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## Contents

# EDITORIAL

It is my pleasure to place before you the ninth volume of *Social Change and Development*. This issue opens with a piece on the forest villages of Assam by Indrani Sarma. Tracing the history of forest villages from the colonial times, Ms Sarma shows how, over the years, landless peasants have increasingly encroached upon forest land , thereby giving rise to complex issues relating to the land rights of people and the need to preserve the environment. The article acquires a lot of relevance in the present scenario of Assam. The second article by Joydeep Baruah presents a critical look into the idea of inclusive growth and convincingly traces the roots of the inconsistencies and in-built weaknesses of such a policy to the nation's neo-liberal policies. Baruah maintains that neo-liberal policies run counter to "those ideas which propagate structural changes for. collective well-being". Akhil Ranjan Dutta, in his perceptive paper, delves deep into the challenges of health security in a country like India which has opted for the neo-liberal paradigm of development. He tries to show how positive schemes like the NHRM have been subverted by the "regressive and coercive policies" of neo-liberal development and how they have failed to achieve any radical pro-people shift in the country's health care system. In the last article, Shaila Desouza and Pranab Mukhopadhyaya, taking Goa as a test case, focus of women's empowerment as a social goal and question the proposition that high economic growth invariably leads to the empowerment of women. Lastly, Abikal Borah reviews a book which he sees as being a part of a wider attempt by recent scholars of spatial history to rescue history " from the hegemonic and repressive regimes of the nation".. I sincerely hope that all this provides for some interesting reading.

Guwahati
10-07-2012

**Udayon Misra**







# The Forest Villages of Assam: Emergence and Evolution

**Indrani Sarma***

*In mapping out the ecological history of Assam, it is interesting to know that the man-forest relationship has its own specificities. People, forest and land, indeed become an important part of the discourses in Assam throughout different historical periods. This article locates the creation of forest villages (FVs) in Assam as a part of the colonial forest management. These villages were established within the limits of the reserved forests for assured supply of labour for the colonial forest department (FD). However, later on, acute land alienation due to natural as well as man-made factors forced the land-starved Assamese peasantry to penetrate into these reserved forest areas in search of land and livelihood in increasing numbers leading to their conflicts with the forest department. The agrarian practices of the forest villagers have emerged as a threat to the very existence of forests in the recent times. This has resulted in serious conflicts between the livelihood needs of the forest dwellers and conservation approach of the state.*

## I. Introduction

Assam, the north-eastern state of India, represents a unique man-forest relationship throughout different historical epochs. This relationship underwent drastic changes from pre-colonial to the post-colonial periods. In the recent times, however the man-forest relationship has witnessed intense conflict pertaining to the widespread degradation of forest cover. Today, the Protected Areas (PAs) in the state are facing severe crisis due to adverse forces such as – large-scale deforestation due to anthropogenic pressure, illegal timber trading, poaching, etc. Thus, the indiscriminate devastation due to growing human interference has resulted in rapid depletion of forest cover, erosion of rich biodiversity, fragmentation of wild animals' habitats. Man-animal conflicts have also increased manifold.

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Buffer areas around most PAs have been converted to cultivable lands.

This essay gives a rounded historicised account of the creation of forest villages (FVs) in Assam during the colonial period. Like the rest of India, the FVs in Assam were created as a part of the colonial forest management policy. These villages were established within the limits of reserved forests (RFs) for assured supply of labour for the colonial forest department (FD). However, with the elapse of time, acute land alienation due to natural as well as man-made factors forced the land-starved Assamese peasantry to penetrate into these RF areas in search of land and livelihood in increasing numbers leading to their conflicts with the FD. This conflict has assumed a much more complex character in the recent times giving rise to serious contestations and challenges with regard to the people's rights and conservation approach of the state. The essay explicates the nature of present day conflicts in the FVs. At present, there are 499 FVs in the state.

## II. The History of Man-Forest Interface in Assam

Assam represents a unique ecological history in terms of its man-forest interactions. In order to understand the present, it is essential to have a historical understanding of man-forest interface in the region. In the medieval times, though land appeared to be abundant in the Assam valley, it was rather limited for the surplus-yielding wet rice cultivation. It necessitated a major drive by the medieval semi-tribal Ahom state[1] to reclaim agricultural land from the existing wastelands and forests and such lands were considered the most valuable asset of the state. However, forests and wastelands served as village commons relatively free from state interventions. The peasants could supplement their subsistence with various products from forests and wastelands which interspersed the landscape of the contemporary Assam.

The relationship between forests, land and people that existed during the Ahom reign underwent remarkable changes with the imperial intrusion of the province. During the Ahom reign, the state was based on barter

[1] The Ahoms ruled Assam for six hundred years from 1228 to 1826 when the administration of the Assam went into the hands of the British.






system rather than a monetised economy. The forests acted as the CPRs of the people from where they could supplement their subsistence. However, this landscape was totally threatened with the coming of the British during the second half of the 19th century. They introduced cash economy in the semi-feudal, semi tribal Ahom state (Sharma, 2001). One can imagine the kind of affects that were brought in the indigenous barter system by the cash economy.

