

Globalisation and Malaysia's Foreign Policy : Myths, Realities and Implications

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The current discourse on globalisation is all too often predicated upon the assumption that it is a phenomenon totally without precedent. Many see it as a tidal wave that will smash the barriers separating the human community into nations, races and tribes. True enough, certain aspects of the present wave of globalization – its extent, reach and intensity, for instance, have no parallel in history. But if globalization is essentially an encounter, or encounters, of cultures, then Southeast Asia is globalizing for centuries. This is because from the time of its recorded history Southeast Asia is a great market of cultures, an agora of civilizations. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha* are not only the sacred history to the Hindus, but they are also part of the folklore of the Buddhists of Indo-China and the Muslims of Malaysia and Indonesia. The Angkor Wat and the Borobodur testify to the deep entrenchment and vivacity of Buddhist legacies in the region. And maritime Southeast Asia is the space where Islam uniquely manifests its moderate, multicultural and pragmatic character. The spread of Islam and its deeper understanding also has revolutionized the Malay mind, internationalizing its outlook and predisposing it to high philosophy. Cosmopolitanism thus runs deep in the Malay vein.

However, the recent history that had a role in globalisation dates back to the fall of the USSR, the end of Communist rule in Eastern Europe, the collapse of Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War gave a fresh impetus of the

Malaysia's Foreign Policy.

The international scene after the end of Cold War is marked by the existence of three phenomena which are the subject of intense debate : globalisation, and the continued defence of national sovereignty. This paper is an attempt to give a theoretical framework of Malaysia's foreign policy and its development in the initial years when globalisation started to emerge as a concept in the analysis of international politics. This is the period, when with the institutionalisation of savings and the need for international diversification of investments, capital flows to emerging markets in the form of FDIs and portfolio capital increased dramatically. This globalisation of financial markets, and globalisation as a process has brought new dimensions to Malaysia's Foreign Policy. Thus, before we get into the further detail it would be relevant to say few words on defining globalisation.

It is easy enough for economists, political scientists and sociologists to say that globalisation is redefining life. Defining globalisation is not an easy task. This is because, globalisation is not just a trend, not just a phenomenon, not just an economic fad. It is the international system that has replaced the cold war system. And like the cold-war system, globalisation has its own rules, logic, structure and characteristics. Unlike the cold-war system, which was largely static, globalisation involves the integration of free markets, nation-state and information technologies to a degree never before witnessed, in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and countries to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever.¹ Although the word has been employed by media quite a bit recently, globalisation has no one definition. To economists, it can mean free trade and open markets between countries. Political scientists may see it as a governing force that will eventually impose its regulations on the entire world. Environmental activists often claim that globalisation is the cause of the earth's deterioration, the catalysts for global warming, and the reason behind deforestation and the extinction of growing number of animal and plant species. In short, globalisation is a word that seems to describe the coming of together of all the economies of the globe to one

entity. It was coined by the rich countries, apparently in response of technological advances and the speed and ease of travel. But the emphasis appears to be on the free flow of capital and trade goods and services. Free means free flow of governmental regulations laws and policies. International institutions would take over, enact rules and enforce them.²

However, the benefits of globalisation are not distributed equally among countries of populations. The world's poorest families are the least well positioned to benefit from expansion of goods, services, capital, and information that characterizes this process of globalisation. In the words of Mahathir bin Mohammad :

People and things may not flow so freely.... But for most of the developing countries, globalization means not more freedom but less freedom from rules, regulations, laws and policies. Worse still, these uniform rules, regulations, laws and policies disregard their particular weaknesses and problems.³

In the beginning of the twenty-first century a large number of national governments around the world are engaged in efforts to reform their bureaucracies. These countries have different electoral systems; they are at different stages of development and yet, to a surprising degree, they are employing a set of reform concept and strategies that are remarkably similar. Malaysia is one such country in this category. Thus, sustaining globalisation became an indivisible part of Malaysia's overarching national interest and foreign policy. However, Malaysia's policy makers realise designing a strategy to promote sustainable globalisation at home and abroad is not an easy task. And it is made even more complicated by effect of globalisation which have intensified the world's long-running core-hate relationship with the western nations, particularly the United States of America. And today, globalisation and rapid technological change are Big Thing to the Malaysia's Foreign policy makers. They feel there are a lot of things that they can do to democratize globalization economically, promote social stability and prevent their own society from drifting even further into high walls and tinted windows. In this way, Malaysia's foreign policy makers believe to

better manage the impact of globalization upon national and regional efforts for sustainable development, these need to be global standards and rules to be agreed upon by consensus and abided by all. Thus Malaysia continue to fight against unfair trade practices, protectionism and economic sanctions that are contrary to the terms and standards agreed upon and accepted by consensus. As Malaysia's Foreign Minister pointed out :

While there are rules for other forms of economic interaction in the world to ensure fairness and stability, there are still more related to the flow of short-term speculative capital, something that is almost illogical considering that the impact can be as equally destructive upon a state as factories being bombed. The need for market infrastructure rules on capital flows is of particular interest to Malaysia. We need to reduce financial volatility in the global market place that will cause not further losses to economies that do not have capital or technology. We are therefore propagating for the establishment of a new financial architecture.⁴

Thus, we see it's a challenge to Malaysia to cope up with the politics of globalisation and liberal democracy. The second challenge concerns Malaysia the uncertainty that still exists in the international capital and financial markets.

Malaysia's Approach to Globalisation

The policy choices taken by a developing country in responding to the challenge of globalisation, and its relations with the world market have an enormous impact on its economic, social and political life. Dr Mahathir's thinking on globalisation has attracted international attention not only because he is one of the few political leaders in the world who has criticised current globalisation trends in his current characteristic frank and blunt manner, but even more so because of the bold and unorthodox policies taken by Malaysia at the height of the financial and economic crisis of 1997-99 to counter financial speculation and to revive the economy that had been on the verge of collapse.

Malaysia was the only country facing the crisis at that time to reject IMF - type policies and to devise into own package of policies that included a fixed exchange rate, de-internationalizing the currency, selective exchange and capital controls, including a temporary moratorium on outflow of foreign portfolio capital, reduction of interest rates and expansion of public spending. As Malaysia did not resort to the IMF, it was also able to avoid being forced to have an open-door policy for the foreign purchase of local assets as happened in other countries. Since the homegrown policies did contribute to a recovery, many people around the world have been interested to find out about the Malaysian alternative to the orthodox IMF structural adjustment policies, which pressurise its client countries to adopt a *one-size-fits all*⁵ opening to the world market.

Since Dr Mahathir is the prime architect of the Malaysian *alternative approach* to economic recovery, his thinking and writings on globalisation take on added significance. He believes in the market system capitalism and globalisation, and gives data showing that Malaysia is amongst the half-dozen most globalized and open countries in the world. His criticism is that the major players in the system have devised unfair rules and the game for their own benefit, keeping developing countries out of the benefits and causing them to lose out.

Dr Mahathir's criticism is that "globalisation" is a concept devised by and made of by powerful countries to open up the economies of weaker countries. The products, viz., companies and banks of the developed countries can then enter the developing countries and take control of them as local products and small local firms fall under the onslaught of trade and investment liberalisation. He strongly criticises the IMF for acting on behalf of the rich countries, for its disastrous policies and its meddling in local affairs. He also points out the wrong approach taken by the WTO in treating all countries as if they have the same capacity, and warns that the developed countries are taking new policies and concluding new agreements that will affect developing countries to lose their capacity to make their own national socio-economic policies, which according to Mahathir can result in loss of

economic, political and social independence.⁶ In the words of Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, Dato Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi :

Bad globalisation has accentuated inequalities between and within countries. And there seem to be no signs that income and opportunity gaps will narrow. The laissez-faire, amoral global market has become more dominant than ever. It details the making of profit and is concerned with little else. The state is in retreat, forced by the logic of brutal economic efficiency and the profound political and social transitions that have to be made adjust to the revolutionary changes. Global institutions are dominated by the rich and the powerful. Their vested interests conditions the rules of the globalisation game and determine its agenda. In the face of all this, except for the valiant few, the weak become weaker, and the poor poorer.⁷

The Malaysian foreign policy makers admits that foreign trade and direct investment has greatly benefited Malaysia, but they are worried that protectionist policies in the rich countries and the pressures they exert to get developing countries to liberalise further is leading to unequal benefits and potential losses. And they come out strongly against the free flow of capital, the free convertibility of currencies and the free market in currency as the most damaging features of globalization. According to Mahathir Mohammad, "The fact that globalisation has come does not mean we should just sit by and watch as the predators destroy us."⁸ Thus, Malaysia's approach to globalisation in general has been guided by the basic principle that the pace of globalisation in Malaysia at least must be on Malaysia's terms, based on its circumstances and priorities. It may not always be possible for the foreign policy makers, but it is crucial to ensure that everybody benefits both the foreign investors and Malaysians. A step by step approach is also important to avoid the excesses and problems associated with all new ideas, principles or processes, including globalisation. Malaysia in this case has to be pragmatic and flexible, not

dogmatic in pursuing globalisation. It can not be viewed as an end in itself, but as a means to an end, which is a better life for Malaysia's people and Malaysia's continued freedom from foreign domination. Thus Mahathir said,

Malaysia has experienced the globalisation of capital and we were nearly destroyed by it. Fortunately, we were able to develop our own methods to defend ourselves and rebuild our economy. We know that our success may be shortlived but we are not going to allow ourselves to be sold ideas, ideologies and slogans without carefully examining them. If we find the slightest suspicions that another agenda is being promoted we will fight tooth and nail to defend our country and the prosperity of our people.⁹

It is in this context Malaysia urged the need to highlight on the main challenges in the post cold war era covering equitable growth and development, regionalism, globalisation and the world order.

In the post cold-war situation which sees the emergence of competing regional economic groupings and uncertainty in the regional security environment, Malaysia believes that a strong and successful ASEAN is not only an economic necessity but also a strategic imperative. On the political front, the world is no safer than before even after the end of cold war. Thus the Malaysian foreign policy makers feels, the kind of globalisation promoted by the rich western countries has not convinced Asia that 'this is the answer to economic ills or the victims for economic growth.'¹⁰

In other words, Malaysia would like to reiterate their conviction that in a more globalized, inter-connected and interdependent world, relations among states should be based on a new paradigm predicated not only on equal sovereignty but also respect for dignity and mutuality of interests and benefits. Malaysia places importance on the need for a continuing dialogue as it bridges the gaps between understanding and misunderstanding. Only on that basis Malaysia would be able to reap the full potential of globalization that it as a nation aspire for.

Malaysia's Challenges to Globalisation

Thus, we find the challenge for the Asian countries like Malaysia is not how to manage the present concept of globalisation but to make it work and to benefit from it. The challenge for Malaysia is to influence the thinking on globalisation, to reshape it, to reduce the changes of it going away in the process destroying economics and countries. It is worth mentioning that prior to 1997, the Asian countries were growing miraculously. But in the post-1997 period every one of these miracle economies are shadows of their former selves. This is because the impact of globalisation involving the free flow of capital and straight jacketing of business has been disastrous. Thus, Malaysia is conscious enough to realise that the existing international infrastructure is inadequate to deal effectively with the developmental problems and crises. The international institutional machinery, comprising the United Nations, the IMF and the World Bank, have not been able to cope with the challenges confronting the developing world. The Asian financial crisis has clearly shown the inability of the developed world and the international institutions to respond to crises and the effects of contagion.

The responsibility to address the issue of development is a collective one, feels the Malaysian leadership. Thus in their view developed countries must play an active role in assisting countries affected by these problems. However on the part of the developing countries they must accept that they have to do their best to ensure that sustainable growth and prosperity can be attained. *In the first place* the Malaysian leadership feels developing countries must continue to enhance domestic resilience and capacity. They must continue to invest in human resource development, to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to cope with the rapidly changing world dominated by technological innovations and advances. Investment in education with emphasis on science and technology must be given priority. Attention must be given to strengthening domestic institutions and the framework of laws, rules and regulations to ensure resilience in the face of challenges posed by globalisation.

Secondly, apart from the efforts of developing countries, industrial countries also have a special responsibility to facilitate this process, by assisting developing countries gain access to knowledges, ideas and inventions, which must be made available at a reasonable price. Intellectual property must be protected but consideration must be given to the needs of the poor. Malaysian leadership admitted to make profit from all means from the intellectual rights but make those who can afford pay more while reducing the profit from the poor. It is on the other hand evident, the new millennium will continue to witness rapid advances in information technology, which will have wide-ranging implications on developing countries. In this context, the Internet has become a force of tremendous potential.¹²

Thirdly, in the opinion of the Malaysian policy makers, all countries must work together to manage the globalisation process for their mutual benefit. Thus, in the context of trade liberalisation, greater flexibility must be given to developing countries for a wide variety of options and responses to deal with the complexities of development and nation building.¹³ The policy makers in Malaysia currently pointed out that :

This aspect and the special situation of developing countries are often not given adequate and appropriate treatment in trade liberalisation negotiations. Developing countries cannot and should not be expected to undertake obligations at similar levels as developed countries.¹⁴

Thus, the Malaysian leadership continuously forced the developed countries to bring a parity in the Market opening measures, where it is expected that developing countries must be commensurate with the level of development. The principle of progressive liberalisation must not only be an integral element of any trade liberalisation initiative, but must be fully recognized by all.

Fourthly, where the Malaysian policy makers tried to concentrate is the ability to manage the pace and direction of liberalisation and globalisation, where developing countries must be allowed to effectively participate in the decision making process in all international institutions. In

their view, international institutions must have the mechanisms to allow the views of all to be heard. The decision making process ought to be transparent and must reflect not just the views of big business and big governments but those of threatened small business and small governments as well.¹⁵

It is based on the above perspectives that the Malaysian policy makers tried to develop their foreign policy agendas in the age of globalisation. They wanted to set a new direction for development strategy that embodies elements that would enable in particular, developing countries to meet the challenges of the 21st century. But unfortunately in the post-cold war period many new factors emerged which affected adversely the establishment of the world peace and order. One factor which affected peace in the post-cold war period is the widening gap between the rich and the poor. As Mahathir observes :

Globalisation and a borderless world seem very attractive in this Information Age and advances in transportation and communication. We now live in a global village. We will all be citizens of Planet Earth. But apparently we are not going to be equal citizens.¹⁶

Thus, we can say that ‘Globalization must be interpreted correctly if it is ever going to bring about a better life for everyone in this world.’¹⁷ However, Malaysian leaders are not too convinced that it is ‘going to be good for them in the developing world’¹⁸ or not. This is because, Malaysia have seen how the “free flow of capital has damaged their economies during the East Asian Economic crisis.

However, the Malaysian leadership also understand the fact that they have no other option left other than to adapt themselves with the process of globalisation. Thus Malaysia urged the need for developing nations to present a united front and to form a smart partnership to face the challenges of globalization. Thus the need for a correct interpretation of the process of globalisation has been felt by Malaysia to bring about a better life for everyone in this world. In the world of Mahathir :

Globalization may yet be the route to equitability for the people and nations of a borderless world. I would therefore like to pledge my support for a globalization that is concerned not just with the means but also the ends.' Let us form smart partnerships. Let us have good governance. But let us not forget that our guest is for the well-being of our people. The best ideology, system or philosophy means nothing if the result does not bring about justice, fair play and prosperity for all.¹⁹

Vision 2020

In 1991, Malaysia launched the plan of Vision 2020 which struck a responsive chord in the hearts and minds of Malaysia's Foreign Policy Makers. In Vision 2020, the Malaysian leaders get the goal of becoming a fully developed nation by 2020, which on the other hand is the end of the Malaysia's second generation as an independent country. Vision 2020 emphasised that in the Information age, Malaysian Society must be information rich. It noted that :

It can be no accident that there is today no wealthy developed country that is information-rich society that is poor and underdeveloped. There was a time when land was the most fundamental basis of prosperity and wealth. Then came the second wave, the age of industrialisation. Smoke-stacks rose where fields were once cultivated. Now, increasingly knowledge will not only be the basis of power but also prosperity.²⁰

Vision 2020 urged that, new effort in the creation of an information-rich Malaysian Society should be made. This is because Vision 2020 is the 'first strategic step' into the information age. It says, "Malaysia has one of the best educational systems in the Third World. But for the journey we must make over our second generation, new standards have to be set and new results achieved."²¹ It further stipulates that, Malaysia "cannot but aspire to be the highest standards with regard to the skills of our people, to their devotion to knowledge and knowledge upgrading and self-

improvement, to their language competence.”²² Moreover, these words are even more relevant today than in the early nineties.

Similarly, on 15 December 1997, at the second ASEAN Informal Summit held in Kuala Lumpur, the Heads of Government of ASEAN adopted ASEAN’s Vision 2020. The aim of ASEAN’s Vision 2020 is to establish a peaceful and stable Southeast Asia by the year 2020 where each nation is at peace with itself and where causes for conflict have been eliminated, through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law and through the strengthening of national and regional resilience.

The ASEAN leaders including Malaysia reiterated their resolve to enhance ASEAN economic cooperation through economic development strategies, which are in line with the aspiration of their respective peoples, which put emphasis on sustainable and equitable growth, development strategies which enhance national as well as regional resilience.

The countries of ASEAN committed themselves to world standards and a conformance system that will provide a harmonized approach to the free flow of ASEAN trade, while meeting health, safety and environmental needs. As Mahathir Mohammad observes :

In ASEAN’s Vision 2020, the leaders of ASEAN and the countries of ASEAN resolved to create a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ASEAN Economic Region in which there is a free flow of goods, services and investments, a freer flow of goods, services and investments, a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities. We resolved among other things, to maintain regional macroeconomic and financial stability by promoting closer consultative in macroeconomic and financial policies.²³

In Kuala Lumpur in December 1997, ASEAN Leaders also resolved to develop and strengthen ASEAN’s institutions and mechanisms to enable ASEAN to realise the vision and to respond to the challenges of the 21st century. The leadership also saw the need for a strengthened ASEAN

Secretariat with an enhanced role to support the realisation of their vision.

According to the Malaysian leaders Vision 2020 'is the first strategic step into the Information Age'. In the words of Malaysian foreign policy makers :

By accepting VISION 2020, we pledged to accelerate the free flow of professional and other services in the region, to promote financial sector liberalisation and closer cooperation in money and capital market, tax, insurance and customs matter as well as close consultations in macroeconomic and financial policies. In Kuala Lumpur declaration, we also resolve to develop and strengthen ASEAN's institutions and mechanisms to enable ASEAN to realise the vision and to respond to the challenges of the coming century. We also saw the need for a strengthened ASEAN Secretariat with an enhanced role to support the realisation of our vision.²⁴

Thus we see, the leaders of Malaysia through ASEAN in their wisdom and common senses, committed themselves to enhancing human resource development in all sectors of economy through quality education, upgrading of skills and capabilities and training.

