with its emphasis on *reason severely* attacked providentialism that believes in "God's care for the world after its creation, overseeing the process of history..." [Lyon 1999 : 7]. This was the initiation of an era of declining religious influence. As a result of the shift in the emphasis from *providence to reason,* the notion of progress on the basis of *human ingenuity* came into being. As Igor Kon [1989] points out "the Enlightener's development of the idea of progress was very important achievement of eighteenth century philosophy." It was important in the sense that the notion of progress discarded the medieval notion of 'divine intervention' in making the history.

The Enlightment had a social perspective too. The emergence of reason in western thought accompanied a change from what we call tradition, to modernity. Advancement in science and technology brought change in economic and political spheres which as a whole altered the basic structure of society. "Capitalism with its constant quest for new raw materials, new sources of labour power... and new technologies to supplement or replace that labour power...", was the dirving force of these changes which we may call modernisation [Lyon 1999 : 28]. These changes witnessed a process of secularisation as well by which religion became increasingly separated from other spheres of life. Moderm ways of living percolated *rationality* in such a way that *dependence on God* has been reduced to a large extent which slowly dismantled religion from its earlier position. As Giddens [1993 : 487] has stated : "Most of us simply do not any longer experience our environment as permeated by divine or spiritual entities." Perhaps it is the social environment that ultimately attacked such dependence rather than any ideological campaigning. However, the diminishing influence of religion is so prominent in the behaviour pattern of people of a particular section of a population throughout the world that

Friedrich Nietzsche announced 'the *death* of God' [see Lyon : 1999, emphasis added].

In the transition from idealistic to materialistic interpretation of social phenomena Marxian analysis played a leading role. That historical transformation is not the function of God's will, rather it is the dialectics hidden in the economic infrastructure had been the basic proposition of a group of thinkers and this gave rise to a distinct tradition in social thought. This is not to say that there is no believer around us. All that is said, is that the earlier *all embracing influence* of religion is existing no more in an era that revolves around *consumer culture*. The difference is fundamental. Consumerism is characterised by a thrust to possess more and the emphasis is on what Habermas calls 'instrumental reason'; religion, on the other hand, is characterised by a thrust to sacrific more and the emphasis is on *blind faith*.

Plea for an Alternative Stance

Almighty religion, in course of time, has been *reduced* to a matter of *choice*. Indian secularism has also put emphasis on religious tolerance making it clear that religious belief is one's personal affair. It is true that despite the emergence of rational thought that rejects the existence of Spirit or supernatural world among a particular section of population, the influence of religion is still existing with varying degrees among a large number of people. The reason is that religion links uncertainty of life with the supernatural realm and provides *imaginary shelter* during the time of crisis. Furthermore, most of us are sociologically 'tradition directed' and psychologically dependent. So it is difficult, not to say impossible, to build up a new society on the graveyard of religion as a whole.

But it is important. Important, because though the constitution of our country has provided religious liberty to every citizen to ensure peaceful religious co-existence, in reality a frustrating picture is coming up. It has already been pointed out that religion increases solidarity among its followers and inculcates a feeling of distrust and antagonism towards others. The problem with religion is that it is not only the 'opium' of the masses as has been termed by Marx, but also a source of violence, fundamentalism and destruction. It is proved that where there is religion there is problem even if it is considered as a matter of choice. So let us start to interpret all social phenomena in terms of materialism to combat religion, to establish a *religion-*

free society.

There are people who believe that a religion-free society is a society without morality. It is wrong. Is it true in reality that all non-believers are morally degraded? There are some people who are directed more by what Kant calls *categorical imperatives* that by the reward – punishment mechanism of religion. Berbeshkina *et al* [1985 : 157] point out that "Elementary ethical standards actually preceded religion. It was only later that they became part of religious belief, taboos and rites. In primitive communal society there existed moral standards and taboos that has no religious or mystic character."