The extremely rich and dense forest covers of the region immediately opened up avenues of commercial exploitation for the colonial administrators. The colonial state began to understand the jungles of Assam in terms of their commercial potentialities (Saikia, 2011: 22), thus became the major sources of revenue extractions. Agriculture was also given priority for it yielded maximum revenue for the administration. Large tracts of forests were cleared to make way for agrarian expansions. Moreover, the discovery of tea plants in 1834 (Saikia, 2011: 24) came as another threat to the forested landscapes of Assam. Huge tracts of forestlands were cleared and reserved for commercial plantations, mainly tea cultivation. The process of transformation of the 'jungles' and 'forests' to (tea) 'gardens' usurped into a large quantity of village commons or community forest lands from 1850s to 1880s. In the process, the system of CPRs of the native population came under severe attack. The local peasantry suffered in the process of reservation of forests, since they were alienated from land and resources. The lands once freely used by the local peasants were brought under total control of the department. Thus, the communally owned lands of the locals were encroached upon (Handique, 2004: 106-107).

Initially, the general notion was that the forests in Assam as timber mines were inexhaustible. Forests were destroyed and clear-felled unsupervised. The colonial state had acquired a total control over the resources of the region by the middle of the 19th century. Systematic and effective administrative mechanism such as system of revenue collection started to establish. The Public Works Department (PWD) emerged as one of the prominent administrative wing of the Company. The PWD was the major consumers of timber for various construction works undertaken in various parts of the region. For the purpose, there was the need of constant labour supplies to work in the forests for felling of timbers. Soon, the administration started establishing villages in the vicinities of the forest

areas by settling the peasants. This was done to ensure regular supplies of labour to work in various tasks of the Department. This clear-felling of commercially valuable trees were done recklessly which later became a major concern for the Department. Tea industry was also playing a bigger role in destroying the forest cover which was beyond repair. The concern over this ever-increasing depletion of the timber, took a different turn with the reservation of forests. The process of reservation began with the declaration of Nambor as reserve in 1862. Till 1859, Assam did not have any guidelines in matters of forest conservation (Saikia, 2011: 31-43).

The provincial FD was established only in the year 1874. Under the Bengal Forest Act, 1865, forests of Assam were classified into two major categories: the Reserved Forests and Open Forests or Protected Forests. In the former, the FD enjoyed the entire responsibility of administration and control over the forests and its products. While in the later category, control and rights of the department were confined to specific reserved trees. The main interest behind the reservation of forests was to secure monopoly control over the commercial value of the forests (Saikia, 2011: 69-70). The Assam Forest Regulation (AFR) of 1891 made more space for commercial exploitation of forests. A new category of forests known as the Unclassed State Forests (USFs) was created under the AFR of 1891 which came to incorporate the Open Forests. The USFs mainly constituted the grassland forests. These categories also included roads, embankments, waterlogged areas and other uncultivated lands. Over the areas under the USFs increased substantially to meet the ever-increasing needs of the Colonial government. At Independence, the areas under such forests were far ahead of the RFs. Historically, the USFs have been the targets for land reclamation for agriculture by Assamese peasants. The pace of such reclamation of the forest tracts under the category of USFs resulted in unprecedented growing human pressures. At a later stage, these USFs came under the administrative control of the FD (Saikia, 2011). By 1900 Assam's 55,156 square miles included 20,830 under government forest control, one of the highest percentages of any state in India (Tucker, 2012: 170).

Tucker in this regard laments, "(E)ven more so than in most parts of India, the history of Assam's forests has been intertwined with the intricate ethnic and cultural patterns of the state. The remote high hills of Assam






and adjacent regions are homes to a wide variety of tribal groups, whose subsistence has been based primarily on shifting agriculture. Until recently tribal populations were thin enough that they presented no fatal threat to the mixed forests, it left to themselves. But the Brahmaputra lowlands supported a much denser and rapidly growing, culturally different populace of Hindu rice farmer" (2012: 170). Further he writes, "(I)n the twentieth century, Assam had the fastest growing population of any state in India: from 3.3 million in the 1901 census to 15 million in 1971, nearly all of the growth before 1947 occurring in the lower areas of settled agriculture...Most challenging of all, downriver in Bangladesh lies one of the densest rural populations in the world. By the late nineteenth century Bengali peasants, most of them Muslim, began surging upriver into the fertile Assamese forest fringe. Even before World War I, one of the causes of depletion of Assam's vegetation was the steady encroachment of these immigrant peasants on the forest lands of lower Assam" (2012: 171).

Interestingly since the early 20th century, the colonial government saw the possibility of opening up the swampy wastelands of Assam for jute cultivation The wastelands of central and lower Assam were opened up for the poor, landless peasantry from the erstwhile East Bengal. Furthermore, the colonial regime adopted the policy of opening up more wastelands for agricultural production with a view to generating more revenue (Sharma, 2001: 4793). Tucker observes, "(W)asteland, a term generally designated land not under settled agriculture or forest reserve, was a great opportunity for settling immigration peasants. In Assam the Revenue Department, for whom 'nonproductive' land was truly a waste because it produced no taxes, consistently pressed for opening more land to plow" (Tucker 2012: 159). The FD agreed on principle that the peasants' need for cultivable land should take first priority in land allocation. The foresters did not disagree with the government's 1938 report, which stressed that – 'indigenous people alone would be unable, without the aid of immigrant settlers, to develop the province's enormous wetland resources within a reasonable period' (Tucker 2012: 174). (For this)...As early as 1920s, the FD had realised that this move would threaten timber supplies. This forced the department to began the survey of vegetation and classification of land-use potential in previously unclassified government forests, especially so as to delineate sal forests which arguably should be kept from the plow (Tucker, 2012: 174).