Further, based on the concept of Vision 2020, the Malaysian leadership further developed the concept of "Strategic Initiative One", which in the view of the Malaysian leaders is the shift of the Malaysian economy from the production-driven economic (P-Economy) to the knowledge-based economy (K-Economy). In the Budget presented in October 1999, the Malaysian government explicitly stressed that it was necessary to ensure a paradigm shift : a fundamental more from the P-Economy to the K-Economy. In the opinion of Mahathir bin Mohammad :

Our K-Economy Master Plan will not be drafted by the best and brightest, cloistered between closed doors. The K-economy, the maximum application of knowledge to every Malaysian economic and business endeavour in every economic sector, is not an elitist process but one

involving every Malaysian from the teacher in the classroom to his pupil, to his fisherman father and housewife mother, to the driver who drives the school bus, to the mechanic who maintains it, to the engineer who also designs the vehicle, to the entrepreneur who owns the company, to his secretary, the janitor and the chairman of the Board. In order for us to succeed with the paradigm shift to the K-economy, all Malaysians, including the young of the Wawasan generation, will have to be fully involved.²⁵

Thus we see, the K-Economy Master Plan is a plan for the entire nation, and a personal master plan for every citizen. While drafting the Master Plan, the Malaysian leadership made it sure that all segments of Malaysian society must get an opportunity to take part in it.

Another vital factor, which contributed positively in understanding Malaysia's concept of knowledge based economy is the Internet. It is noteworthy that the Internet is changing the present day world system. Over the last two decades, information technologies and the Internet have been transforming the way companies do business, the way students learn, the way scientists carry out research and the way in which governments provide services to their citizens. As Mahathir Mohammad puts it :

Learning about information technology should not be confined to its application alone. We must have the capacity to develop the basic software which is so very essential and yet so very costly for us to acquire now. We must develop our own basic software on which to develop other softwares. We must in fact develop our own Internet. There is no reason at all why we must use only the Internet for all applications.²⁶

This is because the Malaysian leaders, in view of making their K-economy Master Plan a success intended to develop thier own software and hardware technology. At the same time, the Malaysian leadership understood the need to bring an Information Revolution in Malaysia, that

will help to build better human bondage. At the same time the Malaysian leadership is also prudent enough to cope up with the external influences :

In the past we could violate ourselves and try to practise our religion and our values free from the polluting influence of others. It is not possible today. The television and Internet and even the telephone bring the private life of the alien people with alien cultures right into our homes, our bedrooms even. We may want to force our people to reject outside influences, we may even ban televisions and cinemas, but the question is, for how long can we do it? The invasion of our world is already on but it will become even more pervasive. There is no escaping.²⁷

Thus we find from the above analysis, for the Information Age and the K-economy, Malaysian leadership felt the need to have a first-rate National Media system. And they felt that the Internet and other IT innovations must be large and critical part of the national media system. They also admitted the need for newspapers, magazines and books. They also admitted the need for broadcasting and narrow-casting television and radio. Indeed, all the above factors will be even more important in the Information Age and the K-economy future, and they will be increasingly accessed through Internet.

It is also evident from the above discussion, some time in the past the Malaysian leadership showed a sense of apathy towards internet in accordance to their severe foreign policy stance for not accepting the external influence. In recent past when in August 2000, Anwar Ibrahim, the Deputy Prime Minister was found guilty of sodomy and sentenced to nine years in prison, the Malaysian government limited the use of internet within its territory to avoid the influence of the Islamic fundamentalist groups upon the Malaysian population. It is interesting to note that during this time Anwar Ibrahim used Internet as one of the media to gain public sympathy.

It is again evident from the above analysis that the more than two decade old Malaysian government is in a dilemma regarding the use of the

Internet within the sphere of their influence. However, at the same time they are quite sure that, they cannot free themselves from the influence of Internet and other technologies in these days of globalisation, even if it could have all adverse effects on their foreign policy stance.

However, as a part of their Vision 2020 policy Malaysia started to concentrate on the following areas relating to IT :

- a) *E-commerce and multimedia development.*
- b) *E-government.*
- c) *Information security and cyber crime.*
- d) *Human Resource Development.*
- e) *Research, design and development, and,*
- f) *Exploring third world markets.*

Justifying the government decision Mahathir Mohammad commented

We must work hard on the demand side, always making sure that we ensure the needed priority with regard to access. Functional literacy must be broadened to all, including the very old. We must aim for 100 per cent basic IT literacy. We must rigorously build on our language skills whether it be in English or Arabic, Malay or Mandarin, Tamil Thai or Tagalog.²³

Malaysia's concept of Vision 2020 is thus a new addition to its existing features of foreign policy due to the significant changes brought about by Information Technology, particularly the Internet. However, the Malaysian leaders are themselves confused regarding the acceptance of free flow of information within their territory. But, interestingly enough they have realized that the spread of knowledge is now unstoppable. The leadership in Malaysia has realized the fact that the Internet has helped in the business to establish direct consumer-to-supplier communication which on the other hand has resulted in direct sales and delivery where before goods were imported in bulk by trading houses and distributed through local retailers, now goods come in small parcels direct to consumers from dot com companies. The foreign policy makers in Malaysia thus

anticipated that the opening of the marketing of the world by the WTO, the banks and the industries of the rich industrialized nations are ganging up. Mergers and acquisitions have made them so big that sovereign states are comparable only to a development of their giant corporations. At the same time leaders pointed out that nearly half of the business transaction on Internet is about pornography which may violate the world wide Islamic sentiments. In the midst of good and bad the Malaysian leadership wanted to accept the process of globalization in a balanced way and prudently to fulfil their ambition of VISION 2020. Mahathir thus emerged as a critic of western concept of globalization, who wanted to accept globalization in his own way saying 'yes' to certain forms of globalization, and at the same time, who is always prepared to say no to globalization, when it is guided by the dictates of pragmatism.

Conclusion

Thus, to conclude, Malaysia's foreign policy makers are cautious enough to build a multilateral and multipolar system of global governance aimed at the sustainable development for the whole planet in these days of globalization. These include classification of WTO rules; the legitimate interests of developing countries and the need to provide capacity building to help them in sustainable development issues related to trade, development and environmental concerns in a holistic and coordinated manner. It is clear that the globalisation process is affecting greatly the foreign policy of Malaysia, as far as its security issues are concerned. They have begun to realise that they can no longer manage the country by restoring the old philosophies and old strategies. Thus, the nation's security paradigm has changed, and this change is profound in some ways, as are seen in the recent trends. The country's national leaders have been focussing on non-traditional aspect of security, encompassing political, social and economic dimensions. The Malaysia's foreign policy in the post-cold war years thus clearly have reflected a pragmatic response to the geo-political and economic changes of the time. To be continually relevant to the country's needs, foreign policy cannot remain static. But whilst change has become

a general feature of Malaysia's foreign policy, continuity marks a higher level of confidence and maturing of the country in the conduct of its international affairs in the recent years. Indeed, in many ways Malaysia's leadership role has been recognised on several issues of deep interest in the developing world in recent years.²⁹

Thus, it can well be said that, to the Malaysian leaders, as a process, globalisation can be guided to provide wealth and the security for everyone, preserve and celebrate diversity and ensure the sovereignty of nation-states. On the other hand, if left to run on its own steam or through subversive intent, it can widen the economic divide in and between nations, create a global monoculture mainstream and aggregate power to certain factions and interests. Globalisation can become capitalism with an ugly face. But, it could also be capitalism with a caring face.

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Politics of Land Reforms and Land Acquisition : A Case Study of West Bengal

ABHIJIT GUHA

Introduction

The empirical and theoretical studies on displacement through the acquisition of land by the government for development projects have so far focussed on the direct and immediate adverse consequences of land acquisition. Most of the analytical as well as the descriptive accounts of the immediate consequences of land acquisition for development projects draws heavily from Michael Cernea's 'impoverishment risk model' which broadly enumerated eight 'risks' or 'dimensions' of development-induced displacement. These eight risks are very much direct and basic in nature which are (i) landlessness, (ii) joblessness, (iii) marginalization, (iv) loss of access to common property resources, (v) increased morbidity and mortality, (vi) food insecurity, (vii) homelessness and (viii) social disarticulation (Cernea 1991). Recently L. K. Mahapatra has added 'loss of education' as another impoverishment risk in situations of displacement (Mahapatra 1999).

But apart from these direct and immediate effects of land acquisition there are more subtle and indirect effects of this coercive and centralised legal procedure which have a bearing on various decentralised and participatory democratic processes and institutions of the state power. Land reforms and the panchayati raj institutions are the two most important areas which are being vitiated by land acquisition. This point however has not yet been focussed in the literature of displacement and rehabilitation.

In this paper we would make an attempt to demonstrate the adverse effects of land acquisition on land reforms and panchayats at an analytical as well as descriptive level with the help of a specific case study. (Guha 2004.)

Land Acquisition Versus Land Reforms : the Analytical Level :

Both land acquisition and land reforms involve legal and administrative actions to be undertaken by the government. These again are issues which relate to governance and allocation of power. But there are crucial differences between land acquisition and land reforms in terms of the allocation of power to different segments in the ladder of governance. The differences are noted in the following order.

1. By land acquisition, the government acquires legally owned private land for a public purpose. Land Acquisition Act cannot be employed to confiscate land beyond the limits of ceiling. This is specifically the job of the Land and Land Reforms Act. So one can say that while Land and Land Reforms Act empowers the poor and the landless, the Land Acquisition Act disempowers the farmers for a public purpose.
2. Land Acquisition and Land Reforms Act differ at the level of the government administration from which they begin their operation. The land reforms process start at the district level and the major part of this lengthy procedure takes place at the block where the updated records about ownership on land are preserved. The distribution of land to the landless is a purely block level phenomenon which requires the approval of the subdivisional officer (SDO). The land acquisition on the other hand primarily starts at the highest level of the administrative structure, i.e., at the level of the Ministerial Secretariat and sometime at the cabinet level in the state capital. The decision to acquire land comes from the highest level of the bureaucracy. From this perspective, it may be stated that land acquisition is a centralised and top-down administrative process while land reforms operate in a more decentralised manner.
3. Land reforms and land acquisition processes deal with elected

panchayats in a markedly different manner. The Land Acquisition Act does not have any provision on the part of the administration to consult the elected panchayats in connection with any kind of land acquisition for public purpose. In West Bengal, screening committees consisting of a member from the elected panchayat samity are formed to consider the proposals from the requiring bodies involving land acquisition. But in the screening committee majority of the members belong to the administration viz., the Collector, Additional District Magistrate and Land Acquisition Officer. Moreover, the screening committee does not have any statutory or legal backing. It is simply an administrative appendage of the office of the District Collector. In matters of hearing objections from landlosers and the fixation of rates of compensation, the District Collector holds the highest power.

The implementation of the various stages of land reforms requires not only the mere presence of panchayat members but also their active participation. One of the most vital affairs of the land reforms process is the distribution of government land through *patta* to the landless families. It has certain stages which begins with the preparation of *Math Khasra*. *Math Khasra* is a kind of survey conducted by the Block Land and Land Reforms Officer to enquire into the actual possession of land by the cultivators which has to be distributed among the landless families. The Land and Land Reforms Act stipulates that *Math Khasra* has to be done jointly by the panchayat and the government employees of the Revenue Inspector's Office at the gram panchayat level. This survey, which is a necessary step towards the distribution of land to the landless cannot be done without involving the panchayat. In addition to this, the list of beneficiaries, i.e., landless persons (to whom land would have to be distributed) is also prepared by the gram panchayat.

The above comparison between land acquisition and land reforms reveals that the former is a centralised and bureaucratic procedure through which the *eminent domain* of state acquires private land in India. The implications of this comparative account for the Left Front Government

(LFG) in West Bengal are important. Because, when the LFG came to power in 1977, it gave top priority to land reforms which was linked with decentralised planning through the involvement of the elected panchayats. In the following section we would provide an account of the thrusts given by the LFG in developing its policy on land reforms and decentralised rural development focussing on the erstwhile Medinipur district.

Land Reforms and Decentralised Planning in West Bengal

The LFG in West Bengal claims its uniqueness among the Indian states not only in staying at power for the last 27 years through parliamentary democracy, but also for implementing a pro-poor land reforms programme with fair amount of success (Mukarji and Bandopadhyay 1993). The key to this success lies in involving the poor peasants of the vast rural areas in the execution of the government policies related to their empowerment. The three major planks of the land reform programme of the LFG were (i) confiscation of the agricultural land of the big landlords beyond the limits of ceiling, (ii) distribution of land to landless labourers and (iii) the recording of the rights of the *bargadars* through "operation barga". Another aspect of this land reforms programme was the empowerment and activation of the three-tier panchayat system through the holding of regular elections. The panchayats have become the ubiquitous political institution in rural West Bengal through which all kinds of developmental programmes are now being executed in the state.

These political developments undoubtedly raised the level of consciousness and aspirations among the poorer sections of the rural population (landless labourers, small and marginal farmers etc.) in West Bengal. In erstwhile Medinipur district, the grassroot level approach of the LFG crystallized into a politico-administrative movement which was phrased as "village-based district planning process" during 1985-86, just a few years before the adoption of the economic liberalisation policy by the then Central Government in India. The major objective of the decentralised planning process was to unleash a movement of village-based rural development programmes by the villagers themselves.

It would be relevant here to mention that the district planning committee (the first of its kind in West Bengal) of Medinipur visualised the whole process of development by putting the poor peasants at the centre of all kinds of planning process. The DPC published a small monograph, entitled *Village Based District Planning process : an Outline of Methodology*, in September 1985, which described and analysed in detail how relevant socio-economic information of every village could be collected by the panchayat workers for using them in this micro-level planning process. Among many pro-poor planning elements, the document gave much importance to the (i) identification of the nature and amount of agricultural land as well as their improvement through ecologically sustainable use and (ii) exploration of the possibilities of developing industries in terms of local demand, raw material and/or skill. To quote from the monograph :

Apart from human beings, the most important wealth of the village is its land. It is used for locating residence, for cultivation, for planting trees, for forests, for ponds and other water bodies, for roads, for schools, markets etc. ...Again it is crucially necessary to know whether, why and how much of cultivable land of your village have either been kept fallow or have not been properly cultivated. What type of families own these lands?
(District Planning Committee 1985).

The Winds of Change : Some Facts and Figures

In the late eighties and particularly in the wake of liberalisation in 1991, the focus of the development policy of the LFG has radically shifted. The government which was fully committed to land reforms started to invite capital intensive and technologically sophisticated private industrial entrepreneurs including multinational corporations in the state. And quite interestingly, the success in land reform in the state was cited by the policymakers of the state as one of the justifications for huge industrial investment. In recent publication of the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation, the justifications for the changes in the policy of the

Government has been described in a precise manner :

Since the Left Front Government was installed in the state in 1977, it embarked on a course of reconstruction of the economy. The sectors in which the state had the powers to act under the constitution naturally received priority attention. As a matter of conscious policy, the State Government focused on rural development, land reforms, agriculture, small scale industries and fisheries along with decentralisation through empowerment and involvement of the panchayats in all development work. The policy resulted not only in a major breakthrough in the rural agricultural sector but also an upsurge in agricultural production, creation of a fast expanding domestic market and a stable political environment (West Bengal : Industry News Update June 2000:44).

But contrary to what has been said in the recent government report which reflected the policy changes of the state Government, an earlier report of the government devoted to the evaluation of the panchayats in West Bengal observed quite emphatically that land reforms is still an incomplete programme. In the words of the authors of the report :

Land reform is not yet a complete programme... In the nearly eleven years till 30 September 1992, only 94 thousand acres were distributed. At this rate the remaining 2.6 lakh acres will take almost 30 years to be distributed (Mukarji and Bandopadhyay 1993).

The authors further stated :

There is no sustained effort to help small and marginal farmers by converging rural development schemes on their households. Patta holders are, more or less left to fend for themselves, once land is allotted to them. So far this has been an area of neglect (ibid.).

In the following section we would present a case study of land acquisition versus land reforms in the 1990s in a particular Gram Panchayat in the Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal. The data for this case

have been collected through a combination of anthropological fieldwork and archival work in the district collectorate during 1995-2000 by the author.

The Ground Reality of Land Reforms and Land Acquisition in Paschim Medinipur : the Descriptive Level

Background Information : the Scenario of Poverty

The area of our study comes under the administrative jurisdiction of Kharagpur-I block of the Paschim Medinipur district. The Kharagpur-I block is situated in the Western part of the district and is bounded in the north by the Kasai river. On the West and the South of the block lie the Jhargram subdivision while the Kharagpur township is located in the east. Although, the two major townships of the district are situated almost in the vicinity of this block it is chiefly an agricultural area with few patches of sal forest. The area is characterised by vast open cultivable lands interspersed with village settlements connected by unmetalled roads.

The occupational profile of the block reveals not only the dependence of the population on agriculture but also the poor economic condition of the people. Out of 41,124 main workers 16,180, i.e., 39.34 per cent are landless agricultural labourers while 11,509 (27.98%) are cultivators. Together, these two categories constitute 67.32 per cent of the total main workers of this administrative unit of the district (District Statistical Handbook, Medinipur 1998). In terms of a number of development parameters, like literacy, villages electrified, small savings collection and aman paddy yield, the Kharagpur-I block presents a rather backward picture when compared with the adjoining blocks. For example, the literacy percentage of this block is only 58.38 (the average for the erstwhile Medinipur district is 81.27) whereas Narayangarh, Kharagpur-II and Keshiary registered 70.06, 64.02 and 61.84 percentages respectively. Again, since a substantial segment of the economy in this region is dependent on the cultivation of *aman* paddy it may be worthwhile to look at the production data of this particular crop. The production data show that although the yield rate as well as the total production of *aman* rice has

increased considerably over a period of one year, the land area under cultivation of this crop has declined from 191.5 thousand hectares in 1996-97 to 158.8 thousand hectares in 1997-98. The area under *aus* paddy cultivation has also declined in the case of these two blocks over the period 1996-97 to 1997-98. The area under *boro* paddy cultivation has however increased in this block during the same period (ibid.).

Let us come to the Gram Panchayats under Kharagpur-I block. There are altogether seven gram panchayats within this block. viz., (i) Arjuni, (ii) Barkola, (iii) Bhetia, (iv) Gopali, (v) Hariatara, (vi) Kalaikunda and (vii) Khelar. The Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat contains our study villages and it stands second in terms of the population strength while as regards the scheduled tribe component of the population this Gram Panchayat occupies the fourth position (23.11%). The most striking feature of these Gram Panchayats is the staggering number of families living below the poverty level. According to the survey conducted by the Block Development Officer in 1997-98, more than 70 per cent of the families in the Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat live below the poverty line (BDO Office, Kharagpur-I, 1997).

The last point to be mentioned in this connection is that according to the directives issued by the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment, Govt. of India, an operational list of poor families was to be prepared out of the total number of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families living in all the Gram Panchayats of the block. The objective behind the preparation of the operational list was to generate various employment schemes in order to push them up from the poverty level. In Kharagpur-I, this operational list was prepared and sent to the District Rural Development Agency by the BDO in November 1997. The operational list contained, 8,157 BPL families which is only 43.84 per cent of the total number of families who live below the poverty line in this block. Incidentally, no funds from the Ministry have yet come to assist the families through various employment generation schemes till 2003.