To avoid religious conflicts in a multireligious society like India, Giri [2001] argues for a spiritual foundation in which every religious group will try to understand the religion of others in a true religious manner. He thinks that in this way distrust and antagonistic attitude towards other religion manner. He thinks that in this way distrust and antagonistic attitude toward other religions will be eradicated and this would be a true foundation of a secular society. In another article he [2001a : 276] opines that "refusal to learn" is totally "antithetical to the spirit of multiculturism". However, Giri should have admitted that Indian state is secular but Indian society is religious [Beteille 2000], and Indian state is democratic bu Indian society is extremely undemocratic [Ghosh 1993]. Furthermore in a country where *Hindutva* is the secret agenda of some political parttes (it has international supports also, see Chowdhury 2002), how is he sure that inter-religious learning will solve the problem? What is the guarantee that a Hindu after having a well understanding of Islam will not abide by the campaigning from the fundamentalists' camp? The need of the hour is a materialistic foundation of Indian society. The Marxist thinkers have a vital role to play to build up a society without religion in future. It is a challenge of course, but they should take it to reorient the existing belief patterns in terms of materialistic ideology.

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Book Review

Alok Narayan Chaudhuri, *Evolution of the Political Thought of Jayaprakash Narayan, Progressive Publishers, Kolkata 2006.*

Jayaprakash Narayan (JP), a renowned freedom fighter, political thinker and activist, was born on 11 October 1902 in Sitab Diyara in the district of Saran in Bihar. In 1922, he obtained a scholarship from an association in Kolkata to study in the United States, where he became a marxist. Upon his return to India in 1929, he joined the Indian National Congress (INC), and participated in the Civil Disobedience movement. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for his participation in the movement. During confinement, he met Achyut Patawardhana, Minoo Masani, Asok Mehta and others, the eminent socialists of the time, and as a result, his socialist leanings were reinforced. Later, along with Acyarya Narendra Deva, Ram Manohar Lohia and others, he founded the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) within the INC. He was arrested, and tortured several times by the British rulers for his active participation in the struggle for independence. He won particular fame for his leading role in the 'Quit India' movements in 1942. During post-independence days, the CSP deserted the INC and just restyled itself as 'Socialist Party'. Now, JP continued to lead political movements for economic causes. He, however, opted out of party politics later as he was disgusted of personal rivalries and party-fragmentation. Again, in the 1970s, he returned to the political arena and launched an anti-corruption movement in Bihar, which eventually led to the proclamation of Emergency in 1976 in the whole country, and he was arrested . While in prison, he gave his idea of 'total revolution' the final shape. After creating history once again by unseating the Congress from power at the Centre for the first time in 1977, he passes away on 8

October 1979. He was posthumously awarded the *Bharat Ratna* and is popularly given the honorific title, *Lok Nayak*. His was actually a life that revoived around a quest for freedom. What was unique in his political life was the absence of any desire to wield political power. He was more concerned with values, not votes; and in that sense, as one of his biographer said, he was 'more a Gandhi, than a Nehru'.

The book under review attempts to understand the evolution of the political ideas of such a person who has taversed a course of life which may appear as 'zig zag', but follow a 'uniform line of development', as he himself claimed. The present study is actually a revised version of the thesis for which the author was awarded Ph.D. degree by the University of Calcutta in 1993. Starting from a short biographical sketch of JP including some glimpses of his political journey to provide the readers with a backdrop against which his ideas developed, the author seeks to identify 'the corpus of his political philosophy' and delineate distinct phases of the evolution of his thought. To the author, JP's thought 'may be divided into several phases such as Marxism, Democratic Socialism, Gandhism and Total Revolution' and accordingly his political ideas also evolved. He, however, was very careful to note that 'all the phases combined together' may only lead to a proper understanding of JP as a political thinker. (p. 23). Identifying the shifts of JP from one position to another, the author explained that it was nothing but a quest for truth and quest for values. To the author, JP had some Gandhian leanings even in his 'Marxist days'. He adds : "Since the middle of the forties, JP's faith in Gandhism was gaining ground and since the fifties, his inclination twards Gandhism became stable and concrete when he gave a good bye to Marxism". The author has also given JP the credit for his reassessment and reformulation of Gandhism to bring out the radical essence of it. (pp. 75-76). Again, the author is of the opinion that even after his break with Marxism JP continued to rely on the revolutionary ethos of Marxian thought to which he was initially committed. Hence, the author concluded that 'the radical stand which was evident during JP's Marxist days was equally discernible in the last phase of his thought' (p. 135). Thus, he concludes that 'radicalism on the one hand and Gandhism on the other constituted the cardinal aspects of his thought and action' (p. 198)