All these seriously restricted the access of the local peasantry, tribal and non-tribal, to the land resources. Over and above, the two great earthquakes of 1897 and 1950 also had a cataclysmic effect on the topography of Assam exacerbating the incidences of flood and erosion and thus loss of land among the indigenous peasantry. Post-1950 years witnessed large-scale migration of Assamese peasantry in search of agricultural land to different reserves of Assam. The available wastelands including forest reserves, grazing land, etc became their main target (Sharma, 2010). This flow of peasants continued as the problem of landlessness accentuated over time.

### III. Forest Villages in Assam

The creation of FVs, like rest of India, was a part of colonial forest management. The colonial FD had to meet the demand of large-scale timber extractions from the forests for railway expansion and had to accumulate more revenue to support the British imperial government. For this, a stable supply of labour was required to exploit the forest resources, mainly timbers. The colonial forest administration started the process of settling marginal and landless peasants in the forest areas and they were allowed to practice agriculture therein in exchange of their labour in collecting forest resources, mainly timbers, and such other activities on behalf of the colonial FD. The villages thus settled were known as FVs (*bon gaon*). Similarly, the people practicing shifting cultivation were allowed to settle in and use forestland for a temporary period until they shift to another place. Such temporary villages were known as '*taungya* villages'. The inhabitants of the *taungya* villages also had to render manual services to the FD.

In Assam, extensive tracts containing valuable forests were reserved under the Bengal Forest Act, 1865. Thus, the process of setting up *taungya* and FVs was undertaken in Assam for an assured supply of labour for the FD. Accordingly, the rights and privileges of the forest villagers were also informed by colonial biases. According to the Assam Forest Regulation of 1891, each adult member of the FV was required to render 20 days of physical labour annually to the FD at the prevailing local ordinary wages. This system was locally known as *'begar'*. In return for their work, the forest villagers were allowed to collect thatch, firewood, cane, etc. from






the forest. Apart from this, they were also allowed to collect sufficient timber to build and maintain their houses. Further, each family was entitled for ten cartloads of fuel wood every year in return for another ten days of labour (Saikia, 2011: 102).

In the early phase of forest exploitation, supply of labour was "met through the introduction of *'taungya'* system as was earlier practiced in Burma and Malaysia..." (Sonowal, 2007: 47). A similar practice exists, under the name of *Kumri* in Madras and under other names in other provinces (Brandis, 1923: 37). In India, *taungya* system "was followed mainly in the areas where the local people refused to lend their labour for government sylvicultural programmes. Initially, the forest labourers were treated as serfs by the government as they were forced to render free service for forest work for a number of days in a year as earmarked. Later, the situation changed slightly as the migrant labourers were provided homesteads and one hector of land in lieu of services rendered by them to the FD. These settlements came to be known/as FVs" (Sonowal, 2007: 48). In Assam, cultivable land of the settled *taungya* villages had never occupied a large areas, it had remained confined to a limited area of operation. It was allowed primarily in places where shifting (swidden) cultivation was wide in practice (Saikia, 2011: 239-240).

Saikia (2011) observes, "(T)he establishment of FVs was within the bureaucratic set-up of the existing RFs or, mostly, in new areas that were earmarked for creating FVs. An illustrative example of the establishment of FV was that of Kachugaon in Goalpara. The FV was established in 1901 by making a new addition to the RFs to make way for a FV. This also meant that the FD was not willing to disturb any status quo inside the already acquired territorial rights. The department made sure that the newly added tracts did not contain any marketable timber. This practically meant that the forest villagers got little time to carry their own agricultural works. Two other FVs, Panbari and Bamujhora, established in Goalpara in 1902, also turned to be similar in the nature of expropriation of labour services by the FD..." Another scholar further state that by the year 1902-03, as many as 15 FVs came up and the number increased upto 145 in 1913-14. Initially, three districts were selected for functioning of FVs. These were Cachar, Goalpara and Kamrup having 8, 15 and 12 FVs respectively in each district (Sonowal 2007: 49). The establishments of FVs in reserved

forests came as a boost for carrying out forestry operations. The villagers were given land to cultivate in the vicinities of the forests which gave better protection of the RFs (for details see Saikia, 2011: 102-103).

Loss of land and livelihoods due to floods, erosion or shortage of land owing to population increase at the place of origin had forced the people migrate in search of secured land. They were motivated by the hope of securing a better livelihood compared to the one at the place of their origin with insufficient homestead or cultivable land. The arrival of more peasants subsequently resulted in the growth of villages and clearance of more 'jungles' facilitating agricultural expansion. There were number of reserves throughout Assam where human settlements came up only with the migration of landless peasants. However, it is to be noted that there were also such settlements in various forest areas of Assam which pre-existed the British rule. After most of the forested tracts of the state were brought under the control of the colonial FD, many such settlements were converted into FVs. For example, in the Doyang forest reserve, numbers of villages were established during the Ahom reign prior to the 19th century. These villagers were also settled agriculturalists as the Ahoms continuously encouraged the expansion of agrarian frontiers (Saikia, 2008: 79-80). This shows the presence of human settlements in the RFs of Assam even before these were declared as protected or reserved areas.