Giving Land to the Poor and Taking it Away

Under the above background of poverty let us now consider the case of Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat where plots of fertile agricultural land have been acquired by the State Government for two pig iron industries. But before describing the case of acquisition we would consider the distribution of land to the landless in this Gram Panchayat which is predominated by families living below the poverty line.

The figures reveal that from 1993 to June 1995, at about 300 acres of land was distributed to 1500 families inhabiting within the Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat (*Smaranika*, Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat 1994-95). Interestingly, the Annual Report of the Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat for the year 1992-93 also gave statistics on land reform in its last page which published figures of land distribution during the period 1978-1992. The figures show the same number of families (i.e., 1500) who had been given land which simply means that during the period 1992-95 no landless family in the Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat area has been given land (*Smaranika*, Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat 1992-93). The rate of land distribution in this area during 1978-1992 (i.e., 15 years) turns out to be 20 acres per year.

Let us now consider the rate of land acquisition in the Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat for two big industries, viz., (i) Tata Metaliks and (ii) Century Textiles. Incidentally, the second industry, for which 525 acres of land has been acquired is yet to come into existence. For these two industries, the amount of land that has been acquired during the period 1986-2000 (i.e., 15 years) is about 759 acres (233 acres for the Tata Metaliks and 526 acres for Century Textiles). The rate of land acquisition turns out to be 50.6 acres per year, i.e., more than 2½ times of the rate of land distributed by the Government through land reforms during 1978-1992.

Table 1
A Comparison Between Land Distribution and Land Acquisition
in Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat

Period	Amount of Land Distributed (in acres)	Amount Rate (Acres/year)
1978-1992	300	20
1986-2000	Amount of Land Acquired (in acres)	
	759	50.6

In the light of the above comparison, the case of Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat brings out an important implication for the development policy of the state. The distribution of land to the landless families in this area, which operated through the involvement of the elected panchayat was a much slower process than land acquisition for large industries. Moreover, land acquisition caused dispossession of small and marginal farmers and disempowered the *bargadars* and *pattaholders* who despite all their efforts and resistances ultimately failed to achieve empowerment.

During our fieldwork, whenever the elected panchayat members were asked about the rehabilitation of the farmers whose lands have been acquired for the industries, the only answer which came to us was : "It is not the business of the panchayat. It is the duty of the Government." The panchayat members were not even interested to conduct any household level survey to find out the number of families (including scheduled tribes) who had lost their rights over land owing to acquisition for the two big industries, within their jurisdiction. The empowerment of small peasants achieved through land reforms in the Kalaikunda area was rather reserved owing to the acquisition of huge chunks of fertile agricultural land for industries.

Conclusion

In the concluding section of the paper we would mention some policy recommendations for the Government of West Bengal whose policy makers have not yet shown any interest towards the relationship between land reforms and land acquisition. The recommendations are :

1. Any generalised macro-level hypothesis regarding economic development should take into consideration the micro-level realities of the field of its application. That land reform prepares the ground for industrialisation may be true in some specific situations, but not for the whole state. The endeavour of industrialisation may become self-defeating in this context.
2. The West Bengal Government should make a clear-cut ban on the take-over of fertile agricultural land for industries.
3. If land acquisition becomes inevitable after searching all the possible alternatives, then a pre-acquisition socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA) survey should be made and priorities should be fixed to rehabilitate the worst affected and marginalized groups of the society through the panchayats.
4. There should be a provision in the West Bengal Panchayat Act which would make it mandatory for the elected panchayats to give priority to Project Affected Persons (PAP) within its area at the time of implementation of various poverty alleviation schemes by the panchayat. Here the project affected scheduled tribe and scheduled caste families should be given priority.
5. Specific amendments in the Land Acquisition Act should immediately be made in case of acquired land unutilised for more than 2 years. The land should be returned to the cultivators without taking back the money which they had received as compensation. Since the Requiring Body (RB) has failed to utilise the land, so there is no question of paying back the money to the RB.

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Civil Service Reform in Developing Countries : Common Themes and Problematic Issues

RUMKI BASU

Pressure for Reforms

Since the mid-1970s, governments have been increasingly concerned with adopting and adapting structures and values of civil service, which would achieve greater efficiency, and more accountability in the bureaucracy. This movement has been motivated by unprecedented economic crises which have led to diminished financial resources for governments and by rapid changes in political and public opinion. A combination of factors acted as catalysts for change. These included problems related to balance of payments faced by most developing countries, which eroded their exchange rates and the purchasing power of governments. The terms of trade were such that developing countries could not cover their needs for imports of manufactured products – many of which were needed by government agencies. Besides, government expenditure as a proportion of the national income was increasing every year with no parity with the sources of government revenue. Hence, there was a need for drastic controls in government expenditure. This concern with economic growth has led to reforms focused towards national goals, rather than those limited to improving administrative efficiency within government. Reforms have also attempted to improve the context for increased privatisation and development through the private sector.

Against this general background, managerial strategy and political ideology have both played their part in motivating reform programmes.

Whether explicitly stated as a goal or not, economic growth has been of paramount concern, particularly at a time of widespread recession.

The role assigned to government in the planning and management of national economic and social tasks has undergone fundamental reassessment in the developing economies. At the same time, major political reorientations in the level of state intervention in social and economic spheres have also occurred.

A crucial development has been the change in strategy being pursued by most countries for achieving economic growth and broader development objectives. In the late 1980s, the question of "perestroika" posed fundamental challenges far beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union. The repercussions were both at practical and intellectual levels impacting on both managers and policy makers alike. The issue of moving from an economy in which activity has been planned mainly in terms of physical quantities, to one in which consumers indicate their preferences by means of the monetary valuations they put on at least some goods and services, is one of the key managerial and intellectual challenges of this transition.

These developments, combined with political and social changes around the world, have had an impact on various economies. Besides reawakening a spirit of economic liberalism, they have also impacted on the functions of governments. Despite consensus on the need for change, there continues to be debates on the future role of the state.

Many countries are now seeking modes of administration, which avoid the errors of both Soviet-style planning and the grandiose corporate planning approaches popular in the 1960s. The need to change the role of the state has found acceptance as a route towards improved economic efficiency in many countries. The restructuring which followed has been shaped differently by the ideological, political and structural contexts in the perceived role of government from acting as the principal vehicle for socio-economic development to guiding and facilitating that development.

The situation, however, is far more complex. Underneath the general current towards "leaner and meaner" administrative structures, there

are many waves in the opposite direction. Economic liberalization brings with it an increased requirement for regulatory activity, as does the increasing concern for the environment. Equally, the strong pressure towards consumer-oriented services can lead to requirements for more rather than less government, with an emphasis on “transparency” rather than size.

Within this ambience of change, there are underlying concerns to achieve efficiency, cost-effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability. The motivations for such reform are public pressures and expectations concerning the quality of government services.

At their 1991 meeting in Harare, Commonwealth Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the commonwealth principles for democratic development and identified sound and accountable administration as a key priority for the Commonwealth. Subsequently, the Secretariat’s Management and Training Service Division organized a series of Roundtables and consultations with Governments. The aim of these was to learn from successful experiences and explore ways and means of strengthening Commonwealth cooperation in the area of administration of managerial reforms.

Civil Service Reform (CSR) programmes are increasingly being adopted in Latin America, Caribbean and a range of African countries and in many cases the results have been mixed and the effectiveness of the aid provided in support of these programmes has sometimes been limited. It is important to review CSR experience and to draw lessons that will enable Special Programmes of Assistance (SPA) donors to improve the impact of their aid in this area and to inform the policy dialogue with recipient governments.

The following principles have been developed by drawing on a wide range of published material, the experiences of the donors in question and six case studies of major CSR programmes, in Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, the Central African Republic, Benin and Burkina Faso, the case studies were specially commissioned by the CSR Working Group to provide a more-in-depth assessment of current CSR programmes from a cross-section of African countries.

Eight Problems

The search for novel and useful approaches to upgrade the public sector in developing countries will have to incorporate explanations for some of the recurrent problems common to almost all public bureaucracies. The following eight characteristics of the public sector offer interesting avenues for further exploration into the nature of the problems.

The first problem is the debilitating effect that expansion of the state has on state power. For decades, Latin American and many Asian states sought to improve their performance and that of their public sector by expanding their scope of activities and through, this rapid and intense diversification effectively weakened the public sector. This phenomenon is now well documented. The social debacles that resulted from public sectors that were too busy managing steel mills, airlines, and hotels to pay adequate attention to health or education have been well analyzed.

The second, closely related problem is that, often, the more overstaffed an agency is, the more congested it tends to be. Many agencies seem to suffer from a chronic incapacity to offer timely and adequate responses to the needs of the public. Such work overload is frequently dealt with by increasing staff size. But adding staff seldom results in more operational slackness. Such agencies are normally overwhelmed by requests to do things for which they lack the necessary resources and capacity.

The third problem is that the more regulations, rules, and legal frameworks – there are, the less control there is, and the weaker that regulatory framework tends to be. The system is, of course, more rigid, but at the same time, easier to undermine. In the quest to control and impose restrictions its operating capacity has been severely impaired. At the same time, such excessive controls are rarely effective as tools to reduce corruption.

The fourth problem is that the higher the responsibility of an individual, the less authority he or she has. The lack of proportion between responsibility and authority is often appalling in Third world contexts. By authority I mean not only power, but the resources and instruments that people need to perform their functions. This issue is related to workload

and to the increasing inability of many of the developing countries' public institutions to achieve their original goals. An audit of Latin American and African public agencies would probably reveal that a large number of them couldn't, for a variety of reasons, effectively perform their central tasks. Ironically, there is evidence that this incapacity is more frequently found in agencies charged with delivering the public services needed by the underprivileged.

The fifth problem is that, although governments have been finding the coordination of their activities increasingly difficult, throughout the 1970s and 1980s they enacted more and more policies whose implementation – and success – crucially depended on interagency coordination. Governments are less and less capable of coordination themselves, due to weak interagency coordination or – in sharing information, closely monitoring each other's functions and effectively taking their interdependencies into account in their decision – making.

The sixth problem relates to the decentralization that, for example, the Latin American and Caribbean region has been undertaking, along with the rest of the developing world and even the post – communist states. Decentralization in developing countries is happening in different stages and is driven by two different forces – managerial and political. Managerial decentralization occurs when, after analyzing a public function, it is decided that the way to improve capacity and performance is to decentralize. Although this measure is often valid and effective, it is also frequently hampered by faulty implementation.

As a consequence of the periodic attempts at decentralization, the above-mentioned region has highly fragmented public sectors. Sporadic decentralization episodes have left organizations with organizational charts that blend old organizational forms with various changes implemented in successive decentralization efforts – resulting in a hybrid that no one had planned.

The seventh problem is that despite ample opportunities to learn from past experiences, public organizations, overburdened with repeti-

tious tasks and problems, tend to repeat mistakes. There is much evidence that public organizations suffer from profound learning disabilities resulting from structural and functional contradictions. In order to understand what causes the public organization's impaired learning capacity it is important to go to the roots causes, which are often country specific in nature.

The eighth and last problem is that economic reforms increase opportunities in the private sector and therefore increase the demand for managers, thus pushing up their salaries. At the same time, reforms in the public sector call for fiscal austerity, which tends to erode salaries, since inflation is normally higher than wage adjustments. So, at the same time that reforms create all sorts of incentives in the private sector for competent managers, it inhibits salary opportunities for competent managers in the public sector. This is surely a paradoxical problem.

An Approach To Civil Service Reform

The principal elements of a comprehensive process of reform are, first, the elaboration of a clear vision of the role of the civil service and, based on this optimal role, the development of a comprehensive reform plan; second, the rationalization of rules and regulations for the civil service; third, the design of modern management systems; and fourth, the implementation of the programme of reform.

First, we need to define a comprehensive strategy. This begins with a rethinking of the role of the state generally. Development theory at present firmly supports removing the state from the day-to-day running of the economy and allowing market forces to take over many of the old responsibilities of the state. Although this is a rather vague notion, it can be redefined. For the civil service, it means relieving the state from the provision of certain services, now best left to the private sector, and it means streamlining the ministries and regulatory agencies, particularly those responsible for the oversight of the economy. It means in effect less active participation of the state in the economy by limiting state enterprises to the

provision of utilities and certain sectors of national interest only. Once the role of the leaner state has been defined, the mechanics of the new government need to be worked out, along with a plan to achieve this goal. This is what is meant by a comprehensive reform framework: a plan that outlines the specific reform measures needed, illustrates the linkages between them, and explicitly relates the relevance of short-term measures to long-term goals. It is important that the reform effort have the full commitment of the political leadership, experience has shown that effective implementation depends initially on the active participation of the most senior members of government. It is also important for the civil service management and rank and file to be involved in the process, to establish domestic ownership of the programme.

The second step is a legislative effort, it involves rationalization of existing policies and implementation of new legislation, to the extent necessary for the introduction of the reform programme. For instance, the administrative laws that regulate the internal workings of the civil service, such as personnel regulations, might need to be amended to allow for the downsizing effort and to install flexible personnel management practices that are geared toward the recruitment of high-quality employees and that will, in terms of compensation and promotion, reward efficient performance. The other set of rules and policies that will need to be overhauled are those of the civil service.

The third element of a reform process is the design of systems and programmes that are appropriate to the needs of the new administration. The most successful of these systems have been based on private sector management approaches and have benefited from the flexibility gained and from the more up-to-date systems in use.

These include:

- A modern data collection system, which ensures accuracy, and includes rules governing the confidentiality of information.

- A financial system for budgeting and expenditure, which includes budget planning and preparation, the control of expenditure, and a tender and contracting system.
- An accounting and auditing system, which ensures sound financial auditing.
- Modern central personnel management systems. These would include a strategic planning system at the ministry of agency level to forecast future staffing requirements over a period of, say, five years – and the consequent job reclassifications and management of human resources – to avoid a build-up of surplus staff, and a personnel recruitment and management system to recruit and promote qualified staff, particularly to high-level positions through effective training and monitoring of performance.

The main objective of these management systems is to ensure sustained and efficient staff performance and the achievement of the civil service's goals, as defined in the general strategy.

The fourth and final element of a comprehensive reform programme is the implementation of the reform plan. This should begin with a determination of the numbers of employees and kinds of skills needed in each ministry and agency. This should then be followed by a survey of the work force (age, grade, position and the like), including a determination of the skills available. The next step is to implement the elements of the reform programme, including installation of the modern management systems that, by now, have been modified to fit local needs and are ready for use.

The dialogue among and between developing countries highlighted both the diversity and the commonality of reform programmes, and the key distinctions between domestic and external pressure for change. Discussions also revealed a movement from "macro" concerns relating to the role of government in socio-economic development, towards a more "micro" concern with the development of specific strategies for improvement in public sector management. In summary, the debate had moved from the

problems to the solutions.

This paper illustrates the degree to which new areas of consensus are emerging in the implementation of reform. It reflects the findings of the roundtables and proposes a framework for sharing experiences of successful civil services reform in developing countries.

Common Themes

Examination of these themes emphasized the complexity of the challenges, the potential which such reform programmes might realize, and the remarkable similarity about the concerns and changes taking place in very different settings. These themes are as follows.

Redefining the Political/Administrative Boundary

The research for enhanced clarity of role and tighter lines of accountability extends to a desire to refine the relationship between political policy-making, and administrative policy implementation. As a policy goal, its roots lie in the concern that the civil service requires a clearer political lead, and the belief that in distinguishing the role of senior administrators from that of the politicians, strategic objectives will be more easily distinguished from operational processes.

Making informed choices

In order to maintain an effective capacity for strategic intervention in all areas of socio-economic activities, governments must select the most effective structured reform option from an increasingly broad portfolio, from corporatisation to contracting-out. Selecting the appropriate option requires a willingness to dispassionately evaluate models for their effectiveness, regardless of whether those models are traditionally associated with the public or private sectors. Also, it implies a managerial style which facilitates a rapid response and which is capable of driving through change.

Emphasising Responsiveness

This identification of responsibilities, where policy formulation is separated from implementation, is a necessary precursor to strengthening accountability. Enhanced accountability fits with a broader concern to adopt a more managerial approach. Such an approach suggests that account-

ability is enhanced by tighter definitions of tasks, measurement of performance, devolution of resource control, strengthening monitoring, and clarifying incentives.

An appropriate mix between the Public and Private Sector

Recognition that the public sector is dependent on the services of the private sector, as well as being ultimately responsible for the climate in which that sector thrives or otherwise, requires a clear conceptualisation of the boundary between the two. This entails clarity in the mechanisms for the exchange of goods and services across that boundary. In turn, this requires a clear model for government's purchasing of externally-produced services and an ability to specify the government's intended outcome in strengthening the capacity of the private sector. Within the more pragmatic management culture increasingly adopted by governments, a broader range of choices is available for the intervention in, and withdrawal from, areas of social and economic activity. The public/private "synergy" is maintained by a flexible and frequently tactical choice of strategies and actions.

A Concern for Efficiency

The reform programmes reflected the two broad aims of increased efficiency and effectiveness. The concern for heightened efficiency is both an organizational value implying a moral dimension to any apparent waste in government, and an instrumental concern resting on the premise that inefficiency within government represents a burden on public resources.

Reducing Corruption

In varying degrees, corruption is a fact of life in all areas of government. While perceptions of its nature and extent vary, it provides a strong impetus for reform on two levels. First, concern exists in some countries that independence left a residue of endemic corruption. Fundamental reform was seen as necessary to change the value base and the procedures which sustained this state of affairs. Second, other countries have more recent concerns regarding the growing number of public sector scandals, which could be related to the fast pace of change.

In both situations, the response of government has been to intro-

duce widespread reform programmes with the broad aim of reversing any perception that corruption is a “low risk-high reward” activity and does not “pay” in the long run.

A Dual Focus on Structures and personnel

Discussions indicated clearly that successful reforms are built on a foundation of attention to both the organizational and attitudinal dimensions of public sector reform. In some settings, tight monitoring of total staff numbers and costs have clearly assisted in developing a new culture in which quality and accountability to the public are emphasized through a conscious process of reorientation.

Such a deliberate process of changing attitudes, in step with reforming structures, highlights the central role of staff commitment to change. The process of reform must capture the imagination of existing staff if they are to lead to sustainable service improvements.

Changing Values and Attitudes

The question of attitudes underpins all concrete issues concerning possible civil service reforms. Increasing concern with the quality of service provided to “citizens” has acted as a particular catalyst in developing an organizational culture where concern for the finished product is a major preoccupation. Attitudes concerning commitment to the job, belief in quality, and flexibility, have been associated with many recent developments. Such reforms within the public sector have represented a major challenge to the traditions and assumed values of the civil service.

In some settings, a concern for quality and identification with the public served are important aspects of the new culture. This gives rise to the possibility that a new public sector value system is emerging. If this is the case, it might represent the ethical dimension of the revised boundary between the public and private sectors referred to earlier. Such developments raise fundamental questions about the very notion that the public sector is distinct and separate from the private sector and should operate on different principles.