The book is divided into five chapters including introduction and

conclusion. Three substantive chapters, viz., "JP's Concept of Power and Politics," "Methodology of Social Revolution," and "Reconstruction of Indian Polity," no doubt, represent major areas through which one may have deep understanding of the development of JP's political thinking. What is very much interesting in this regard is that the author's classifcation of several phases of JP's political thought is also reflecting in structure followed and organizing each chapter. All the three main chapters, i.e., chapters I, II and III, are subdivided in more or less the same way as he divide different phases of JP's thought. In chapter I, while the first section is sub-titled as "JP and Marxism", the second one as "from Marxism to Democratic Socialism", the third, as "From Democratic Socialism to Gandhism," and the fourth as "Towards Total Revolution". The same pattern is followed in Chapter II, entitled "The Methodology of Social Revolution" Here, section one is sub-titled as "JP and the Marxian Technique of Social Revolution", section two as "JP and the Democratic Method," and section three as "Conversion to Gandhian Methodology" etc. Similarly, Chapter III which is concerned with the issue of "Reconstruction of Indian Polity" have sub-sections, viz. "JP and the Marxist way of Reconstruction", "JP and Democratic socialist society" and "Sarvodaya and JP" etc. The inclusion of two photographs may be regarded as additional attraction for the book, but it is not understandable as to why one of those was placed in between chapters II & III and marked as 'p. 137' by interrupting the contents. As regards the sections on 'Notes and References' it may be said that the readers would find it more convenient if those were placed at the end of respective chapters. Again, it would have been better if the detailed references were given in those 'end notes'. This was particularly necessitated as all the entries were not included in the bibliography. In a very unconventional manner, the author included an additional index on JP, apart from general index, which may be of help to the readers to locate the answers to specific questions.

While exploring the political ideas of JP, the author has emphasized on the openness of JP's mind in 'attaining the desired human values' that prompted him to move from one position to another. He also elaborated the 'revolutionary and dynamic content' of JP's thought particularly in regard to the issue of mass action. Besides giving a positive account of the development of JP's political thinking, the author was also aware of the

contradictions involved in his political journey and mentioned the major criticisms usually levelled against him in this regard. But, instead of delving deep into those, he merely listed the major points and left the task of determining his legacy to the future only. (p. 189) However, the author has rendered a great job in offering us a combined portrait of JP's life and thought which are, in fact, 'inextricably woven together'.

Written in a very lucid style, the book is a product of serious research and, as such, it may be regarded as an important addition to the growing body of literature on modern Indian political thought. As the author has made use of a substantial amount of primary and secondary source materials on the subject, as is evident both from the text as well as from the bibliography, it may be of great help for the future researchers in the field. Again, as the study of JP constitutes an important part of the syllabus at the University level, the book may be found as very useful by the students and teachers alike. It may also have some appeal to the general readers who are interested to learn about the country and her illustrious leaders. So the book deserves wide attention of the academic community in general.

Debnarayan Modak

Manu Kant, *Watching the Mighty Soviet Union falling Apart : An Eyewitness Account*, Manak Publications, Chandigarh 2005.