In Nameri RF (declared as such in 1878) in the Sonitpur district of Assam, for example, such movement of peasant settlers started in 1920s-1930s. Most of these early peasant settlers hailed from the nearby areas of Balipara and Chariduar who had lost their small landholdings on account of either river erosion or shortage of land owing to population increase. Like other RFs of the state, in Nameri too, the British administration driven by its colonial economic interests allowed the peasants to settle in the vicinities of the forests in the form of temporary settlements. Later on, these temporary settlements were converted into FVs. The villagers were given cleared up patches of forest lands for agricultural activities in return of their physical works rendered to the colonial FD and a small amount of 'revenue' (*khajana*[2]). Accordingly, each adult forest villager was required to render *begar* services to the FD. Thus, FVs created inside the notified

[2] Rent on land.







forests comprised of the people once hired as labourers by the FD. Except the above mentioned rights of the forest villagers, the FD exercised monopoly control over the forest villagers. Though the villagers were permitted to settle in forest land, they were not given any tenurial security. The FD allotted 10 bighas[3] of cultivable land (*rupit mati*) and 5 bighas of homestead land (*bari mati*) to each family in the village. The 'revenue' on these officially allotted lands was fixed at Rs. 5 per bigha on each family per annum. The department maintained its strict control over the forest villagers. The forest officers maintained records to monitor their works. Like Nameri reserve, there were other forest reserves throughout Assam where human settlements came up with the migration of landless peasants as indicated above.

Doyang and Tengani RFs, located in the Golaghat district bordering Nagaland in eastern Assam, had also attracted huge influx of landless peasants affected by floods and erosion from different parts of the state. Tengani is located in the Nambor RFs. Adjoining these forest patches is the Doyang forest reserve and the inter-state boundary with Nagaland. Doyang was made a forest reserve in 1886 under Bengal Forest Act. The colonial FD set up 4 FVs in Doyang in 1905 namely, Merapani, Chaudang Pathar, Kachamari, and Amguri. During 1951-54, the Assam government set up more 'forest' and '*taungya*' villages in the area. Moreover, under a strategic policy to protect the land along the Assam-Nagaland border from the Naga encroachment the Assam government settled indigenous peasants in adjoining forest tracts of Nambor and Doyang. Officially known as 'half-a-mile settlement', landless peasants from neighbouring areas came and settled within a distance of half mile from the inter-state border during 1968-70 under this official policy (Sharma, 2010).

Tengani was declared a FV after it was brought under the Nambor RF area which was declared as a reserved forest in 1878 under the Bengal Forest Act. After independence, in 1953, the state FD established several *taungya* villages in Tengani. With the elapse of time, these villages attracted considerable number of landless peasants affected by flood and erosion from different parts of upper Assam. However, as happens with the *taungya* villagers, they never got tenurial rights over their land (Sharma, 2010).

[3] 1 bigha = 1/3 acre (approx.)

The situation, however in Doyang and Tengani is different from that of the FVs in Nameri National Park (NNP). The FVs of Nameri consist of only the officially recognised forest villagers. The expansion of families in these villages has eventually led to the population increase. The present population is the families of the original settlers. These villages have however, never witnessed any waves of migration of outsiders since their establishments during the colonial rule. In contrast, Doyang and Tengani have witnessed huge influx of landless peasants over and above those already settled in the FVs, established by erstwhile colonial administration for forestry works as discussed above. As the time passed, the penetration of more and more landless peasants into these areas have assumed a complex character and thus become a matter of major dispute over land.

It is in this context, a distinction must be made between forest dwelling communities and forest villagers that connote different meanings. Forest dwelling communities is a broader term that includes both forest villagers as well as the encroachers on forest lands. These encroachers are generally considered illegal occupants on forest land without any official recognition. Whereas, forest villagers are settlers residing in officially declared FVs. Since, they are officially recognised settlers, they enjoy certain rights and privileges in form of agricultural land for livelihood, firewood from the forest, minimal revenue payment on landholdings, etc from the FD. In the present times, the expansion of populations has eventually led to the shortage of land in FVs. Since, agriculture is the dominant activity of the villagers, the shortage of land has further aggravated the economic conditions. It is therefore, time for the FD to create alternative livelihoods strategies for the forest villagers. If we think of the long-terms benefits, these alternatives are important, since the population pressure on forest lands is mounting, but land is limited. This point will be discussed in detail later.

## IV. Administration of Forest Villages

The administration of the FVs is in the hands of the FD. The villagers are under the strict control and vigilance of the FD. They are given sufficient amount of homestead and agricultural lands for survival in the vicinities of the forest areas. Since the land belongs to the FD, the villagers have not been given tenurial rights on land (*patta*). In the recent times, the issue






of land rights has been a cause for much insecurity among them. Thus, the issue of *patta* is also central to the socio-economic as well as political dynamics of the interactions between the forest villagers and the forest. Moreover, they do not have rights to sell or mortgage their lands even at times of difficulties, neither among the fellow villagers nor to any outsiders. The FD enjoys the sole proprietary rights over the land. Each family in the FVs are officially allotted fixed amount of homestead and cultivable lands. They are not allowed to encroach upon forest lands over and above the stipulated official limits. Any member found doing so is considered punishable offence by law.