Technological Opportunities

The growing power of information technology has opened up possibilities, which have not existed previously. The rapid processing and dissemination of information is allowing the development of a broader range of organizational structures and functions. Flatter structures allowing for tighter monitoring of service outputs and delivery of better services to the customers and improved information interface with the public at large are some of the developments in this area.

Despite data constraints, the experiences of developing countries suggest some lessons to guide present and future civil service reform. These can be summarized as follows:

- The impact of programmes to contain the cost and size of civil services through emergency pay and employment reforms has so far been small. Effort in most countries to reduce the wage bill and to decrease the number of civil service employees have yielded only modest results. Attempts to correct distortions in the structures of pay and employment through the decomposition of wages and the rationalization of the remuneration system have also had limited success.
- Technical analysis and support activities, such as functional review and competency testing, for example, have been useful in providing a rational basis for cost containment measures. Their major contribution, however, may be the symbolic assurances they provide that the reform process has been undertaken with fair and equitable intentions.
- Some reform programmes have promoted interim solutions to pay and employment problems through specialized incentive schemes for topping up executive-level salaries for key government posts, or, more broadly, by widely supplementing civil service salaries through donor-financed activities. Most observers familiar with the use of these mechanisms recog-

nize their limitations and costs.

- The question of whether more aggressive reforms are feasible is partly technical but mainly political. As discussed previously, the political economy of pay and employment reforms needs further conceptualization and analytical work. Nonetheless, it is possible to hypothesize from the few examples of countries where programmes have been carried out that the political costs of implementing pay and employment reforms have been lower than most governments and donors anticipated. Organized opposition to reforms have not resulted in regime destabilization, or social upheavals. As a result, dismissals have not occurred. In part, this may have been a function of the surprising capacity of private sector labour markets – especially in agricultural and informal sectors and particularly, but not exclusively, in Africa – to absorb surplus government workers.

What this suggests is that perhaps regimes can (for political reasons) and should (for economic reasons) make deeper cuts. How far any given government can push these reforms is, of course, unknown. But the relatively mild consequence of the minimal reforms undertaken so far can, it is hoped, influence governments' perceptions of political risk and encourage them to take bolder actions in future.

Most activities in civil service reform have concentrated, understandably, on short-term cost containment measures. Considerably more emphasis will have to be given to longer-term management issues if sustained improvement in government administrative capacity is to take place. More attention needs to be paid to devising a coherent, and viable strategy for civil service reform, and detailing the set of tactics by which the strategic goals will be achieved.

Reducing the size of government while remaining effective and efficient has been the main objective of civil service reforms aimed at developing a new public administration capable of meeting the emerging and

complex challenges of the future. However, individual governments have adopted a much more discriminating approach in seeking to enhance civil service performance while maintaining the overall objective of improved public administration and the delivery of high-quality public service to citizens.

While global concerns exist about the nature of civil service reforms, there is no unique solution or approach. There are as many lessons to be learned from the successful experience of the developing countries, as from the industrial countries. Each country needs to identify its priorities according to the local circumstances, drawing upon the mix of other experiences from both industrial and developing countries, and look at achievements and implications. In short, states have to develop country specific and local solutions to global challenges.

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The Anglo-Indians as an Ethnic Minority : Issues in Boundary Maintenance

SUDARSHANA SEN

Introduction

The Anglo-Indian community in India is a legacy of India's colonial past. It still exists with distinctive characteristics of a cultural hybrid group functioning as a link between the colonial past of India and its present state. The community of today can be traced to the years following 1775. As a population of mixed racial heritage between 1600 and 1775 the members had either merged with the British or with the indigenous population. (H. H. Stark : 1936). This is not to say that the process of assimilation had stopped after that, but the mixed racial composition could be identified by its distinctiveness even now.

Though the making of this community was enhanced by the British colonial interest (C. Hawes, 1993), it was actually the majority community in India which had furthered its cause. Many other communities had to fight for their rights and interests, had to struggle for their survival, but this community in particular has been able to maintain its identity despite such struggles. The most notable feature of this community living in Kolkata is that it has been able to maintain the same distinctiveness that was a mark of its identity in the colonial period, such as the use of English language, adoption of western manners and customs, marriage practices, individual families, and in most cases adherence to the Church, etc. The community has evolved into an ethnic minority, closely bound within themselves, trying sometimes to transcend the border of "we" and "they", thus facing a marginal situation full of socio-psychological trauma. The incidence of crossing the boundary is still relatively less, because the community as a whole has never found it imperative to do so.

Anglo-Indians as a Marginal and Ethnic Minority Group

The concept that Anglo-Indian community is a marginal and ethnic minority is perhaps overemphasized in any literature on this community. The notion of marginality implies a combination of material and non-material elements through which a community remains confined within themselves. The first in the list is the presence of schools to educate themselves; the second is persistence with some occupation(s), and the third is the purchasing power to enhance participation with other groups, and finally and most importantly, absence of opportunities to do so. The last criterion emphasize capabilities and options a person ought to exercise, selecting roles pertinent for his/her participation in other group activities. This includes motivations, knowledge, type of personality, and intellectual capacity (Germani Gino : 1980).

This concept embodies a condition of conflict where the minority faces difficulties in effectively manipulating insufficient and inadequate opportunities as presented by the dominant culture. Admittedly, discriminations against the minority complicate the situation, getting cultural and subcultural differences linked to ethnic factors. Moreover, this discrimination might also generate an ideological struggle against the dominant culture, rendering the situation more complex. This particularly applies to a situation where the minority follows certain food habits, clothing and recreation, family customs distinct and different from the dominant culture (ibid. : 1980).

Sometimes a hierarchical situation may develop in which the barriers that exist between the dominant and subordinate culture, prevent the latter group from the privileges of the former. In this case, the dominant culture does not prevent the absorption of its culture by the subordinate groups develop a stereotypical image of itself (D. Clarke : 1968) of a racially, culturally mixed “Marginal Man ” — a kind of unhappy half-comical caricature of the ideal to which he is presumed to aspire.

Some may be able to transcend the barrier of “us” and “them”, although it remains so for all who are unable to cross it. Some may feel

totally excluded while others may accept or reject the barrier. Another fact being that such membership is ascribed, unalterable and kinship plays a very vital role in such situations. Individuals who cross the margin are not only uncertain of their belonging to the group they enter but also their belonging to the group they leave (K. Lewin 1948). Moreover, as they comprise a small part of the whole social body, they are numerically a minority, but the fact that they live within restricted territories tend to make the boundary even more prominent. These boundaries exist in their consciousness restricting not only free movement, but also limiting them in their choice of occupation, religion and seeking of opportunities for enhancement in conditions of living (ibid.).

Living within themselves, ethnic minorities tend to build up to propagate for their own community-level institutions (Kinloch 1979). Groups that enter a society under negative historical situations in particular, are perceived by the dominant group as culturally different and are generally of low economic status, experience discrimination, remain segregated with low levels of political economic and social dissimilation. They may also be viewed as violence and deviance-prone with low standards of moral conduct. Ethnic minorities on the other hand may take pride in their ethnic background and vehemently argue in favour of their own culture (ibid.). It is a labelling process, where the ethnic minority perceives a situation where they are seen as different and inferior with respect to standards of behaviour, culture and economic roles set by the society.

The Anglo-Indian community members in India were never labelled with a parental heritage of credit either by the colonial power, whom they revered or the indigenous population, with whom they had to stay without any other choice. The colonizers never credited them as British. The indigenous population too often ostracized them by common remarks such as “half-whites”, “half-sahibs”, “country-born” and “Anglo”. Their reaction to such expressions are “these Indians”, “bongs” and “natives”, may be cited as examples of the reactions to the indignation they face. The Indians perhaps could never forget that this community was a product of

western imperialism and that the community had taken the side of the colonizers in fostering the British Rule. The Anglo-Indians on the other hand, were aware of this situation and entered Independence (in 1947) with a negative set of mind -- that they would not be accepted freely and would have to fight against their wishes to mix with the emerging "dominant" mass. Moreover, to be an Indian by birth is not the only consideration one has to feel to be an Indian. It is difficult for them to take Indian national ideology into their consciousness.

They now live through the institutions they have formed such as Anglo-Indian schools, clubs and occupations that they are stereotyped with such as teachers, clerks, secretaries etc. They seldom make friends with others. Often circumscribed by their friends and family from the community they spend their old age mostly in Homes built and maintained by and for the community. The schools maintained by the community are the centres where the children of the community go. Though these schools maintain their roll strength on non-Anglo-Indian pupils, the community enjoys special privileges in fees, uniforms, books and food for the Anglo-Indian students. The community, which is heterogeneous in economic status, takes to these schools unanimously. In most cases, the affluent mostly try to help the poor so that they get into good schools, have a decent education to support them later on in life. So, they are mostly confined within themselves, rarely crossing the "barriers". Such exceptions do not always receive a better treatment. But these are considered "great" by their people because they have been successful to an extent. i.e., to be able to mix with "others".

Origin of the Community

The community's name is an indicator of its long historical past. By the Franchise Rules of the Indian Act of 1935, an Anglo-Indian is a person, whose father or any one whose male progenitor is of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India. Such a definition encompasses and recognizes not only British male ancestor but also any European such as Dutch, French or Portuguese. There is, for example, the Bengal Branch of the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association

which recognizes any mixed group of Anglo-Indian origin as members of the community. But they vehemently protest and despise the inclusion of "Indian-Christians" and Goans within their fold despite the fact that they profess the same religion. This is so because they remain distinct in ways of life and attitudes toward life.

The largest number of the Anglo-Indian community reside in West Bengal. They constantly face a considerable pressure, which has forced them to unite into a homogeneous racial-linguistic, and cultural group. They survive as a self-sustaining minority through a complex network of institutions created long ago. They have been gradually absorbed into the Indian life as cosmopolitan proletariat. They live in Kolkata with their distinct culture and are able to maintain their ethnic affiliation, language, life style, educational priorities, occupational patterns that help them to practise and preserve isolation.

The Anglo-Indians are primarily an urban group with a tendency to conglomerate in certain pockets of the city of Kolkata, avoiding predominantly Hindu areas. The situation today has hardly altered with few exceptions of in-migration. The barrier that is felt today, has not always been consciously or purposefully displayed by the community but was the result of the policy of the British to keep them away from the Indian masses. Some authors have suggested that, as they are beefeaters, they tend to flock within areas where there is a predominantly Muslim population.

The two axes along which this community can be identified as ethnic are education and employment choices. They have retained their distinctiveness in their reluctance to use any language other than English, strict adherence to monogamous marriages, nuclear families, European kinship pattern, European style of living and, last but not the least, a conscious effort to maintain distinctiveness.

Anglo-Indians and Ethnic Boundary Maintenance - 1

The issues, which relate to ethnic boundary maintenance, are adherence to a language, education system, its own stereotypical occupation, marriage. Here only two features, i.e., insistence on a language

and occupation at the schools owned by the community are discussed, keeping in view the significance of the other issues. The Anglo-Indian identity revolves around the use of English language. English language being their mother tongue and the backbone of their interaction, Anglo-Indians resent the thought of most of the Indians that it is a foreign language.

The case of Bombay School is an evidence at hand, in favour of their keenness to stick to keep to their cultural *lingua franca*. Still now, almost all Anglo-Indian boys and girls are admitted into English medium schools, because it is "their Language". Perhaps many are unable to pursue further studies or even continue school education, because they are not well "acquainted" with or "expressive" in other languages such as Bengali or Hindi. As no school under Indian educational standard allows ...of studies in any one language (Abel 1988), every pupil is supposed to take up two other languages, either from the local dialect or the national one. Anglo-Indians of yesterday either took French or Latin as the rule was, but now, they have no other option than following the mandate of two languages other than English.

Further references can be cited during the period between 1935 and 1947 and even after that to corroborate the extent to which the community had striven to maintain an education system, which they could call their own. It was during these years that Anglo-Indian education received statutory protection by the Government of India Act of 1935. It provided financial stability, which it thought necessary for the maintenance of the standard of education at these schools. Starting with this, the post-war Reconstruction of Education Report of 1944, was carried out with plans for implementing a modern educational system.

In 1958 Frank Anthony founded the All-India Anglo-Indian Educational Society, devoted to the promotion of education and educational pursuits. Its objective was to set up public schools. Later on, under the leadership of A.E.T. Barrow, Cambridge School Certificate Examination was replaced by Indian School Certificate Examination in 1958, which is the sole body that conducts examination for Anglo-Indian education in the

name of Council for Indian School Certificate Examination. English is the only medium of instruction approved under this council. Any claim of regional language to be the primary medium of instruction is not accepted by the All India Anglo-Indian Association on the ground that there is no provision for special protection of Anglo-Indian education in the Constitution based on the right of the community to conserve its language and culture. To quote E. Abel, the schools are administered by the All India Anglo-India Education Institution whose policy is to hire a majority of Anglo-Indian staff as a means of preserving Anglo-Indian tradition and culture.

To corroborate the above statement, the Bombay school would be an apt example. In 1951, the Bombay Government laid emphasis on the use of child's mother tongue as a teaching medium. As Anglo-Indian schools admitted students from other communities, they came under the purview of this policy. Frank Anthony, a leader of the community, complained that in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the governments had imposed compulsory teaching of Hindi (Abel 1988). There were instances of occasional restriction of grants for this purpose. In 1954, it took a new turn, as leaders of the community publicly denounced education policies of the Bombay Government as "educational apartheid". Since the Government at the Centre was to continue with English in official transactions, Anthony asked school authorities to deny admission to pupils from other communities. Such reactions were emotional on the one hand and constitutional on the other. The Bombay Government stated that only non-Asiatic children of Eurasian and European origin could claim English as their mother tongue. Within days the Anglo-Indian community organized public opinion, and later on the Government re-verified the language policy. Schools remained closed for long periods as a symbol of protest. Later on, the Government was compelled to adjourn a hasty decision. Again, in 1967 the Indian Government introduced the Official Languages Bill and a resolution on language policy was adopted. Anthony opposed this as a clear case of discrimination against the community. He insisted that the use of Hindi as a second language in Anglo-Indian schools could be the only

solution to the problem but to introduce Hindi as the sole "medium of instruction" in Anglo-Indian schools can never be acceptable to them.

This controversy throws light on the fact that, on the one hand the community was unable to come to terms with Hindi as a medium of instruction and on the other, it would continue with English in schools as an expression of their bearing a separate identity. The introduction of Hindi instead of English would have left the community with no other alternative but to diminish the use of English in their schools. Moreover, as these schools depended on non - Anglo - Indian students, the use of Hindi would ultimately create a negative image about these schools in their minds. This is so because this would then find no difference between an Anglo - Indian School and some other schools. The students of Anglo - Indian School are not only learning English as Britishers do but also learning etiquettes, customs and values of European culture. Till then, the legacy of a colonial regime so dominated the psyche of most Indians, that the idea of admitting wards to such schools was the only objective of people who could offer its high fees. From the community's viewpoint, their distinctiveness enabled them to thrive on such schools. So such decisions would ultimately mean the end of their struggle to survive. These schools still are a breeding ground for Anglo - Indians. That is to say, the community revolves around these schools; almost all the teachers in such schools, specially at primary levels, are Anglo -Indians. The schools are run by boards formed mostly with eminent Anglo- Indians Even almost all secretaries, clerks, fourth grade staff are from the community. So a loss of distinctiveness of such schools would not only mean losing identity of a language and culture, but it would also mean an economic loss in a situation of growing of unemployment faced by the community after withdrawal of special protections. Clearly, in preserving their ethnic pride and maintaining their 'Anglo - Indian' identity their schools and language have taken the leading role.

Anglo-Indian and Areas of Ethnic Boundary Maintenance 2

The other axis along which they still remain distinctive is their choice of occupation and employment status they achieve. A considerable portion

of the community in Kolkata live near pockets of insufficient economic means; added to that, they have a family to support. The Anglo-Indian boys and girls understand the value of money from an early age. This is the case especially with the boys and is one of the potent reasons why they constitute the most of the dropouts at schools. Girls on the other hand try to pursue studies and mostly look for jobs at offices. The members of the community, who are comparatively better off, mostly try to accommodate such boys and girls in their business firms. Most of such firms accommodate a sizeable number of Anglo-Indian staff. Potent sources of employment for Anglo Indians in the past were government jobs. Most of the Anglo-Indians of yesteryears were either in the Police or Railways or Tramways, or Telephones. Women were either secretaries in such services or were teachers at Anglo-Indian schools. But as value of higher education and specially specialized technical expertise became important to find a job, and, as also with increased mechanization, clerical jobs were fading out, the Anglo-Indians started facing a troubled time. At present, women and men are either teachers or in low-paid part-time jobs. Only a few, with good and upper-level contacts, with specialized field knowledge in hotel management and computer application can find jobs for themselves. The present generation is finding it hard to find jobs to their liking because their technical knowledge is not from the best of institutions of the country where there are open entrance examinations. Their reluctance to try something out the ordinary and to look beyond the traditional job orientations, has also added to their present stereotypical occupational pattern. As a result, the Anglo Indians are now mostly confined to schools maintained by the community. Here, they are not only employed as teachers but also as clerks or other lower grade staff. It will perhaps be a repetition to state that these schools thrive on the number of Anglo-Indian students on the one hand, and on the employment of a large number of Anglo-Indian staff on the other. So, revolving round these schools there now exist three classes of people — one that run these schools, one who study there, and finally the one who are employed there. Last but not the least, they are oriented from

the very beginning of their life to develop a tendency to enter into these institutions, where they can get easy admissions, the only criterion being their mixed heritage. This has made it harder for them to interact, communicate and know about others, to join with them in their affairs and feel as one among them. They stay within a closed system consisting of their families and friends, and remain segregated from the rest. The result is that they are confined within themselves, set up a world for themselves marked by their culture, their ethics and "Anglo-Indianness"

Conclusion

H.A. Stark's comments way back in 1926 are still appropriate to understand the tradition the Anglo-Indians grudgingly nurture

Ask us to sell our British heritage for a mess of political pottage....The answer is instant and clear.... (It) speaks in the heart of each of us. It throbs in the blood that mingles without breath. It leaps to our lips in soul-stirring appeal "O England! Who are these if not thy sons?"

Kuntala Lahiri (1991) reports that in their expressions, the Anglo-Indian authors mostly present images, which lack balance and borders on either extreme. Anthony, Maher and other authors tried to focus on the positive side and the contributions the community has made for India. This appraisal console them and lays emphasis on their zeal to overcome stereotypical images and barriers felt during interaction. Grimshaw has put forward an argument in favour of their unity as a group. Leaders of the community continually urge the members to stay united to fight for their rights and try to mingle with the Indian population, keeping their distinctiveness intact. Their ethnic identity and boundary maintenance perhaps found an ultimate expression in their utopian construction of a homeland — Mc Cluskiegun, 37 miles from Ranchi. In 1930-32, Sir Gidney had asked for a separate state, namely, Andaman and Nicobar Islands for them, but it was not acceded to. Stirred by a strong emotion for a bond with a geographical area, a colony was established by E.T.McCluskie. But later on due to various reasons, it became quite

irrelevant to the younger people and the colony, which grew up with much expectation, lost its importance. The fact however, remains that the community has survived a scare – a near desperation of extinction as community devoid of any economic security. Amid rapid Indianization of 1940s and 70s and globalization of 1990s, the community has kept a tight hold over the customs and habits, tenaciously, which stand for identity of their culture and heritage. English language being their mother tongue, they are quite eloquent in their pro-Western courteous interactions and etiquette. Even then they remain a minority of mixed racial heritage, a miniscule in the social-cultural map of India.