The book by Manu Kant, *Watching the Mighty Soviet Union Falling Apart : An Eyewitness Account* runs through 303 pages. Through a bunch of 38 long and short articles, written in a lucid style, the book throws light on the changing socio-economic scenario in the Soviet Union and how the people were reacting and adapting themselves to the rapidly deteriorating situation during the latter part of 1980s. In addition, there are a few articles on the post-soviet developments, particularly during Yeltsin and Putin years also. The main focus of these articles has been to examine the impact of the policies of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' resulting in scams, scandal, corruption, predominance of mafia and oligarchs, widespread ethnic conflicts, widening disparities in incomes of the rich and the poor in the post-Soviet society and so on. Throughout the book, the author

highlights the major developments that finally led to the collapse of the Soviet Union itself. It is interesting to note that Manu Kant was an eyewitness to these historical developments. Most of the articles in the book were written during the late 80s and early 90s of the last century, when he was a student in the Faculty of Journalism at Moscow State University.

In all the 38 chapters the author reflects on, as he himself witnessed, various facets of Soviet socio-economic and political development. The first five chapters exclusively focus on the nature of the "Soviet Man" in the beginning of the 20th century and the nature of Soviet economy. The remaining chapters record the author's eye-accounts on the state of affairs in Russia from the regimes of Gorabachev, and Yeltsin in the back ground of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Meanwhile how the scourge of inter-ethnic conflicts have been vitiating the Russian situation has been vividly and meticulously analysed in chapter 28.

Five chapters (29 to 33) that follow chapter 28, reflects on the politico-military developments in Russia under the regime of Putin (as author himself had eye-witnessed), who ultimately was re-elected in 2004 and silenced his opponents to strengthen his political base.

The last five chapters (34-38) are the most interesting in the sense that those pieces of writings have dwelt on the "Kremlinologists Insurrection", and Russian's efforts to regain its earlier position in international area.

The last chapter (chapter 38), "Russia : Nostalgic for the Soviet Era" while highlighting the rapid pace of developments in the post-Soviet Russian society— the dismantling of the social welfare system, the introduction of privatization and pressure from the outside world, the author notes that the perceptions of the Russian people are changing fast and they have developed nostalgic feeling about the old soviet days due to these new adversary changes.

Apart from 38 chapters, there are two Appendices about the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin. Extracts from the books of the leading writers on the Soviet Union, of the earlier as well as the later years, have been incorporated. This includes the quotes of some of the great thinkers as to what they thought of and wrote about Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet Archives. There are extracts from M. N. Roy, who was once a member of the executive committee of the Communist International and later on a

bitter critic of Stalin and the Soviet Union. This apart, there are extracts
and quotes from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse Tung,
Enver Hoxha and many other communist thinkers.

Manu Kant's book *Watching the Mighty Soviet Union Falling
Apart : An Eyewitness Account* recorded the events that gave rise to the
world's first Socialist Workers' state, the mighty Soviet Union. K. Gupta
made an interesting comment about the book : "Manu Kant's observations
and articles compiled in the present book are not entirely unbiased. They
are largely from a young, skeptical, but sympathetic student living his
formative years as a journalist in the Post-Brezhnev years of the Soviet
Union."

Finally, let me make a frank confession about my judgment on the
book. It has indeed been a very time consuming and challenging task for
me to review the book on the ground that all the chapters in the book are
descriptive in nature and lack in-depth analysis. Though the book is written
in lucid and purely journalistic style, in some cases, it has even been difficult
to establish link between chapter's title and its content. For example,
chapter 20 has been titled as "Dial M for the Job", and similar is the case
with chapter 35 that has been titled as "Kremlinology's Resurrection."

However, the book has been intellectually stimulating and helpful in
understanding and tackling some of the vital issues facing the people of
former Soviet Union. Besides, the book seeks to answer questions as to
what the Soviet Union was and how and why it was allowed to be sunk
into oblivion.

Raj Kumar Kothari

**Vijay S. Khare, *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and India's National Security,*
Kilaso Books, New Delhi 2002, pp. 320, Rs 770**

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar was a saviour of the depressed classes,
and at the same time a prolific writer, a renowned economist, a noted jurist
an anthropologist, and the chief architect of Indian Constitution. He is not
only a constitutional expert and a parliamentarian but also a profound thinker
and active social reformer. He is widely known for his contribution to the
making of modern India. Dr Ambedkar had put forward many a policies
and suggested how to implement them. He also offered his well thought

out views on almost every issue that concerned the Indian society and state, including the problem of national security.