The FD undertakes the functioning of different conservation programmes implemented at the village level. The Joint Forest Management (JFM) Scheme as well as the FD has initiated various afforestation programmes in all deforested tracts in the fringe areas of forests. In the FVs, the *gaonbura* (headman) plays an important role in representing the villagers' needs to the authority. In case of any dispute in the village or with another FV, the villagers resolve it through the instrumentality of the *mel* (assembly) of the villagers which is an Assamese traditional practice. However, in case of disputes between a revenue village and a FV, the Ranger has to be immediately informed as police cannot directly intervene in matters pertaining to forest villagers. The situation in the FVs gradually changed with the passage of time. For instance, the system of *begar* services has been abolished. The villagers gradually stopped rendering *begar* service to the FD with the effect that the system does not exist today.

Today, almost all the FVs in Assam have schools, Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Anganwadis, electricity, Village Panchayat, community prayer hall (*naamghar*), etc. The villagers also receive the benefits of various government schemes/provisions such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Rajiv Gandhi Rural Electrification Scheme, Indira Awaas Yojana, Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards, public distribution system, etc. Different government schemes have been implemented in the FVs in order to help the rural poor by giving them access to basic needs.

## V. Idiosyncratic Features of Forest Villages in Assam

Unlike the FVs in other parts of the country, in Assam they own peculiar features in terms of the history of their formation, the settlers and their livelihoods and man-forest interface. Forest-dwellers in most PAs of India are mainly dependent on forest products for sustenance, though agriculture is also practiced (Sachchidananda, 2004: 55). Lele (2011) observes, "(S)ocially, in India, the livelihoods of 100-200 million people are intertwined directly with forests. These people live in close proximity to forests, and most of them have a long tradition of forest use, and therefore of a sense of customary rights and of how a forest should be. Indeed, in many tribal communities, there was no simple separation between 'forests' and 'non-forests': forests are completely integrated into their systems of shifting cultivation. And even settled agriculturalists think of pastures, woodlots and dense forests as all part of their 'jungle'..." (2011: 96).

Sachchidananda (2004) contends, "(T)he material culture of tribal people depends on forests to a very great extent. Food is the first and foremost requirement of any people. The forests, particularly sal forests, are like a repository of all sorts of edible fruits, roots, shoots, etc. from which these things are picked up as and when required. The availability of these edible items is maximum during the lean period of the year from March/April to August/ September when people's need of an alternative to their cereal diet is the most. Apart from being a substitute to their normal diet, these products also act as a nutrient additive. Besides these vegetable produce they also get red ants, squirrels, and other small game from these forests which are very much part of their diet" (2004: 54-55).

In contrast, the FVs in Assam represent different reality of man-forest interactions which is at variance with the all India scenario. In Assam, the FVs are different as evident from the above. A FV does not mean any human settlements formed deep inside the forests. The FVs are mainly located in the vicinities (i.e. buffer areas) of the forests with vast agricultural lands, acting as life-supporting system for the dwellers. These villages consist of tribal as well as non-tribal populations. It is worth mentioning that the socio-economic systems of these tribal and the non-tribal FVs hardly present any worthwhile difference. The dominant activities






of the both tribals and non-tribals forest villagers revolve around agriculture and their dependence on forests are only supplementary. Most villagers are either wholly or partly dependent on agriculture in one or more than one of the following roles: landowner, sharecropper and labourer. Life for them in reserves is a harsh struggle for existence, they live amidst poverty. Other than agriculture, they have no income earning ways. The villagers earn the major part of their income from the sale of grains, they also supplement their income by selling coconuts, betel nuts, varieties of vegetables, livestock, etc either in the local *haat*s or in the village itself to the local or outside traders.

The agricultural activities, mainly the cultivation of rice, however, have become increasingly hazardous in some of the FVs in Assam. Crop raids by wild elephants are regular occurrence in these villages and no villager can afford to take things easy till the harvest is over. Man-elephant conflicts have intensified over the years. Incidences of elephant attacks on villagers are common. For example, in the FVs of NNP, previously the cultivation of *Sali,* a traditional late maturing variety of rice and sugarcane was practiced. Regular elephant raids on crops have compelled the villagers to completely abandon the sugarcane and *Sali* rice cultivation. While the villagers are not anymore ready to risk sugarcane cultivation which involves much more hard labour and manpower, today almost all the villagers go for early maturing varieties of rice so that they can protect and harvest the crop together. When the crop is ready for harvesting, the fields are protected from elephant herds at nights continuously till harvesting is over. Male members from the families make groups and spend the nights in the *tangi-ghars*[4] in the paddy fields. Throughout night, they keep shouting, beating the drums and firing the crackers to chase away the elephant herds. These few months are extremely difficult and hectic when the villagers remain tied up with agricultural works.

The women too are equal partners in the struggle for economic security. Except using the plough for tilling the land, a woman does virtually everything in the field. However, women never go out to the jungle in search of firewood, which is always a man's work. This is in

[4] Small temporary hut for one or two persons build upright on top of a tree in the midst of paddy field to chase away elephants.

contrast to the fact that in most PAs in other parts of India, a majority of the forest produce collectors are women who often face the ire of the forest officials and harassment by the forest guards (Prasad 2008: 228). This applies to other FVs of the state as well. It is clear from the above that the forest villagers (both tribals and non-tribals) are primarily agriculturists with minimal dependence on forest produces such as non-timber forest produces (NTFPs).