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Contextualizing Market-Preserving Federalism : The Indian Scenario

KESHAB CHOUDHURI

A neo-liberal view of globalization highlights unprecedented developments taking place at the national and international levels as a result of contemporary breakthroughs in the domains of science and technology, particularly electronics, bio-engineering and communication (*World Bank Development Report 1998-99*). The world economic order is at present undergoing a process of rapid transformation and almost all nations, capitalist, socialist or erstwhile communist, are busy in implementing some of the prescriptions contained in the Washington Consensus, like the adoption of macro-economic and financial programmes, the inauguration of trade and financial liberalization, privatization and deregulation (Ahrens, 1997), 'Market socialism' of the People's Republic of China, and Indian economic reforms, a little more than one decade old, are but a kind of response to the call of meeting the demands of globalization.

The economic reforms in India, I believe, cannot succeed unless they are accompanied by political and administrative reforms preparing the foundations of economic growth. When the Constitution of India came into force, the economic and political realities confronting the nation were very different from what they are today. The beginning of the 21st century seems to be a suitable time for not only comprehending the nature of sustainable growth but also probing deep into the nature of changes urgently required in the structure of governance in India, (*The Statesman*, 21 April 2004).

The present write-up maintains that a heterogeneous economy and society divided on the basis of caste, class, ethnic, regional and religious lines are ill-equipped to ensure compatibility between public policies and economic performance. A reconstructed, reinvigorated brand of new federalism with limited government and market-preservation capability may go a long way in ensuring a significant measure of such compatibility. What is needed in India today is a self-enforcing governance structure that reduces collective action problems, directly involving social groups and subnational governments in political decision-making processes. The concept of participatory market-preserving federalism (PMPF) developed by Weingast *et al* appears to be helpful in laying down the political foundations of economic growth (Parikh and Weingast (1997); Qian and Weingast (1995) *et al*).

Governance Structure and Economic Policy

Graduate students in India often find such statements as 'India is quasi-federal' and 'India is a federation with strong centralizing tendencies' — receiving an annual ritual airing at the time of examinations. The examiners expect the students to refer to relevant articles of the Constitution that relate to the scheme of distribution of legislative, administrative and financial powers between the union and the states is heavily tilted in favour of the former.

Particularly, in the scheme of division of economic control there is so much of asymmetry that Williamson (1995) calls the Indian system of government as 'bogus federalism'. The system, as is well known, is the direct result of historical factors : most of the national leaders in the final two decades after independence displayed 'devotion and loyalty' to national objectives and were inclined to take resort to central economic planning for national reconstruction (Ahrens, 1997).

In the Nehruvian years, 1947-1964, industrialization was considered to be the key to alleviating poverty and a powerful state with a planned economy as essential for accelerating the rate of industrialization, public savings and investment, for reducing the role of foreign trade and for

achieving self-sufficiency. Nehru did not use state intervention like several Asian leaders to build strong private-sector industries, but he did not, at least, intend to dismantle the private sector altogether. This appears today in the days of privatization 'a saving grace' which was conspicuously non-existent at the time of collapse of socialism in the erstwhile Soviet Union.

Nehru and his followers utilized the system of central planning to protect infant domestic industries, to have a solid industrial base and to prevent disparities between the poor and rich states from widening. In reality what happened between three successive decades from 1950 was that per capita transfers to high-income states were very noticeably higher than those to low and middle-income states.

The role of the Indian state witnessed two major shifts during the prime-ministership of Indira Gandhi : first, the neglect of agriculture was reversed through state activism in subsidizing new seed and fertilizers, agricultural credit and rural electrification in such a way as to usher in what has come to be known as the green revolution; second, under the slogan of *garibi hatao* state control over every aspect of the national economy was tightened, banks were nationalized, foreign investment was squeezed, and price controls were imposed.

The two shifts taking place between 1966 and 1977 saw India attaining self-sufficiency in grains as well as a stranglehold on the economy. The period between 1977 and 1991 witnessed the phenomena of a spending boom and rising fiscal deficits. By mid-1991 when a new government headed by Narasimha Rao came to power India's foreign exchange reserves were virtually exhausted (*World Bank Development Report 1997*).

The compelling circumstances forced the union government to woo private and foreign investment, so to say. It dawned upon both the union and state governments that it was beyond their capacity to continue to finance both subsidies and heavy public investment. The impending bankruptcy dictated the initiation of the reform process and the transformation of the state's role from that of principal investor to that of

facilitator of entrepreneurship. The coalition government that came to power in 1996, by and large, sustained the reforms initiated by Narasimha Rao's government. The government of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is now pushing the reforms forward with much fanfare for understandable reasons.

India today, for a little more than one decade or so, is willy-nilly working with a new national consensus in place of the older one on socialism, the chief architect of which was no other than Jawaharlal Nehru.

Has 'India's Decade' Dawned at Last ?

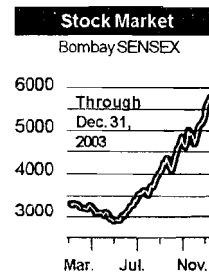
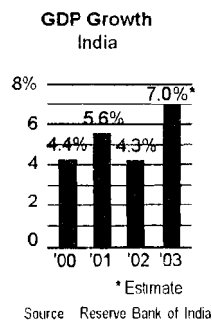
The Indian economy, we are told by Jaswant Singh, India's Finance Minister in A. B. Vajpayee's NDA government, is 'fast approaching a point of criticality and, when that criticality takes place, India's growth will be explosive'. (*Time*, 12 January 2004).

At present, India's economy and stock market are booming. Judged by a few chosen parameters the Indian economy had never been so good as it is in 2003-2004 — GDP growth projections at 8%, foreign exchange reserves at \$100 billion-plus, inflation moderate, corporate sales and profits up, stock market with its bulls and bears entertaining both big and small investors, affluent consumers spending like never before, houses, cars, and higher education loans cheaper now than at any time in living memory, and tens of thousands of Indians joining the middle class, boosted by better-paying jobs in service sectors such as India's \$2.3 billion business process outsourcing (BPO) industry. (*The Statesman*, 31 January 2004). Although not yet explosive, India's economy has already attained a critical stage wherefrom it is just a plunge away from emerging as a global powerhouse to rival China. No wonder the election air in the early months of 2004 is heavy with hyperbolic slogans like "India shining", "India on the move", "*Aayee hai naya sabera*" (a new dawn has come).

A report in *The Statesman* (31 January 2004) states that the year 2003 ended with 'the promise of India making the economic big league in another 15 years or so, well within our life-time.' It is quite possible that with the attainment of the take-off stage the Indian economy could achieve

a China-like breakout. India's GDP soared 8.4% on an annualized basis in the July-to-September quarter of 2003 — 'its best performance in nearly a decade'. India is perhaps the second fastest growing economy in Asia today. The Bombay Stock Exchange shot up by 73% in 2003 and a rising consumer class is fuelling 'a new sense of confidence in India about India' (*Time*, 12 January 2004).

A look at the following two figures shows that India's economy and stock market in India's financial capital soared in 2003 :



Goldman Sachs, an American investment bank, predicted in October 2003 that over the next half century growth will slow sharply in the world's six big rich countries as well as in Brazil, Russia and China, but that India will continue to average an annual growth of national income per head in dollar terms will have multiplied 35 fold. (*The Economist*, 21 February, 2004 and *The Statesman*, 28 April 2004). This prediction speaks of the future, obviously not of the present. India, for some may be shining and for others not at all. But Indians may at least find out shining hopes laid out for them by an American investment bank!

Market-Preserving Federalism :

Federalism works to arrange for a subdivision of power through vertical separation and the integration of heterogeneous societies. Of the two extreme versions of federalism — the centripetal and the centrifugal displaying resemblance to unitary and confederal states, respectively — none is to be found in its pristine purity in any existing federal state. The reason for this is that tensions between the forces of unity and diversity,

integration and autonomy as well as the political culture and institutions of a country provide a distinctive shape to a particular federal system.

Political institutions play a major role in the functioning of a federal system, but they hardly address 'the fundamental political dilemma of an economic system' (Weingast, 1995). Strong governments are good for protecting and enforcing legal rights, but more often than not, they pose threat to citizens' rights, wealth and freedom; they may even damage the eagerness of the private actors to go for a big, long-term investment. By blocking thriving markets they may very well halt the process of economic development.

In an increasingly globalizing world a federal state today can only survive if it opts for self-enforcing political institutions forming the basic governance structure. Parikh and Weingast (1997) opine that such a structure has to be so designed so as to limit political discretion in matters of the economy, particularly those related to the preservation of markets and the adherence to rules and rights.

Market-preserving federalism (MPF), the studies of Weingast (1995), Montinola *et al*, (1995), and Qian and Weingast (1995) so suggest, comprises the following principal foundations

F₁ : a hierarchy of governments with a clear assignment of competences ensuring autonomy to each set of government (union, state, local) within its domain of authority;

F₂ : institutionalize autonomy for all sets of government that cannot be altered at the discretion of any set of government, central or subnational;

F₃ : subnational governments enjoying the primary authority in respect of the economy of their respective jurisdiction;

F₄ : a government at the centre guaranteeing a common market that presupposes the dismantling

of barriers to the mobility of goods and factors of production throughout the subnational jurisdictions;

F₅ : all sets of government facing a hard budget constraint.

F₁ envisages a decentralized system, but a sheer decentralized system hardly guarantees a centrifugal type of federalism. So, F₂ is needed to limit the discretionary power of the central authority MPF, because of F₁ and F₂, starts to get self-enforcing. But, the essence of MPF is to be discerned in F₃, F₄ and F₅, which address the relationship between authority and economic issues.

F₃ and F₄ ensure that the thriving markets are not damaged by political discretion. F₅ is very important because it deals with both borrowings by different levels of government through different channels of the financial system and transfers of fiscal revenues between the constitutionally recognized sets of government.

Hard budget constraints serve many purposes : they ensure financial prudence at all levels of government; they act as a deterrent to the ill-conceived endeavour of higher-level governments to bail out subordinate ones; they act as incentives to regional and local political leaders to 'care about the consequences of their policy choices.' (Ahrens, 1997). McKinnon (1994) opines that 'the more expenditure obligations are shifted to lower-level governments, the greater is the separation of fiscal policies and monetary policy in the economy and the easier to realize the independence of the central bank'.

Benefits of MPF

MPF cannot but generate competition between all sets of government in a federal state. Under a competitive market, regional and local restrictions that create comparative disadvantages showing negative effects on regional, local and even national economic activity, lose any kind of logic for their survival. Secondly, hard budget constraints call for prudent fiscal management; those governments that cannot face adequately the demands

of hard budget constraints allow themselves to fall into the trap of bankruptcy. Thirdly, MPF performs a demonstrative function in the sense that successful governmental units become the model to follow by the unsuccessful or relatively less successful units. Fourthly, MPF has the merit of laying the political foundation of markets; private actors are assured of long-term security from political predation. Lastly, MPF, through the devolution of political and economic authority, 'sustainably constrains the authority of the central government over the economy, thereby limiting the power of a strong government'. (Ahrens, J., 1997; Rubinfeld, 1987). The benefits of MPF have been adequately described in the writings of McKinnon (1994), Montinola *et al* (1995) and Oates (1972).

Even when MPF gets self-enforcing and achieves a fair amount of durability, the need for institutionalized techniques of conflict resolution is not diminished in view of the likelihood of major and minor inter- and intra-governmental conflicts cropping up now and then.

Indian Federalism and the MPF Yardstick

The federal system of India even today persists with a pronounced asymmetric division of economic control between union and state governments as a kind of hangover from Nehru's ideological commitment to central economic planning and firm belief in the primacy of national objectives over regional or state needs. Naturally, imperatives of stability etc. got precedence over power sharing between governments at all levels. Diversity was considered inimical to national development and inherently divisive (Mukarji and Arora 1992). Economic centralization, conceived to be an instrument for reducing economic disparities between high-, low- and middle-income states, had in reality resulted in per capita transfers favouring the high-income states as compared to the middle- and low-income states (Krishnaswamy and others, 1992). This continued for nearly three decades — 1950s up until the 1980s.

Most of the elastic tax revenue sources are assigned to the union by the Constitution, whereas the relatively inelastic and almost inelastic sources are earmarked for the states. Even then, 60% of total state revenues are

received from tax receipts. About 20.5% comes from grants of the union government which has been alleged to be distributing funds generously as a mother to some state governments and to a few state governments very niggardly as a stepmother. The World Bank Report of 1995 and Shah's work (1994) point out that capital and development expenditures of the states display a downward trend because they fail to augment revenues and are committed to follow an inappropriate expenditure composition for reasons, remotely ideological but mostly populist.

Inter-governmental transfers, a critical source of state revenues, have by now become the order of the day in contemporary Indian federalism to achieve a semblance of justice in dealing with the problem of constitutional mismatch in distribution of revenues and economic responsibilities. At present, the Finance Commission and the Planning Commission are the two most important authorities that have enough power to influence in a big way the economies of the states. The former is empowered to recommend transfer of grants and shared taxes from the union to the states, the latter can arrange for tied and untied transfers, mostly related to the developmental plants and plan schemes conceived by the union government.

The state governments may also have revenues in the form of loans from the union to finance their budget deficits. According to Krishnaswamy and his associates, the union government covers nearly half of states' deficits through loans; it also controls the way the remainder is financed. (Krishnaswamy *et al*, 1992).

The system of covering budget deficits of the states by the centre is hardly conducive to prudent fiscal management by the states; 'repetitious refinancing without conditionality' and 'loan forgiveness' does not create the urge in the state governments to be self-reliant.

At present, the states are engaged in the task of competing to secure private investment by transferring resources to the investor as allurement. The impact of such a practice results in the shifting of the burden of such transfer, partly at least, to the centre and the other states. The World Bank

Report (1995) points out that under the constitutional revenue sharing scheme the centre has very little incentive to have a vigorous collection drive for shared taxes.

The Constitution prescribes constraints on the power of the states to borrow from the market as long as they owe loans to the centre. As the states are head and ears in debt to the centre the decision to borrow hardly rests with them. (Parikh and Weingast, 1997).

In the backdrop of the existing arrangements for intergovernmental revenue distribution and financial relation between the centre and the states it is quite apparent that Indian federalism in no way satisfies the conditions of MPF. Foundations 2, 3 and 5 of MPF fail in the case of India. True, gone are the days of *licence raj* today. But, are not most economic regulations and enactments made by the centre? Are not the political priorities of the states controlled by the centre through its approval or disapproval of the states' capital expenditures? Provision of institutionalized autonomy of all governments (F_2) and grant of primacy in the economy of each set of government in its own jurisdiction (F_3) are conspicuous by their utter disregard in the present system of Indian federalism. Inasmuch as F_5 is flagrantly violated, the Indian states feel hardly the need to follow 'prudent and accountable fiscal policies'. The Constitution of India has paid no heed to the economic theories of federalism that advocate the grant of a very limited number of powers to the centre like foreign affairs, monetary policy, national infrastructure, defence, and the protection of a national common market. It has made a powerful central authority to control the sub-national units of government for promoting national unity and economic development. This arrangement is hardly now conducive to nation-building and national solidarity, in the context of a globalizing world it seems a major obstacle to the realization of a decentralized participatory democracy.

Participatory Market-Preserving Federalism

Whether globalization is viewed positively in terms of McLuhan's 'global village' or negatively in terms of 'Western imperialism', it is 'a fact,

not an option' anymore. Globalization calls for homogenization, but it does in no way run counter to the concept of locality. 'The production of locality', a theme so logically and strongly emphasized by Appadorai (1996) acquires significance in the case of governance in India.

In democracies people demand participation in making decisions that affect them, particularly those decisions that are likely to improve their living standards. Democratic governments have to respond to local demands. Responses can be many and varied. One political response to localization that many countries have found worth resorting to is decentralization. Globalization is leading to major restructuring within states, shifting trade and production centres away from many traditional urban centres towards cities and towns that demonstrate competitive market advantage. The Government of India, willynilly, has to embark upon a policy of facilitating markets, promoting economic and social stability, and ensuring equity. What the government does to streamline public sector management or private sector development is less consequential than what it does to empower sub-national, municipal and village-level governing units to involve communities, groups and individuals in development within their jurisdictions. This is because such units remain the everyday-face of the government where essential public services are delivered to individuals and businesses and where policy meets the people.

As at the grassroots level, so also at all other levels of the federal polity, government-business-society relations have to be forged in such a way that they work together to help the emergence of a civil society. Participation of beneficiaries in the design and implementation of projects and policies ensures commitment and cooperation better than exogenous imposition of orders and directives. Such participation makes projects, programmes and policies responsive to felt needs. It also works from below to keep the bureaucrats with vested interests in check. Participation is, however, no panacea. It may open a Pandora's box, if not properly planned. Public participation literature by now has become so voluminous that it is possible to devise a politico-administrative structure that is adequate to

guide the preferred implementation of a strategy.

MPF developed in 18th century Britain and 19th century USA by way of historical evolution; people's participation came to be associated with it through formal as well as informal rules and regulations. In India, they have to be achieved as supplements of one another through a process of overhauling the whole structure of governance. That requires broad political consensus. Today, in India, coalition governments are the order of the day. At all levels, governments are running after private investment, privatization and deregulation. Very soon, the time may be rife for devising a structure of governance on the lines of PMPF.

Sunshine on every Indian's Shoulders?

That 'India is shining', comes as a phrase from India's governmental propaganda campaign, on the eve of the fourteenth Lok Sabha elections, is likely to give the impression of 'Indian exuberance tinged with the rhetoric of electoral context'. The impression can, however, land one somewhere a little away from truth. That India has begun to shine is visible in many areas of the economy. Not to speak of the satisfactory GDP growth rate and the foreign exchange reserves, Indian firms, of late, have become leaner and more efficient, and are capable of competing with the best in the world. On the outskirts of Bangalore, companies such as Wipro and Infosys 'have built serene, orderly, clean, state-of-the-art campuses as modern and efficient as anything in Silicon Valley.' But, such places are plonked incongruously, in the middle of India, almost disconnected with the surrounding vast areas of underdevelopment, poverty, illiteracy and darkness. What has happened in the People's Republic of China may very well be duplicated in India : pockets of development surrounded by vast areas of underdevelopment. In order that a vast majority of Indians are not left out of the developmental process, what is needed is not trickle-down as splash-all-over.

This is hardly possible so long as the people are not empowered to participate, through formal and informal channels, in the decision-making processes of government at all levels, from the grassroots to the centre.