National security is simply perceived as military threat from the external sources. It has also to be considered as a threat from internal sources as well. It is also concerned with a country's development to go ahead without any hindrance. But with the new global geopolitical changes specially in Germany and Soviet Union and due to globalisation, national security has to be perceived from different approaches. Basically preoccupied with the security of individuals, nation states, and the world.

According to modern approach, a nation-state is secured to the extent to which it is not to sacrifice its core values if it wishes to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such war.' But considering the recent change in the conduct of war and nature of conflicts, strategic thinkers modify the definition and focus on our own values of national integrity to cope with the present challenges of national security and international peace and tranquility.

Against this background, the thought of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar relating to India's national security which provides an essential framework for India's long-term national security policies is worth remembering. The author of the book under review, Vijay Khare has undertaken a painstaking task of analysing the idea of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the context of national security of India. The author, Dr. Khare, is quite well known for his contribution in the fields of Political science and Sociology.

A distinctive feature of this book is that it provides a penetrating and comprehensive analysis concerning the concept, thought and philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar. The book is written in a simple, lucid, unambiguous manner. It contains eight chapters including introduction and conclusion in addition to a few Appendices. The first chapter seeks to highlight the problems and issues related to India's national security i.e., social, economic, cultural, military, regional etc. and includes objective of the study, hypothesis, limitations, methodology etc.

Conceptual framework which highlights the concept of national and, individual security, elements of states and components significant to national security alongwith Hobbesian and Marxian view on security and its contemporary relevance are, contained in chapter II.

Process of nation building and policies of government and absorption

of Dr Ambedkar's views on this into the government's policies has been studied in details in chapter III. The author also examines the implications of all these policies.

Chapter IV, while dealing with various provisions of Indian Constitution relating to national integration i.e. single citizenship and single judiciary system, principle of unity in diversity, also focuses on the meaning and concept of national integration. Regional integration through the strategy of division of provincial states, strategy for eradication of caste system, policy for empowerment of women and policy for labour, has been analysed carefully.

As a nation-builder Dr Ambedkar was very much concerned with political stability of the country. Emphasing the importance of this aspect of Dr Ambedkar's thinking, the author scrutinizes such issues as the political system in India and working of parliamentary democracy and center-state relations and quasifederalism to protect India from separatist tendencies from the Ambedkarite perspective on political stability.

Chapter VI contains an analysis of Dr Ambedkar's views on India's defence and foreign polices. A detailed study made in this Chapter highlights Dr Ambedkar's ideas on military education, strategy for second capital, thoughts on Pakistan and Kashmir, foreign relations with neighbours and dominant powers of the world. Such a vast range of topics concerned with India's national security projected by Dr B. R. Ambedkar, have been dealt with in the present chapter.

In Chapter VII the author has tried to assess the implications Dr Ambedkar's views on the security policies and opine that how Government of India fails in this sphere due to non-compliance with his views.

In the concluding section of the book, the author emphasizes the need to reformulate the national security issues in the light of Dr Ambedkar's guidelines.

It is heartening to note that the author mades a painstaking effort as to how Ambedkar's vision and philosophy and thought regarding nation building, national integration, and assimilation, regional integration, social integration, social justice, labour policy, women development policy, policy of political stability, defence policy vis-a-vis policy of national security specially, has been implemented by Government of India, till now in independent India and to what extent, these policies need to be

implemented, in India's national security in the globalised era. Globalisation has increased the need for harmonizing India's defence, foreign, economic, social, technological and internal security policies with each other within a planned holistic framework to minimizing to internal conflicts through confidence building and by practising prudent policies and efforts.

In the ultimate analysis, Dr Khare's book would certainly be welcome by the students of political science, sociology and other branches of social science, specially those who have engaged themselves in research work on the thought and philosophy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

Ishita Aditya