## VI. The FRA 2006 and the Forest Villagers

The promulgation of The Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, popularly known as the Forest Rights Act 2006 (henceforth FRA) created new possibilities of entitlements on their land and forest among the forest dwelling communities. As in most parts of the country, the implementation of the Act is seen as a saviour of forest-dwelling communities and as a historic endeavour to 'undo' the wrongs committed against them, providing rights to land and resources within the forests. The aim of the Act is "to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded; to provide for a framework for recording the forest rights so vested and the nature of evidence required for such recognition and vesting in respect of forest land (Upadhyay, 2009: 21). One of the most significant provisions of the FRA recognises the "rights of settlement and conversion of all forest villages, old habitation unsurveyed villages and other villages in forest, whether recorded, notified, or not, into revenue villages."[5]

Initiatives for the implementation of the FRA in Assam were undertaken in December 2008. This brought new rays of hope to the forest villagers and they were happy that the Act would provide them permanent *pattas* on their land and that they would no longer have to live under the control of the FD. For instance, in NNP the FRA came to be known as *Maati Patta Aain* (Land Rights Act) among the forest villagers.

[5] Section 3 (h) of FRA.






**Table :**
**Important Development**
**Related to the FRA 2006 in Assam**

| Important Date | Action |
|---|---|
| 31 December 2006 | Passing of the Act by the Indian Parliament |
| 1 January 2008 | Enactment of the Act in the country |
| December 2008 | The Assam government orders to implement the Act in the forest villages. |
| 28 February 2009 | Deadline for submission of claims for tenurial Land rights by the forest villagers. |
| 7 April 2009 | Deadline extended |
| 11-14 July 2010 | Public Consultations conducted by the National Forest Rights Act Committee. |

Nevertheless, the coming of the FRA has created an atmosphere of uncertainties in the state. It is true that most of the rights and privileges addressed in the FRA are ground-breaking. Some of the crucial provisions of the Act do not match with the existing ground realities. For example, the use of the phrase the 'other traditional forest dwellers' (OTFD) in the Act is a vexed one. Section 2 (o) of the Act defines OTFD as any member or community who has for at least three generations[6] prior to December 13, 2005, primarily resided in and depended on the forest or forest land for *bona fide* livelihood needs (Upadhyay, 2009: 31). Perhaps, this definition holds true for a large number of tribal forest-dwellers who have been residing in most of the PAs in India for ages. Most of them are *'gatherers'* although agriculture is also practiced. They have a long tradition of forest use for sustenance (Lele, 2011: 96).

The local realities in Assam are clearly at variance with the definition of the OTFD as used in FRA. The forest villagers in Assam cannot be termed as the 'traditional dwellers' because they are neither the traditional

[6] The word 'generation' has been defined as a period comprising 25 years for the purposes of this clause.

inhabitants of forests nor intrinsically dependent on forest produces for their livelihood. Only circumstances and natural calamities, as discussed above, had forced these indigenous poor peasants to move into forests areas in search of land and livelihood. One also does not witness any utilitarian religious or cultural ties of the villagers with the forests. No sacred grove or explicit history of forest protection exists among the villagers (Bose, 2009). In other words, the history of man-forest interactions in the area has its own specificity and is at variance with the all-India perspective that informed the FRA which in its present form undoubtedly bodes adverse implications for the non-tribal forest dwellers in Assam.

However, the non-tribal forest dwellers could not submit their claims. For instance, in NNP the Forest Rights Committee (FRC) faced strong resistance as the FD emphasised that non-tribal FVs have not yet completed 75 years and thus were ineligible to get the benefit under the FRA. The FD halted the entire process of recognising the rights of these non-tribal forest villagers. While the prevailing oral history suggests that the history of human penetration in this area might be more than 75 years old, the lack of any supporting evidence has become the root of all problems. Though the FRA makes provision for the recognition of the existing forest villages as revenue villages, this was either entirely suppressed or ignored by the local FD. What is significant here is that the local forest officials focused only on that provision in the FRA, which is applicable to the forest dwellers outside the FVs. The section 4 (3) of FRA pledges to recognise the rights of the forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs) inhabiting a forest land prior to 13 December 2005. However, as per the section 2 (o) of the Act, the OTFDs are required to have, for at least three generations (that is, 75 years) prior to 13 December 2005, primarily resided in and depended on the forest or forests land for bona fide livelihood needs. There is no doubt that the proof of 75 years of settlement in forest for non-tribal forest dwellers is a very difficult condition enshrined in the FRA (Upadhyay, 2009). It is indeed a tall order to expect the villagers to keep their settlement records (*khajana* receipts) for such a long time what even the FD has failed to do. The villagers for instance, in Nameri lament that they never thought that this kind of a situation would arise one day and that the *khajana* receipts would be so crucial in ascertaining their settlement rights. Indeed, the issue of regularisation of *patta* is not new in Assam. The AFP, 2004 spoke






of regularising the pre-1980 encroachers on forestland, but with the coming of the FRA, the AFP became redundant.

## VII. Public Consultations

The inadequacies in the FRA have also created problems in other parts of the country. The protests and concerns expressed by the affected people and the forest right activists led the government to review the Act by a committee known as the National Forest Rights Act Committee.[7] The committee submitted its report after holding public consultations in various parts of the country. In Assam, these consultations took place during 11 to 14 July 2010 in some select areas of the state. The consultation was carried out in areas like, Kaki (Nagaon, Central Assam), Kaziranga National Park, Tengani Reserve (Golaghat), Jagun sub-division (Margherita, Tinsukia District).[8] However, Nameri was not included in the list. In addition to the public consultations, the committee also carried out discussions with the officials of the state forest and civil administration. The consultations with the concerned people revealed various procedural lapses during the implementation of the FRA. One recurring issue in these consultations had been the case of the non-recognition of rights of OTFD under FRA. The three generation occupation in forest land for the OTFD has created a situation of chaos in the context of Assam as mentioned above. The forest-dwelling communities, both tribals and non-tribals are barely distinguishable in terms of their economic dependence. They are all peasants. Their history of migration into forest land is the same as already mentioned. So, it is neither feasible nor desirable to implemented rules differentiating both these communities. It has been found that in most cases, the OTFDs have not been able to produce evidences of three generation of occupation in forest lands. Only the prevailing oral evidences that the people can provide.