No matter whether the government of a country wields limited or unlimited power, powerful elite groups, political parties, and vested interest groups are capable of usurping power and using it to their advantage. In most poverty-stricken areas of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and north-eastern states people get no warmth of shining India, not because of lack of funds or poor policy; it is the unwillingness or inability of the present governmental machinery with elite, caste or bureaucratic dominance to deliver. It is in this context that the PMPF calls for a consideration.

May be that India today cherishes a shining hope. But, sunshine is unlikely to be on the shoulders of all chasses of Indians unless the political foundation of a self-enforcing, market-preserving, people-participating governance structure is instituted in place of the one that was installed 57 years ago.

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Research Note

Revenue and Expenditure Patterns in the Zilla Parishads of Midnapore and North 24 Parganas

PANCHANAN CHATTOPADHYAY

I

Local government is a form of geographical and political decentralisation, in which directly elected councils created by and subordinate to Parliament, have partial autonomy to provide a wide variety of services through various direct and indirect means, funded in part by local taxation.¹ In a country like India with a federal structure of public finance, the fiscal system operates at three levels, namely, Union, State and Local. It is necessary that local finance remains an integral part of entire system of national finance. At a time when there is a shift towards democratic decentralisation, the proper administration of local finance becomes all the more important.

As the Asoka Mehta Committee Report observes, “while specific functions to be decentralised and allocated to them, it is also necessary to ensure adequate availability of funds for the discharge of the responsibilities that may be entrusted to the panchayati-raj institution,”²

It is also argued : “Financial self-reliance of the panchayats at all the three levels is necessary to underline their institutional autonomy and constituency accountability. It is recognised that unless at least a half a local government revenues are internally generated, local fiscal autonomy and responsibility could be seriously

compromised. In this perspective, it is necessary to examine the methods to strengthen the 'own revenues' of the panchayats, so that their self-government role can be sustained."³

Pramanik and Datta observed in conclusion of their field-study of the functioning of Gram Panchayats in West Bengal that "panchayats will have to be more careful for the additional mobilisation of resources and creation of assets" in view of fact that in future the fund provided for the various anti-poverty programmes would be "more and more scarce in future with a definite change in the policy of the Central Government."⁴

II

In view of the above observations, the present study seeks to throw some lights on the Zilla Parishad finance in West Bengal with special references to the case of Midnapore in the period from 1978-79 to 1994-95, and that of North 24 Pargans, from 1986-87 to 1994-95. The reason for selecting these two districts is that while the former is essentially an agriculturist district the latter is substantially urbanized one. The major thrust of the study would on a comparative analysis of pattern of revenue and expenditure between the two districts. The method adopted in this exercise is empirical-analytical on the basis of participant observation.

III

Revenue of Zilla Parishad

The legal framework of the Panchayati-Raj Finance in West Bengal is such that only Gram panchayat has powers of taxation and of wide resource-mobilisation from its own sources. As Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishads are merely the agencies of the State Government to deliver goods to the people in a popular way they remain financially weak in West Bengal.

Zilla Parishads in West Bengal have different sources of income,

e.g., grants from central/state governments, scheme-specific grants, its own sources, advances, loans, etc. Understood thus let us identify various sources of income of two Zilla Parishads, Midnapur and North 24 Parganas and also to find out how the dependence on different sources change over the years.

Midnapur Zilla Parishad

The study on this Zilla Parishad is carried out for the periods 1979-80 and 1994-95. In 1979-80 its major source of income is grant for specific schemes. 82.53% of total income comes from this item and 14.8% comes from the second important source like advance. Only 1.40% of income comes from grants central/state governments. In this year the Zilla Parishad takes loan from government which amounts to 0.12% of total income. Using its own source it earns only 1.12% of total income. Grants for specific schemes play an important role as source of income in all the years, except 1985-86. In 1985-86 its share is only 1.79% but from 1991-92 it shows an increasing trend. In 1993-94 its contribution is the highest which is 96.96%. Grants from the governments range from 0.93% to 84.91%, and it is lowest in 1980-81 and highest in 1985-86. Up to 1988-89 there are other two sources of income, viz., deposit and advance. Income from deposit ranges from 0.01% in 1983-84 to 21.81% in 1980-81, and except in the years of 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1988-89 it never exceeds 1% of total income of this Zilla Parishad.

Now let us concentrate on item-wise analysis of income coming from its own sources. There are three major heads wherefrom such income comes, viz., (1) roads cess in the district, (2) receipts from tolls, (3) and, all other receipts. Among these the roads cess gradually comes down during the period from 1979-80 to 1994-95. In 1979-80, its contribution was the highest (70.24%) while in 1991-92 it was the lowest (6.08%). Share of receipts from tolls also decreases during the period 1979-80 and 1994-95 ranging from 15.17% to 0.83%. But over the years the

contribution of all other receipts gradually rises. In 1979-80, its contribution is 18.48% but in 1994-95 it is 97.64%. It is due to all these facts that the sources of income of Zilla Parishad is gradually expanding. For example, rents on land and building becomes a source of income of the Zilla Parishad from the year 1991-92.

North 24 Parganas Zilla Parishad

Similarly in this Zilla Parishad we can find that grant from specific schemes are gradually increasing. In 1986-87, 60-95% of total income comes from this item but in 1994-95 it rises to 96.11%. Like Midnapur the share of grant from government u/s 179 (1) (a) decreases over time. Deposit and advance had some steady but small contribution in income. The share of its own source fell during the period 1986-87 and 1994-95. Similar trend is found for contribution of Panchayat Samity and after 1992-93 there is no contribution of Panchayat Samity grants to the Zilla Parishad fund.

So far as its own source of income of the Zilla Parishad is concerned we get a similar trend as Midnapur. The major item of its own source is 'all other receipts' of which contribution rises from 23.66% in 1986-87 to 76.98% in 1994-95. The contribution of receipts from tolls, rates etc. rises from 7.59% in 1986-87 to 17.44% in 1994-95. But proceeds of roads cess in the district shows a negative trend in income generation.

Expenditure of Zilla Parishad

Midnapur Zilla Parishad

Expenditure pattern also changes over time. In Midnapur district expenditure for specific scheme is the highest (93.5%) in 1985-86 but over time expenditure for such item comes down to 20.0% in 1994-95. On the other hand, expenditure for allowances to Panchayat Samity or Gram Panchayat rises from 4.40% of total expenditure in 1979-80 to

74.91% in 1994-95, though it is highest (93.34%) in 1989-90. The cost of Establishment has more or less been steady, i.e., around 1-3% of total expenditure. However, it exceeds 5% in the two years (1983-84 and 1984-85).

North 24 Parganas Zilla Parishad

In case of North 24 Parganas the major expenditure item is specific scheme. In this item more than 90% of total expenditure is incurred in the period 1986-87 and 1994-95 and in 1994-95 and 1995-96. 12% of total expenditure available for such purpose. Expenditure for 'other purposes' is not significant. Except establishment (1.79%) and its own source (1.44%) expenditure for others is less than 1%.

Table 1 : Comparison between Two Zilla Parishads' Revenue-pattern

<i>Items</i>	<i>Midnapore</i>	<i>North 24-Parganas</i>
1. Govt. Grant	91%	96%
2. Loan/Deposit Advance	5%	2%
3. Own Source	4%	2%
Total	100%	100%

Source : Annual Administrative Reports, Midnapore Zilla Parishad, 1979-80 to 1994-95 and North 24 Parganas Zilla Parishad, 1986-87 to 1994-95.

Table 2 : Comparison between Two Zilla Parishads' Expenditure-pattern

<i>Items</i>	<i>Midnapore</i>	<i>North 24-Parganas</i>
1. Establishment	3%	3%
2. Specific Grant Scheme	42%	95%
3. Allowance to Panchayat Samiti	41%	-
4. Own Expenditure	14%	2%
Total	100%	100%

Table 3 : Comparison between Two Zilla Parishads' Items of Own Sources' Income

<i>Items</i>	<i>Midnapore</i>	<i>North 24-Parganas</i>
1. Road	37%	37%
2. Tolls, Rates	7%	10%
3. Miscellaneous	1 %	-
4. All Other Receipts	55%	53%
Total	100%	100%

Table 4 : Comparison between Two Zilla Parishads - Items of All Other Receipts

<i>Items</i>	<i>Midnapore</i>	<i>North 24-Parganas</i>
1. Printing Press	16%	6%
2. Sale of trees, grass, fruits	3%	4%
3. Rent of Land & Building	3%	-
4. Gift / Donation	4%	-
5. Roller	-	-
6. Sundry receipts	8%	18%
7. Other receipts	66%	48%
8. Sale of tender forms	-	16%
9. Fisheries rent	-	8%
Total	100%	100%

Source : Annual Administrative Reports, Midnapore Zilla Parishad, 1979-80 to 1994-95 and North 24 Parganas Zilla Parishad, 1986-87 to 1994-95.

IV

Therefore we can find that for own sources of income, printing press and sell of trees and grass are important in Midnapur Zilla Parishad while roller-hire charges, sale of tender forms, ferry service charges and rent of fisheries are important source of income in North 24 Parganas Zilla Parishad. What is to be noted is that gift and donations are negligible in both the Zilla Parishads.

Midnapur and North 24 Parganas have similarity in expenditure for its own expenses. Both the Zilla Parishads' main items of expenditure include lawyers' fee, printing and stationary, and office maintenance.

It has been observed that Zilla Parishads in West Bengal have neither time nor inclination to generate their income from its own sources. Zilla Parishads also do not have sufficient staff for the purpose. Zilla Parishads are busy in routine work and in the supervision of specific scheme grants. So lack of political will and bureaucratic lethargy are mainly responsible for the abnormally low yield of income from "their own sources" of Zilla Parishads in West Bengal.

For improvement of the situation, it may be suggested, the legal frame should be suitably amended so that 29 subjects as mentioned in the 73rd Constitution amendment can be given to the Zilla Parishads. Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council can be a model to following transferring the powers and functions of State Government to Zilla Parishads.

In Tripura the State Government has already undertaken steps to assign and transfer activities of 12 line departments to the institutes of Local Self-Governances. Of these, nine line departments have already been transferred along with administrative, functional and financial powers. In this direction, the powers and functions of various government departments are also to be assigned to them in a phased manner, which will be in addition to their respective obligatory duties and functions provided in the Tripura Panchayats Act 1993. Based on the recommendations of the First State Finance Commission, Panchayat Development Fund has been launched in Tripura to provide the gram panchayats Rs. 100 per head per annum, the Panchayat Samity Rs. 60, and to Zilla Parishad Rs. 40 per head per annum for enabling the PRIs to take up innovative projects in agriculture and allied sectors⁵.

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Research Note

On the Community-Based Management of Forests

N. K. VERMA AND R. K. BHAKAT

Introduction

During the Earth Summit at Rio, Kenya's Minister of Environment gave a statement, "if it is a question of choosing survival or environment, we would take survival." (*India Today*, 1992). The message is clear and conclusive. Forest community, "the ecosystem people", and the forest's existence both are interlinked. After marine and aquatic ecosystems, the forest ecosystem is the major life support-system on the earth. In addition to the usual environmental function (watershed protection, ground water recharge, prevention of soil water run-off, wild life refuge), forests in India serve important subsistence functions (a source food, wood, fodder and income) for millions of forest dwellers, half of them tribals.

Before the forest department was created to manage the forests, forests were virtually managed by the community. The German botanist Sir Dietric Brandis, the first Inspector General of Forests under the British colonial rule was so overwhelmed by the community-managed forest in the name of "sacred groves" that he advocated the system of reserves and preserves for the whole country modelled upon these groves. It is a history that he had to face a tough resistance in pursuing them. The alienation of the forest dwellers from the affairs of forest management began during early British period (1750-1900) when teak

(*Tectona grandis*) was declared as royal tree. It was simply an act of robbing the people of their proprietary rights without any compensation. It was the period during which production of only a handful of timbers was declared as the goal of forest management. The non-wood products were considered byproducts or incidentals. To legitimize the restrictions regarding the uses of forests by the local people, the first ever Indian Forest Act was passed in 1865. It was during this period the forest dwellers were considered as intruders and destroyers of forest. Since then all efforts were made and all acts were framed to legitimize the exclusion of the forest dwellers from valuable forests and limiting their freedom in the rest.

The commercial objective in the name of scientific management of the forest with inherent character of deprivation and marginalization of forest dwellers leading to their migration, undermining of tribal culture and breaking down of mutually reinforcing relationship between forests and forest dwellers continued unabated even in independent India. Independent India inherited over exploited forests and an environment of hostility between foresters and forest dwellers. Selective felling, conversion to uniform system and favouring monoculture not only robbed the forest dwellers but also diluted the rich biodiversity of the forests. The herbs, shrubs, climbers, roots, flowers, fruits, leaves, mushrooms etc. growing in natural forests provide food, fodder, medicines and boost income of the tribals. Trees of timber value was not of much importance to them as they live in thatched houses made up of bamboo and grass leaves. It may be a consolation that British rulers were alien but it is difficult to digest why the draconian forest acts and *Saheb* style of functioning of foresters continued even after independence.

Consequential revolt by forest dwellers was natural. One study identified sixty four incidents of major revolts between 1778 and 1971,

most of which reflected repeated uprisings by the tribals of the Chhotanagpur plateau, the Bhills of Gujarat and the tribes of north-eastern India.

These events made it amply clear that antagonising the community by keeping them away from the forest management would not be carried on further. In this background the paper deals with the triangular relationship of forest, forest dwellers and the foresters with some observations on Joint Forest Management (JFM) in West Bengal.

Successful Community-Managed Forests

Communities in India from time immemorial had been the defenders of environments in general and are conserving biodiversity in particular. The following examples will suffice to justify the capabilities of communities in conserving Indian biodiversity.

Bishnoi and Trees

The Bishnois, a small community in the state of Rajasthan, practice environmental conservation as part of their daily religious duties. Principal among them is a ban on the cutting of a green tree and killing of animals. Over time, their geographical area developed into lush dense forests with substantial trees. About three hundred years ago, 363 Bishnois had laid down their lives in defence of *khejri* trees earmarked for logging by the state Maharaja. Even today, the Bishnoi community continues to protect trees and animals in their territory with great zeal. Their dedication became the inspiration for the Chipko movement of 1973 (Bishnoi, 1992).

Chipko movement

The now well known Chipko agitation of Uttarakhand Himalaya is a grassroots conservation movement in India. After a protracted struggle over nine years (1973-1981), the activists including the local communities ultimately galvanised the whole state machinery to stop merciless destruction of trees. Although, the movement was aimed to

halt deforestation in Himalayas, the later part of the movement went beyond tree conservation to ecodevelopment involving local people. (Guha, 1989, Bhakat, 2003 a and b)

Sacred groves and communities

Sacred groves are the indigenous method of tree conservation in India. Named differently in different parts of India they are predominantly located in tribal areas. Throughout India, including southern West Bengal where JFM originated basically to revive degraded forests, the local people are already preserving and protecting a large number of near climax forest patches or groves on socio-religious grounds (Gadgil and Vartak, 1981; Ramakrishnan *et. al.* 1998; Bhakat, 2003). Moreover the examples of large numbers of self managed community forest groups in Bihar, Orissa and other states simply point towards the fact that community by itself is sensitive to forest destruction and is capable to manage its natural resources.

Forester's Limitation

Foresters have now been facing a complete antagonistic and hostile forest based communities. This may be attributed partly to their attitudinal rigidity. According to Saxena (2002),

Overregulations inherent in forest laws, the weaknesses of the democratic institutions and the sheer monopoly which vests with the forest service creates sufficient ground for arbitrary power. This has led to two very major problems in the delivery; inefficiency and corruption. The problem of inefficiency has been compounded by some of the characteristics of the forest service; rigid hierarchical structure, one way communication, declining cohesiveness, absence of long term planning, lack of public contact and short tenures.

As a result the lower level foresters became easy target of the community anger. When two forest guards were killed in Ranthambore

tiger reserve in April 1993, a forest guard, Indrapal Singh, lamented “the guns are inadequate and the guards are being eliminated.”

The rise of MCC and terrorist groups in the forests and the attack on forest officials may be considered to be symptomatic of laws in the conservation strategy that has angered people in the vicinity of national parks throughout the country. The more we add to the protected areas the more enemies are created. Earlier the forest officers were less and guards were more in numbers and now the forest officers are more compared to earlier days. Yet forests in India decline alarmingly.

Another relevant aspect of forest service is the complete lack of forestry education. Still the recruitment in forest service is no different from earlier days. Science graduates are selected and trained in forestry. Forestry is a full-fledged developed science, which should be taught in Universities at both graduate and postgraduate levels leading to excellence in research. We need specialists today and no more generalists. The forest policy of 1988 has accepted this fact as quoted thus :

Forestry should be recognised both as a scientific discipline as well as a profession. Agricultural Universities and institutions dedicated to the development of forestry education should formulate curricula and courses for imparting academic education and promote postgraduate research and professional excellence keeping in view the manpower needs of the country. Academic and professional qualifications in forestry should be kept in view for recruitment to the Indian Forest Service and the State Forest Service. Specialised and orientation courses for developing better management skills by in-service training need to be encouraged taking into account the latest development in forestry and related disciplines.

(Paragraph 4.11)

It should be accepted that forestry education and research have

suffered a lot in independent India. Although, the structure of ICFRE on the pattern of ICAR has been created but in practice, it still functions on the bureaucratic model of F.R.I., Dehradun.

Huge funding from the World Bank for “Project tiger” parks in India, solely managed by the forest department could not stop the degradation of the forest which increased by an estimated 186% between 1983 and 1989. Even the good quality forest with canopy closure of more than 40% declined by 50% during the same period. If the condition of the most intensively managed and heavily funded wildlife parks in India continue to deteriorate at such a relentless pace, reserve and protected forests with far fewer guards and much smaller budgets appear to have an even lower chance of survival, remarked Poffenberger and Mc Gean (1996).

Given the size of the country, and the extent of forest it is next to impossible to manage the forest by the forest department alone. Under the growing environmentalists, NGOs, pressures and revolts from various quarters the 1988 forest policy accepted the role of community in forest management. “Creating a massive people’s movement with the involvement of women” was included in the basic objectives of the Forest policy. This also formed the basis of JFM.

Joint Forest Management (JFM)

Although the notification for JFM from the Union Government was issued in 1990, in fact many of the states were already practising different models of participatory management in forestry (For details see Poffenberger and Mcgean, 1996). The famous Arabari model of JFM acclaimed world wide is a case in point. The experiment done on JFM in the Midnapore district of West Bengal succeeded not simply because of participation of the community. A strong political commitment of the ruling party of the state had virtually pushed it ahead. Poffenberger and Mc Gean (1996) write “In West Bengal in the early

1970, the communist government (Communist Party of India-Marxist) was building its political base on land reforms and other programmes designed to gain popularity among rural communities.” After several tribal deaths occurred in Purulia district during a protest over forest policies, the forest department was informed by political leaders that it could no longer use police to repress local forest use. The success and the progress of JFM in southern West Bengal may also be attributed to the strong political will of the Government which directed the forest bureaucracy to mend its ways. Almost all successful JFM cases had an alternative source of fuel wood. In South West Bengal people could protect better because farm forestry in the area had already boosted fuelwood supplies and income for the poor. It would be relevant to mention here that tribal community in ancient days was aware of this vital regulatory mechanism; that is why, it maintained safety forests vis-a-vis sacred groves as is evident in Mizoram. The sacred groves of Meghalaya, Karnataka and similar numerous examples throughout the country reveal that the success of J.F.M. and participatory form of forest management is linked with the alternative source of income as well. Therefore, rural development schemes, and agri-horti-forestry along with animal rearings should be implemented together to improve the socio-economic conditions of the forest protectors. The more they are well off the more the forest is protected.

By and large the JFM is getting its roots. People are now getting sentimentally attached with the forests. They have many complaints but the things are improving (Verma 2001, 2002 a, b and 2003). Instead of 25% of the share, now they are demanding full share. Even joint protection in reserve forest area should be initiated. The most important thing lacking is the legal back up of the JFM. Experiments in selected Forest protection committees of Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia districts of West Bengal for giving 100% management in the hand of

community under the leadership of Dr. Ajit Banerjee (the man behind the Arabari JFM) is in progress. Community is being divided in groups and are given full training for the preparational Stock mapping, Micro-plan preparation and Book keeping so that they become independent. Even in the rest of the JFM areas of the country if proper training on the above aspects is imparted, the community's potential in managing the forest can be accelerated.

It would be in the fitness of the thing if the skills of forest department and the potential of the community are utilized in a combined way. It is wise not to allow the management of the forests either by the communities or by the forest department alone. Limitations of both have been discussed. Forest is not for forest department and not for forest dwellers, it belongs to whole biotic community. Every one owns rights on forest.

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Book Review

Anjana Ghosh, *Thhanda Yuddho-uttar Antarjatic Samparko : Sankat -o- Prabanata* (Post-Cold war international relations : crisis and trend) (with an Introduction by Goutam Kumar Basu), Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 2003, pp.83, Rs. 80.00 ; ISBN : 81-8064-048-5.

The end of Cold War has brought massive changes in International Politics. Post-World War II international politics was mainly shaped by tension-stricken, suspicion-ridden and distrustful relationship between the USA and Soviet Union. The power craze of these two super powers was reflected through cold war between them. Till the mid-1980s, since Gorbachev rose to power in the Soviet Union, there didn't occur a single incident in international politics, which remained unaffected by the heat of cold war. Though polycentrism was very much visible in the socialist world, the USSR could still keep its followers, barring China, under its control. A wave of changes was perceptible in the socialist states of Eastern Europe in 1980s and communism started to collapse there. Meanwhile, with the rise of Gorbachev as the topmost leader of the Soviet Union, several political and economic changes also took place in that country. His new reformist policies added fire to the fuel existing in the suppressed nationalist feelings of different Soviet Republics. In spite of utmost effort of democrat Gorabachev, Soviet Union finally broke down in the beginning of 1990s. Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia first took initiative to sever their relations with the Soviet federation and declared independence and remaining republics followed suit with a view to freeing themselves from Russian hegemony. While this process was going on, the *New York Times*, a leading daily in the USA, published an article on 2 April 1989, where the United States declared out of its own, the end of cold

war. In the same year, in a Summit meeting held at Malta on 3 December, the two chief contenders of global power, the US President, George Bush and the Soviet supremo, Mikhail Gorabachev, in a joint declaration, officially recognized the end of this rivalry, i. e., the cold war. Thus the end of the cold war and the loss of respect of the Soviet Union as a super power and then its eventual disintegration brought a sea change in its internal politics. The whole situation was pithily described by Francis Fukuyama as the 'end of history'. Post-cold war international politics has now been termed as "Unipolar world", a world which is conspicuous by the US hegemony.

Against this backdrop of international politics, Anjana Ghosh's book is a welcome contribution to the existing literature. The book, is mainly a collection of essays written in different times by the author. It is divided into two parts – 'World' and 'India'. Under the section, 'World' there are five essays discussing some major problems in post-cold war period, namely, present conditions of the Third world states. Gulf crisis, the role of UN in Iraq, Kosovo crisis, current terrorism and American Imperialism. In the second part, there are five essays focusing on different issues concerning India. While the first entitled 'India and CTBT', the next three essays have thrown light on Indo-Pak relationship, and the last is about SAARC.

In order to do full justice to the title of the book, issues like the present East Europe – its ethnic and related problems, the question of European Union, the Palestine problem, and Israeli response to it could be included. In the second part all essays are important but India's present nuclear position, Sino-Indian relationship and the effect of global terrorism on India are some important issues which should have deserved serious attention. At the same time it is to be mentioned that some of those excluded topics have been discussed briefly in relevant contexts, by the author.

In the first essay written on the present situation of the Third World Ghosh aptly summarised the crises and dilemmas of the developing states in the context of their thinking and action. Actually, already problem-stricken from various aspects, the Third world countries are bewildered now while facing the challenges of Unipolar or 'America-made' world and the globalization. However, a brief account of globalization and its effect on developing states of the South would have been of immense help to the undergraduate students of politics as well as to common readers.

In the second article on Persian Gulf crisis in the present international situation and the UN's role in the Iraq problem, though the invasion of Iraq on Kuwait and the position taken by different Arab states as well as the US interest in it have been vividly explained, the 'Oil politics' of different developed states of the North has not been pointed out clearly. Moreover, though the book is published only a year ago (February 2003), there is no description of US attack on Iraq in 2002 ignoring world public opinion against it. If the author could update the essay, as far as possible, it would be more useful. But her evaluation of UN's spineless existence on Iraq issue is quite praiseworthy. Moreover, her statistics-based description of the lives of Iraqi people vividly shows how cruel and brutal the man could be.

The fourth article on Kosovo crisis, though a bit sketchy, has rightly raised some crucial questions about the real role played by the UN as an international body, in the cases of unprovoked violation of state sovereignty, the problem of human security and the relevance of Non-aligned Movement. But while discussing about NATO's role in Kosovo problem, when the author has used the term; 'Capitalist States' to denote the developed West, then it may mean that there some non-capitalist or socialist states still exist. Do we call present China as a

'socialist' state or can we describe North Korea or Vietnam or Cuba as the banner holder of socialism? She has used a term "Pax Consortis" while explaining the US effort to dominate over Serbia through NATO (p 30). But she has not clarified the meaning of the term.

The fifth or last essay in the first section has briefly explained the nature and features of present day terrorism and American imperialism. The author has narrated in a lucid manner the nature of trans-national terrorism (p 35). It is probably right to call this global terrorism as 'Osamism' because the deprived, dejected, oppressed and religiously orthodox or fundamentalist people of a major human community of the world have found their 'hero' and inspirator in Osama Bin Laden to fight against America's crude politics and sheer barbarism under the veil of some noble principles. But to describe America's way of thinking as Americanism is a bit simplistic.

In the second section of the book, the essay on 'India and CTBT' is an important one. But here a reader will not find what the CTBT actually is and why the subject has become a controversial issue. Though the author has explained in a nutshell, India's position on this subject. It would be more helpful for readers if she would explain phrases used while evaluating CTBT (p 44).

Next three articles have mainly focussed on India's relationship with Pakistan, her chief contender in South Asia. In her analysis about Kashmir problem, the author has proved her capacity to deal this complex issue. Her effort to provide a summary of Simla Pact 1972 will help us to go deep into Indo-Pak debate on Kashmir. In the third article, she has narrated the pros and cons of the developments as regards the Lahore Treaty to undeclared war at Kargil sector but did not discuss the second nuclear explosion (May 1998) of India and Pakistan's response to it and obviously the international reaction to all these incidents. US response to this matter requires serious attention

because that has shaped to a great extent the US attitude and policies towards India vis-a-vis Pakistan. In the fourth essay, the author has discussed in detail, the hoax of Agra Summit between Vajpayee and Musharaf and the causes of failure of the summit. But, to the reviewer, it seems an oversimplification when the author, while evaluating the Agra Summit, has equated the position of Kashmir to that of Jerusalem. It would help much if Ghosh would have discussed the needs and demands of people of different communities in Kashmir in details and that would clear India's stand about keeping this state within her territory. In the last paragraph of this essay, some of her comments require clear analysis (p 71).

In the last article on SAARC, the author has summarized well the detailed history of SAARC, its tension areas and constrains, and some useful points about its prospects.

As a whole, the effort of the author in analyzing some major issues of post-cold war international politics is undoubtedly commendable. For both general readers and students of politics, the book will be of much value and will be treated as a 'must-be-read'. Lastly the quality of printing of the book is quite good. Its price is also moderate and affordable.

Niladri Bhattacharya

Amal Datta, *Lenin : Revolution, State and Terror*, Progressive Publishers, Kolkata 2002.

On the cover, the name of the book has been written as above. Perhaps for a smoother understanding of the readers regarding the essence of the book, a bracketed adjectival phrase has been added, in the page containing publication – information, below the title of the book. The bracketed information runs thus :

“(An essay on the horrendous start of the Bolshevik rule)”.

If that proves to be insufficient, the author, Amal Datta, an ex-representative of the CPI(M) in Lok Sabha for a number of years (cf. Backleaf) dedicates the book

To the Millions of people who have suffered torture, cruelty and death due to the ideology of Lenin which shaped the Bolshevik Rule in Russia and other countries of Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world.

The theme-music of the book is thereby set. I do believe that Lenin was not that much sentimental to shout at his grave ‘*et tu Amalyevitch!*’

The aforesaid dedication evokes parallel memories of people who died at the *Auswitz*. But in the backleaf it has been written that Lenin was the main originator of terror as an instrument of state-policy. From this, it is just another step to reach at the conclusion that Franco, Hitler and Pol Pot, all drew inspiration from Lenin! Datta has not wasted his valuable time to think of the billions who died, are dying, and will die due to the capitalist ideology implemented through the so-called democratic state-policy.

One thing that is not up to Datta’s liking is the fact that Lenin’s ideas have been catered through low-priced editions (cf. p. 7). The author perhaps for his busy schedule, has failed to notice that the ideas of Vivekananda, Aurobindo, even of Rajneesh and of many others have met with such low-priced fate.

Datta accuses Lenin of 'introducing into Marxism his ideas of the means to reach a goal which were uncompromising'... (p. 35) The accusation is based on several facts. But here we may just recall some incidents occurring in the then spatio-temporal contexts :

- (i) 1904 – Russia involved in a war with Japan.
- (ii) 1905 – Russia's defeat.
- (iii) 1914 – Germany declaring war with Russia.
- (iv) 1917 – Collapse of the Russian state; October Revolution, etc.

Can any party afford to be 'democratic' in such situations? I do not know. This does not mean that what Lenin did were everything correct. But those mistakes are mistakes discovered through *post mortem*, and not through *pre mortem*, analysis, which is always a safer job.

It is no doubt true that the entire family of the Czar was executed. But can it be the case that Datta could not gather the informations regarding the cruelty and insensitivity of the Czars towards the Russians? Was the Czarist Russia an El Dorado for millions of Russians?

The references cited by Datta are "...based on materials collected from various books in English which have come out in and after 1996 and ... materials found from the archives in Russia which were mostly declassified after 1991." (p. 251) Datta's utmost faith in the authenticity of those documents is scintillating. These documents are so mono-dimensional that they trigger an urge for their cross-checking.

The author wonders 'why the people of the long oppressed country ruled by a ruthless dictatorship had not been able to fight against the repression of the [Bolshevik] regime remained a mystery ...' (p. 11). Is it not equally a mystery that, if not millions, at least thousands of people are now trying to revive a Socialist regime in Russia?

Datta writes :

Lenin took great care for maintaining his reputation and was indeed highly successful in maintaining his stature as a benevolent, kind-hearted person. A perfect

combination of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. (p. 141).

The above-quoted lines strangely reminds me of Sibram Chakraborty's when he who, in his own inimitable way, wrote :

Thakur, tomai ke chinto

Na chenale Achintya?

It is striking that Datta refers to Solzhenitsyn, but not to Polevoi, Ostrovosky, Geider, John Reid and many others, from whose writings we get a different picture. Datta even fails to consider 'Russian Chitti' of Rabindranath worth mentioning.

The questions that demand answer from Datta are : How did the then USSR and the then Party win against the Nazis without any spontaneous support from the masses? Only by torturing the people and gagging their voices the then USSR managed to be a Super Power!

Some overenthusiasts have deified Lenin. Datta has compensated for their sin by demonifying Lenin. But there are several other frames through which we may view a human face of Lenin. I may please be allowed to cite only one : an obituary, written by Maxim Gorky, of Lenin. It may be an easy task for Datta to prove that Gorky was forced to write that. But, even if the task is easy, Datta has to prove it.

Kumar Mitra

Satyabrata Dutta, *Constitution Review : Venkatachaliah Commission*. Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 2004, pp I to XI, 1-147, Price : Rs.100.00.

R.M. MacIver and C.H. Page have rightly said : "Society exists only as a time sequence. It is a becoming, not a being; a process not a product." In fact, society is ever changing. Thus fifty years ago the face of society was vastly different from that with which we are familiar today. All these changes have far reaching implications. This universal law or better to say the law of dialectics is applicable in every sphere

of our life. Naturally a constitution cannot be an exemption from this universal rule.

In fact, every written constitution provides within itself the method of its amendment or alteration to cope with the changes of society. Because a constitution “dates” ; it closely reflects the polity of the day, and embodies the ideas and concepts of its makers who are dominated by the prevalent conditions and circumstances in the country. Hence, a constitution which is drawn up to meet the needs of a society at a given time cannot be adequate to meet the changing needs of a modern state or it cannot provide permanent political solutions. Thus the necessity of providing for a process of amendment to the constitution is inevitable.

However, the amendment to the constitution is not enough. Thus within the span of 53 years our constitution has undergone 91 amendments yet it cannot satisfy the demands of the Indian people. For the growing demand of the people we see several attempts have been made since 1951 for constitutional changes. Thus “The first review was initiated at the nascent stage of the constitution in 1951 when the First Constitution Amendment Act was adopted and a new Article 31A, 31B was inserted and Ninth Schedule, which kept quite a number of legislations passed on land reforms outside the perview of judicial review, was added to the Constitution”. And the latest review was carried on by 11-member Commission headed by Justice M.N. Venkatchaliah, former Chief Justice of India as appointed on 23 February 2000. The Commission placed its 1976 - page report on 31 March 2002 examining 20,000 communications for our consideration.

Satyabrata Dutta being an expert in constitutional matters has examined Venkatchaliah Commission’s report regarding the review of the Indian Constitution. He is quite methodical. Consequently in Chapter I he deals with the background of such review. Here he presents the brief history of constitutional review as well as the apprehension of

almost all political parties and their reservations regarding the intention of such review. The author has tried to prove that by inclusion of certain intellectuals in the Commission, the NDA government made this effort fruitful for democratic people of India.

The composition, terms of reference, methodology and procedure followed by the Venkatachaliah Commission are incorporated in Chapter II. In this chapter author has rightly pointed out that 'rewrite the Constitution failed to remove the suspicions of the critics'. In fact if we look at the Advisory panel, it would be clear that except L.C. Jain all were from legal background. Consequently they could not represent the genuine demand of common masses beyond legal framework.

In Chapter 3 Dutta has covered 22 consultation papers only in 22 pages. Thus, he has presented these papers in a synoptic method. Naturally we would be happier if those consultation papers would have been examined more elaborately and detailed out.

But what is praiseworthy is that in Chapter 4 Dutta has elaborately dealt with the 11 recommendations of Venkatachaliah Commission. These recommendations are not unanimous as P.A. Sangma resigned earlier. Moreover, this Report contains a dissenting note by Justice B. P. Jeevan Reddy, a note by Subhas C Kashyap, an additional note by C.R. Irani and "reservations" of Sumitra Gandhi Kulkarni. By examining these recommendations we, the common people, may at least decide the future course of action in the coming democratic functioning (elections).

Finally in Chapter 5 the author critically examines the pros and cons of this Review Commission whereby we are enlightened and empowered to think for future issues and specially the most controversial part of the emergency provisions of our constitution. And, by incorporating the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 he has made our task more easier.

Many people like us had the apprehension that appointment of such a Commission to review the working of the constitution is an effort to damage the unity and integrity of the Indian people which has developed through centuries. But by reading Dutta's *Constitution Review Venkatachaliah Commission* at least we understand that the basic structure is not altered by the Commission. Rather, Venkatachaliah Commission has boldly upheld the similar decision of Keshavananda Bharati case and are eager to protect basic structure of our Constitution. Thus analysing Constitution Review Venkatachaliah Commission' Satyabrata Dutta has done a splendid job for those who love Indian Constitution, and particularly for the students of contemporary Indian politics.

Himansu Ghosh

Militant Nationalism in Midnapore Till 1947, a commemorative Volume, published by Dr Shyamapada Bhowmik, on behalf of the organising committee, UGC-sponsored state level seminar, Kharagpur College, Midnapore; price not mentioned.

It is well known to the students of the history of freedom struggle in India that in every significant historical phase of the national struggle against the British imperialism the nationalist revolutionaries of the country invariably strove to remain in the forefront. Unfortunately, in the official or semi-official history of the freedom struggle published after independence, ceaseless propaganda was carried on by all the authors to convince the world as well as the Indian opinion that India won her independence in a unique and unprecedented manner through non-violence, through open political struggles, mass satyagraha and non-violent civil resistance under the leadership of Gandhi. Only a half-hearted recognition was given by

these authors to the part played by the revolutionaries who dared to challenge the biggest colonial power of the last century.

From the very beginning the militant nationalists fought consistently for complete freedom. When the Indian National Congress remained confined within 'constitutional and legal movement', those revolutionaries were the first to project the goal of complete independence and never budged from that aim. It should also be kept in mind that the revolutionaries at the same time never kept themselves aloof from the open mass movements and the popular agitations. They always actively participated in those struggles even when those were launched by the Congress, and when the Congress leadership seemed to dither or hesitate, the former came forward with their own programmes of militant mass struggle. Inside the Congress they always supported the pro-struggle section of the leadership. They did this 'as a matter of deliberate political policy with the object of sustaining the political militancy of the mass movement and also to be in a position to prevent the opportunist upper class leaders of the open movement from making any reformist deals or compromise with imperialism.'

Thus it may be asserted that militant nationalists have left their indelible imprint on every phase of the history of the national freedom struggle. Though the official historians of the independence movement (who were mainly patronised by the successive Congress governments at the Centre) have not felt the necessity to write an authoritative history of the militant nationalist movement in India, some first-hand accounts have been written by the revolutionaries themselves in their personal political reminiscences, prison memoirs etc. Some enthusiastic scholars and researchers have also tried to write a systematic and properly documented history of the revolutionary movements. All these works amply testify to the fact that the struggle of Indian militant nationalists historically played no less a significant part in every phase of the freedom movement than the open constitutional agitation or non-violent mass movement of Indian National Congress and

Mahatma Gandhi. The book under review is an important addition in the process of documenting the events of militant nationalist movement in Midnapore which was the hotbed of anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle right from the very beginning of the twentieth century.

The book contains the papers contributed by different academicians in a seminar organised by Kharagpur College of West Midnapore on 'Militant Nationalism in Midnapore till 1947'. The first article, "The Role of Armed Struggle in India's Freedom Movement, with Special Reference to Medinipur" is only an abstract of the keynote address delivered by Professor Goutam Chattopadhyay, an eminent communist historian where he identified different streams prevalent in India's struggle for independence. In this context he also mentions the role of some militant nationalists and revolutionaries of the district of Midnapore. The second article is also an abstract of the paper presented by Manju Chottapadhyay on the 'Role of Women in the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal (1905-1939)'. The author in her article refers to the part played by some of the women revolutionaries like Nanibala Devi and Dukharibala Devi who were the first to put up with the agony of imprisonment. The names of some very well-known women revolutionaries like Priteelata, Kalpana, Bina, Ujjala, Santi, Suniti are referred to in the abstract.

Bishnupada Das in his article 'The Roots of Revolutionary Terrorism in South West Frontier Bengal' has tried to identify the major social and economic causes of the insurgencies in South West Midnapore bordering Bihar and Orissa. The author does not agree to trace the root of militant nationalism to Jungle Mahal uprisings because "The high ideas like nationalism, independence and negation of colonial rule and feudal society in their inaccessible Jungle region were away from their periphery of thinking". Local issues dominated the outlook of the ignorant village people participated in the revolt. The author believes that the revolt of Ghirai Community against their oppressive Zaminder of Balarampur, the revolt

of Bagdi, Kurmi and Jungle Mahal's other disbanded paiks under their dispossessed zaminder Rani Seeromani of Karnagarh in 1799-1800 or the Bhumij Community's revolt in 1831 or other rebellions in the area had been more concerned with the deprivation of rights and privileges hitherto enjoyed by the respective group of people than their urge for freedom and participation in the revolutionary movements launched by the militant nationalists who mainly belonged to the upper caste Hindus and who were confined to towns or developed areas of East Midnapore. He rightly points out that more intensive research would expose the true character of those revolts during colonial rule. The article is really thought-provoking.

Maitreyee Bardhan Roy in her paper on "Socio-Political Causes Of the Growth of Militant Nationalism in the District of Midnapore" has tried to find out the causes of militant nationalism in a very general way. This paper lacks indepth analysis and it is the weakest one in the volume.

Shyamapada Bhowmik's article "A Brief History of the Militant Nationalism in Midnapore - The Early Phase (1907 - 1911)" is an attempt to narrate the major events of militant nationalist movement in Midnapore during the Partition of Bengal and Swadeshi movement in the first decade of 20th Century. The author has given a detailed account of Narayangarh Bomb Case in which Barin Ghosh and Bibhuti Sarkar were involved. He has also narrated the sequence of events which led to Muzaffarpur Bomb case in which Kshudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki tried in vain to assassinate the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, Kingsford. The author has also tried to identify the causes of the failure of the movement.

Pranab Roy in his contribution, "Militant National Movement in North East Midnapore (1905 - 1947)" has attempted a brief history of the movement in Ghatal subdivision of Midnapore. This region of Midnapore has a long tradition of militant struggle against oppressive authority. The author has analysed the revolt of Sobha Singh of Chetua

Barda against Mughal oppression in 1695 and the Sannyasi and Chuar rebellions against colonial oppression in the early British rule. In the beginning of 20th Century the whole of this region stirred up in protest against the Partition of Bengal. From the anti-partition movement of 1905 till the achievement of independence in 1947, North East Midnapore (particularly in Kshirpai, Ramjibanpur, Chandrakona, Jarah areas) was the centre of anti-imperialist movement. The author has presented a detailed history of this movement. "The Spring Jhunder in Midnapore : Assassination of James Peddie" — the other paper contributed by Prof. Chatterjee is a running commentary on the assassination of the District Magistrate of Midnapore, Peddie who earned notoriety for his reign of terror in the district.

In addition to the above, the book contains an appendix where a page from Bengal Criminal Intelligence Gazette has been reprinted where the DIG of Police, Criminal Investigation department, Bengal had announced absconder - reward for the arrest of Bimal Das Gupta the prime accused in Peddie murder case. The book also contains personal reminiscences of two respected militant nationalists of Midnapore - Sanatan Roy and Prabhangsu Sekhar Pal.

Finally, the editor should be congratulated on bringing out the volume which would be helpful for the persons who are interested to know the saga of heroism of the militant nationalists of Midnapore.

Bimal Sankar Nanda

Moitree Bhattacharya, *Panchayati Raj in West Bengal Democratic Decentralisation or Democratic Centralism*, Manak, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 218 (xxi), Rs. 370/-

The search for an institutional framework for effective decentralisation of decision-making authority through people's participation in governing India was put to rest with the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts. Through the inclusion of panchayats and municipalities in Part IX of the Constitution, India is moving fast towards establishing a multi-level federation to accommodate the diverse needs and aspirations of her people. The new federal structure with the local bodies at the districts and below has been institutionalised through which the process of self-governance has moved down to the Villages from the Centre. Not only that the additional levels have been incorporated in the Constitution but also all these sub-state level arrangements have been given new meaning and content to multi-level federalism when PRIs and Municipalities became the 'institutions of self-government'. Now almost all the states in India have created people's institutions through panchayati raj system in tune with the spirit of these Amendments, and West Bengal is not an exception. But what is emulating is that the panchayats in West Bengal belong to a different category when compared with their counterparts elsewhere in India excepting in one or two states.

Panchayati Raj in West Bengal: Democratic Decentralisation or Democratic Centralism authored by Moitree Bhattacharya is devoted to examining the organisation and functioning of panchayati raj bodies in this state. There are, in all, eight chapters including an introduction by the author in the book. In the 'Introduction', the author presents the theoretical issues together with a brief review of related studies in this field and sets out the scope and methodology of the

present study. There are seemingly two strands of thought the author seeks to present : the *first* is that the panchayats in West Bengal have consolidated themselves as institutions of local governance and development under a new type of leadership hitherto unknown in India. And the *second* is that all is not well with the panchayats in Bengal since they have failed to facilitate the process of democratic decentralisation due to lack of adequate people's participation.

One of the institutional changes brought about with the establishment of the Left Front Government in West Bengal is the reorganisation of the system of rural local government through the formation of PRIs at three tiers below the state. The panchayati raj bodies created in West Bengal on the recommendations of the Balwantray Mehta Committee lost their legitimacy long before and became defunct since late sixties of the last century. Though the West Bengal Panchayat Raj Act was passed in early seventies, no positive steps were taken to translate the Act into practice by the State Government. Within a year of being voted to the seat of government at the state, the Left Front organised elections to the local bodies. Since then there has been elections to these bodies at a regular interval of five years without interruptions. Apart from ensuring timely and regular elections to these bodies, certain structural and administrative changes like, delegation of functions to the PRIs on the items mentioned in the Constitution, establishment of State Election Commission, formation of State Finance Commission, and the introduction of decentralised district planning as per provisions of the Amendments. The statutory mechanism for involvement and participation of people at the lowest levels through creation of *Gram Sabha* and *Gram Sansads* have also been developed. Substantial changes in rural power structure have also been set in motion through land reforms measures by the State Government. A two-pronged strategy of development: implementation

of land reforms programmes and the establishment of elected local bodies, was initiated by the Government which was backed by a strong political will and a regimented leadership provided by the ruling coalition. Both the efforts, interlinked and mutually supportive in nature, created an atmosphere in which the poor and the marginal sections of the rural community found a legitimate place of their own replacing the traditional rural leadership. In this process, a new kind of leadership comprising the 'illiterate and the literate, high castes and low castes, women and men, tribals and non-tribals, old and young, experienced and totally inexperienced, poor and rich' has emerged. All these have been dealt with by the author in the chapters of her book that follow the 'Introduction'.

Survey of panchayat members conducted at different times have revealed that apart from major representation from the landless, marginal and small cultivators, the representation of scheduled castes and tribes and women in these institutions have been higher than the statutory requirements and there have also been instances of women getting elected in the general category. Chapter IV concentrates on examining the socioeconomic and political background of the elected members of two Gram panchayats, which confirms the general observation that the panchayats constituted under L F regime in West Bengal exhibit a high degree of participative character. The changes in power structure in rural West Bengal brought about by the reorganisation of panchayats and effective land reforms have created conditions in which the state has emerged from a long period of agricultural stagnation. Cropping intensity has increased steadily as a result of land reforms and other pro-people measures initiated with the help of panchayats in the post-land reforms period. The socio-economic conditions of rural people especially of those living below the poverty line have been improved a lot due to implementation of various rural development programmes.

The devolution of a number of functions including the responsibility of formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes to the PRIs by the State Government has made the panchayats the centers of rural development activities, and this task of devolution started in West Bengal much before the Amendments were passed that needs to be highlighted. There are no doubt the positive achievements made by the panchayats which have also been confirmed by the findings of the study in the subsequent chapters.

But there is also the negative side of the story. The panchayats in West Bengal, as the researcher points out in Chapter V, after scrutinising the activities and achievements of the PRIs, have become the basic engine of the development venture affecting the life of rural people. But the *modus operandi* of functioning of the panchayats has led to the growth of a dependency syndrome in which people have become passive subjects instead of being 'actors' in the development process. People's active participation in different stages of planning and implementation of development programmes is considered axiomatic in contemporary development thought. The scope and extent of people's participation brought about by panchayats in West Bengal have been examined in Chapter VI. While indirect participation of people (through representatives) is somehow satisfactory, their direct participation as stakeholders or beneficiaries, it is ascertained by the researcher, is not conducive to people's mobilisation. But decentralisation is bound to degenerate if there is no organised mobilisation of the masses. The benefits of land reforms measures undertaken by the Left have been sustained because there was active mobilisation of the people in the programmes.

The *Gram Sabhas* and *Gram Sansads* have been created to expedite the process of decentralisation in rural governance but, as the present and other similar studies reveal, the experiences in people's

direct participation in most of the states in India do not exhibit a healthy trend and in most cases have fallen short of the requirements. In the present study the failure is attributed to the ideological and organisational regimentation of the political parties of the state. It is quite obvious that under such a situation, panchayats may serve the role of development agencies or at least the role of agents of the State but cannot function as the 'institutions of self-government' of the people. But it is an oversimplification of the fact to consider the situation as only characteristic of West Bengal. The all-India picture is far more disheartening. Failing to hold the meeting of the *Pathari Gram Sahha* while convening the same twelve times, special efforts were made to hold the same again on 19 December 2001 but only seven persons including the *Sarpanch*, *Gram Sabha-in-charge* and a *Gram Sewak* turned up at the venue of the meeting which was postponed for the thirteenth time. The experience is no longer desirable, certainly nor does it justify the failure in West Bengal. The present study could have been more enriched had the researcher directed her analytical tools towards a comparative assessment of the situation which is essential in any objective study.

The role of political parties in panchayats has been scanned by the author in Chapter VII in details. The attempt to examine the role of respective parties in organising, coordinating, directing and monitoring the activities of the panchayats is surely encouraging, which has been neglected in most of the studies. In a democratic system, involvement of political parties is inescapable and activities of the panchayats cannot remain apolitical. This is what has exactly happened in the states in India. Distribution of patronage or adoption of partisan attitudes are inherent in political activities which may have secondary priority only with the growth and development of a stable civil society. But the moot question remains whether the interference of political parties accelerates

or retards the process of decentralisation. The author contends that the participation of political parties in Panchayati raj system in West Bengal starting from the selection of candidates for different tiers of PRIs to the implementation of various programmes has resulted in extreme politicisation of village panchayats and has retarded the process of democratic decentralisation. The author points out that though the elected representatives occupy the formal seats of power, seldom do they possess the decision-making authority in panchayat bodies. Apart from the strategies and methods used by the political parties to keep the lids tight in panchayats, there is a statutory provision (Section 213A of the West Bengal Panchayat Raj Act) which compels an elected member to obey what his or her party dictates. The anti-defection provision enumerated in the Act is an issue that warrants a serious academic debate but the author at the same time has noted a very healthy development that the drawbacks have been identified by the leading party in the ruling coalition in West Bengal with a view to ensuring greater participation of the people in the functioning of the panchayats. It is appropriate to focus the point that West Bengal has implemented the anti-poverty programmes more successfully. While pursuing a policy of decentralisation, the State Government has been able to maintain strong central control through its regimented organisational networks. In fact the strategy adopted here closely reflects a blend of centralised and decentralised state action, or better to say, a state of controlled decentralisation.

In the concluding chapter the findings have been summarised based on the conviction of the author that without effective participation of the people, the panchayat system in West Bengal has failed to hasten the process of democratic decentralisation. Such a judgment is no doubt hasty when the author seeks to generalise her findings obtained from her empirical study of only two Gram Panchayats in West Bengal. The

author categorically admits the limitations of micro-studies in drawing general inference but asserts that the findings indicate the general nature of the functioning of PRIs in West Bengal. From an academic point of view, it is necessary to investigate if complete decentralisation is possible under the given class and caste divisions in Indian society. It is a fact that the political organisations of the disadvantaged sections have altered the balance of political power in rural West Bengal that has made effective the implementation of diverse far-reaching socio-political programmes considered otherwise infeasible in most of the states. We may differ from the views nourished and the conviction developed by the author but it is to be admitted that the issues and debates raised in the study can never be ignored in an honest attempt to evaluate the decentralisation exercise in any state. The inferences drawn and questions raised by the author have become new hypotheses which are highly debatable and at the same time need to be tested through disparate micro-level studies for confirmation but the findings are not without any merit.

Anil Kumar Jana

Anil Kumar Jana, *Administering District Plans in India: Issues, Constraints and Choices*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 468, Rs. 900

Decentralised district planning in India has been constitutionally mandated by the 73rd and 74th amendments of India's Constitution in 1992. This is a major input in the scheme of rural development and planning. Professor Jana is not only an academic expert in the subject but also an activist in this field having personal involvement in the formulation and implementation of village plans in Midnapore district in West Bengal.

The author begins with a well-researched survey of literature on the administrative dimensions of planning in India and offers an overview of decentralised planning in India. This is followed by an account of decentralised planning experiments in the States of India. He has prefaced his analysis of planning machinery at the district level by a competent discussion on methodology of district planning. The core of the book is the analysis of implementation of decentralised district planning and the identification of the issues, constraints and choices in district planning in India.

An important finding of this research is that the process of preparation of perspective plan for longer period has been discontinued since the Eighth plan due to lack of definite policy and absence of funds flow to district and below. This factor has weakened the system of linkages between the long-term perspectives and immediate objectives.

The second interesting finding is that District Planning Committee has been reduced to a deliberative body meeting irregularly to take broad policy decisions. The DPC no longer takes the job of plan formulation, co-ordination, monitoring and supervising lower-level planning. The administrative support rendered by District Planning Cell to DPC is minimum, because the Cell itself is ill-equipped and without an effective establishment.

Thirdly, the situation at the block level is deplorable. There is no separate establishment for block-level planning and the necessary planning activity is performed under the overall guidance of block-level Panchayat Samiti. The planning machinery is representative in character but inadequately skilled.

At the village level the Gram Sansad plan constitutes the basis on which the entire planning hierarchy is developed but there is no planning organisation at the Gram Sansad level. Similar is the situation at the level of municipal ward in urban planning.

The Zilla Parishad functions as the main organisation in development and planning activities in the district. ZP has a well-equipped establishment for organising effective supervision and monitoring of the planning operations at various levels. Through the DPC and its subcommittees, the expertise of the State government's officers and the perceptions of elected representatives are brought together for formulating an integrated plan for the district.

It is also revealed that the campaign undertaken to popularise decentralised planning among the people has not been much successful, but it has created some awareness to facilitate data collection and raising plan-cadres at the pre-planning stage. The foundation of decentralised district planning, however, did not materialise.

People's participation in multi-level planning as visualised in the 73rd and 74th Constitution amendments has been achieved only indirectly insofar as people's representatives have been associated with the planning process, but direct participation of the people is rather limited. Poor attendance at the Gram Sansad meetings provides testimony to this point.

District Planning Committee has very little control over funds allocation to different sectors of development. Resource mobilisation remains a vital issue. District planning is dependent on funds flow from the State government. The recommendations of the State Finance Commission are partially implemented. The funds devolved by the State government are primarily meant for the government departments at the district level formulating and implementing sectoral plans independently. The DPC has little control over expenditure of government funds. The author has found that the field functionaries and line personnel do not take adequate interest in decentralisation of authority and prefer to shift their responsibilities to the panchayats. Planning from below still remains unrealised in India.

Through his painstaking research and incisive analysis, the author

has correctly concluded that the issues of “popular participation, flow of funds and devolution of decision-making power pose greater challenges to the success of decentralised planning.

The book contains nine valuable appendices on district planning (C.H. Hanumantha Rao Committee), administrative arrangements for rural development and poverty alleviation programmes (CAARD), Constitution (Seventy-third) Amendment Act (1992), Constitution (Seventy-fourth) Amendment Act (1992), West Bengal District Planning Committee Act (1994), West Bengal District Planning Committee Rules (1994) and Kerala’s experience of People’s Campaign for Decentralised Planning. These documents have added to the indispensability of this book to those who want to have detailed knowledge about decentralised district planning in India, in general, and in West Bengal, in particular. The facts and data have been collected from government documents as well as secondary critical writings of the experts in the field. The author has mixed his own experience as a practitioner in the field of district planning to make his account authentic. His analytical faculty has added to the value of this book. Professor Jana deserves full praise for producing a quality research work on a topic which is of much contemporary significance in policy-making and development administration in India today. Students of political science and public administration would be immensely benefitted by going through this well-written and elegantly produced volume which deserves to be included as a reading material in the list of recommended books for the M.A. and B.A. (Hons) courses.

One basic issue confronting the exercise of decentralised district planning is that this concept has emerged in the context of the need for people’s participation in development management, which in its turn is an off-shoot of the ideology of good governance. There is no quarrel with people’s involvement in planning and development, but the sincerity of the practitioners of liberalisation and privatisation in development

management is questionable insofar as the choice and priority of development programmes are seen to be mostly influenced by considerations of profitability and marketability. The political leadership of the investment-hungry, capital-poor countries is, in practice, forced by the pressure of politico-economic circumstances to ignore the genuine needs of the marginalised and deprived sectors in society. Hence grassroots planning is reduced essentially to political management of the voters. Development has ceased to be “planned” in the real sense of the term and this explains to a large extent the indifference of people at the grassroots towards planning and development which are officially sponsored and recommended from above; hence the low attendance at the meetings of Gram Sabha, Gram Sansad and Ward Committee. There is reason to believe that grassroots “planning” is largely incongruous with liberalisation-privatisation ideology. If private investors are to decide what to produce, when to produce, how much to produce, where to invest, how to distribute the product and services and on what price, what else is left to the district-level planning and below? Moreover, in the overall context of rampant political, administrative and business corruption in India, decentralised district planning is doomed to be a lip-service institutional arrangement without any real impact on democratic governance and sustainable public welfare.

A final problem with publications like the present one is that there are very few serious readers in the current scenario of higher education in India. Still more regrettable is the fact that politicians and bureaucrats also do not care to take such publications as seriously as they should do.

Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay