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7 The two ministries of Environment and Forest and the Tribal Affairs of Government of India constituted a joint Committee on April 2010 to comprehensively review the implementation FRA, 2006. The Committee members were selected from wide spectrum of retired civil servants. forest officers, tribal department officers and representatives of civil society organisations and NGOs.

8 Implementation of Forest Rights Act in Assam, Report of Field Visit, 11-14 July, 2010, MoEF/MoTA Committee on Forest Rights Act.

However, one notices a number of lapses in the process (such as, the non-constitution of *Gaon Sabha*). The public consultations held in Assam by the National FRA Committee also revealed a number of discrepancies during the implementation of FRA. It was found that there has been lack of awareness about the provisions of the Act even among the officials of both civil and forest administration. Awareness campaigns pertaining to the local people's rights and privileges as per the Act also have not been carried out. Moreover, there has been no flow of information among various implementing agencies such as FRCs, FD and the District Level Committees. The attitude of the FD also appears to be somewhat apprehensive regarding the granting of land *pattas* to the forest villagers. It seems to presume that granting of *pattas* will only encourage more encroachment leading to more deforestation (Kiro *et al.*,2010).

Moreover, the Committee of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) on the implementation of FRA in its report on Assam prepared after its consultations with the concerned public and the government officials notes that like the rest of India, the concerned Assam government officials are also found to be either extremely critical or indifferent to the FRA. Often they are unaware of the provisions of the Act and indulge in misinterpretation. In NNP, the forest officials are clearly seen to be engaged in subverting the provisions of the Act. The Committee finds that the state government is especially critical of the section 3 (h) of the FRA which makes provision for conversion of forest villages to revenue villages. The Committee also notes that while the government has apparently prioritised the forest villagers and ST populations to be given land rights amongst all other claimants there has been complete lack of entertaining the claims of OTFDs except those areas where there are strong and vested political interests. (Kiro, *et al.* 2010). Indeed, the implementation of the FRA in different states has shown varied responses. It has faced challenges even in those states of central and eastern India which consist of largest number of forest dwellers.

The public consultations in Assam suggest that there is an urgent need to amend some of the provisions of FRA taking into consideration the specific history of the region. Nonetheless, the Act offers a broad framework for addressing forest conservation and livelihood needs of the






forest dwellers. The entire idea behind the promulgation of the Act is to provide the local communities their rights over forest resources for survival and to make them stakeholders in forest conservation. The significance of the Act lies in the fact that it seeks to create conducive policy structure reconciling both livelihood and conservation needs. In Assam, if the state implements the Act with greater vigour and necessary amendments, it would provide much scope for a sustainable forest conservation regime. It depends on the pro-active role of the state government in this regard. The then Union Minister of State for Environment and Forest, Jairam Ramesh emphasised that for effective implementation of forest policies, different regions in the country needs diversity of models such as, state-centered model, state-cum-community partnership and community led model. In this regard, he advocated a complete 'paradigm shift' in the management and governance of forests in the country. He was quoted as saying, "we need a complete paradigm shift in the way we look at forest management. Our model is based on the primacy of the state, but we must shift to a three-fold model of state, communities, and partnership between the two" (Ramesh, 2011).

## VIII. Present Scenario

Today the FVs in Assam have become major sites of conflict between the survival needs of the poor peasant dwellers and the conservation strategies of the FD. The land-use pattern of the forest villagers is the most contentious issue in the recent times. As discussed above, their agrarian practices are posing threat the existence of forests. The state government and its forest administration have largely remained ineffective in formulating policies that accommodate the survival needs of communities and forest conservation in a sustainable manner. It is one thing to advocate the need for people's involvement, and quite another to actually make it happen (Saberwal, *et al.* 2001: 89). Conservation experiences, over the years, show failure of various forest policies in involving the local communities at large. These policies are inadequate in matters of addressing local specificities and needs of the communities. For example, the Assam Forest Policy (AFP) 2004, despite its progressive intent on many issues, had been criticised by forest rights activists in Assam for emphasising on a model of forest management which is more applicable to other parts of the country (Phukan, 2008: 50; Gogoi, 2008: 59; Bora 2008: 67). This has

happened as the AFP 2004 was prepared in the mould of the NFP 1988 (Govt. of Assam). The forest policies for the state must address its regional specificities attuned to conservation.

In almost all PAs of India, different forest policies have been providing entire gamut of rights and privileges to the forest-dwellers over forests for survival. For instance, the National Forest Policy 1988, JFM, National Biodiversity Action Plan 1998 and the more recently implemented FRA 2006 which is a break-through in the history of forest conservation as already pointed out. Unlike the case of forest villagers in Assam, the NTFPs provide sustenance to millions of people living in and around PAs in different parts of the country. The forest-dwellers collect these either for self-consumption or to sell in the localised markets. NTFPs are important for the dwellers because these fulfill their subsistence needs, give employment opportunities (mainly in collection, processing and storage). Harvesting of wide varieties of NTFPs provide them decent livelihoods. Fuel wood, broom grass, oil seeds, bamboo, beet, thatch, herbal plants, mahua, tendu, lac sticks, honey, amla, chironji, kahjur leaf, cocoons, khair, fodder, cup-plate making leaves, among others are mainly collected from the forests. Search for these products take time but they enable them to meet their cash needs. In forest areas of Central India, the Indian Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation Limited (TRIFED) has been working for the marketing and export of forest products as well as generating higher income for the tribals. In Jharkhand, it provides training in lac cultivation and distributes lac seeds free of cost to the tribals. TRIFED purchases tamarind, muhua and chironji directly (for details see Sachidananda, 2004: 71-77).

In case of the forest villagers in Assam, no such assessments of their survival needs have been done so far government (both at the centre and state). None of the forest policies have succeeded in integrating the survival needs of these communities with the official conservation strategies. It is only with the promulgation of the FRA in December 2008 that many local realities hindered its effective implementation in the region. Nonetheless, the Act has opened up an opportunity for the forest administration and governments (centre and state) to monitor and properly assess the existing ground realities in Assam and to formulate appropriate policies.






## IX. The Future of Forest Villages

At this point, question may arise as to what kind of development and conservation strategies would match the local specificities. The above discussion reveals that the villagers are not likely to support the official conservation programmes, unless they receive some benefits in return (Saberwal, et al. 2001: 97-98) for their participation in conservation. In case of the FVs in Assam, tenurial rights over land being the critical issue among the villagers, they would not take up conservation responsibilities if they are not provided tenurial security.

Further, alternative livelihood opportunities must be created for the villagers to divert pressures from forest lands for agriculture. For this, it is important to adopt hands-on conservation strategies which entail evolving innovative practices of alternative livelihoods for the villagers. This will motivate the latter to conserve forests out of their self-interests and to create a positive association between the two (Sahahabuddin and Rangarajan, 2007: 12). These alternative livelihood options for the villagers of NNP may include dairying, weaving, handicrafts, horticulture, etc. The JFM Scheme in Assam has provisions for 'Entry Point Activities' which mainly stress on community welfare activities in the FVs. These include: distribution of handloom and sewing machines to the women villagers, training to the youths (such as driving), plantations of short-term rotation crops like medicinal and aromatic plants, fruit yielding varieties, cane, bamboo, and other such NTFPs. Unfortunately, most of these are only in papers. In most forest reserves, the scope of JFM is limited only to the afforestation tasks as already mentioned. The FD has not been successful either in implementing alternative livelihood programmes or in mobilising the forest villagers' participation in conservation as most of the conservation schemes are decided unilaterally by the FD. Further, once implemented the schemes are not properly monitored. It is high time that the FD undertook effective measures to create sustainable alternative livelihood options. Small village industries, cooperatives, small food processing units, self-help groups may be formed in the FVs with good market linkages. This would substantially contribute to the rural peasant economy and help divert pressure on forest lands for agriculture.

It is important that the governments at the centre and state must give a serious thinking to the issues of land question, livelihood needs and forest conservation in Assam. The question of development of the forest

villagers and the forest policies has never been integrated so far. It is imperative for the FD to come out of the 'power centric' approach (Sachchidananda, 2004: 223) and to adopt a 'people-centric' approach to conservation. In case of the forest villagers in Assam, their participation in conservation programmes has to be defined in terms of issues that squarely address livelihoods and tenurial securities. This would help to achieve man-forest co-existence over a long term. The future state of rapidly dwindling forest covers, largely depend on a new policy structure specific to the region.

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# Inclusive Growth under India's Neo-liberal Regime: Towards an Exposition

**Joydeep Baruah***

*Ever since the Eleventh Five Year Plan, India has been trying to pursue an inclusive growth strategy. There is, however, much vagueness with regard to the content and intent of so-called inclusive growth. The present paper attempts at exploring the different discussions of India's inclusive growth and exposes some critical inconsistencies underlying it. The paper then traces the source of such inconsistencies and shows how these have their roots in the country's neo-liberal policies.*

## I. Introduction

The term *inclusive growth* and the discourse around it in India have suddenly gained currency since the approach paper to the Eleventh Five Year Plan has been titled as "Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth" (GoI, 2006). It advocates that rapid growth is essential for the country on two accounts – first, "it is *only* in a rapidly growing economy that we can expect to sufficiently raise the incomes of the mass of our population to bring about a general improvement in living conditions"; and second, "rapid growth is *necessary* to generate the resources needed to provide basic services to all" (ibid, p.2, emphasis added). While both of these propositions can legitimately be questioned for their "unrealistic assumptions" and "problematic theoretical underpinnings" (Patnaik, 2006; 2011), it is, nevertheless, required to understand how Indian planners have conceptualised the notion of inclusive growth in the plan document that followed by examining its broad contours and diverse shades and, more importantly, its *intent* from the political-economy perspective. This paper makes a preliminary attempt at attending to the "content" and "intent" of India's inclusive growth strategy, and also tries to offer some *general* observations.

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The paper begins by tracing and locating the "official" version of *inclusive growth* and the strategy to achieve this, followed by a discussion on its possible interpretations as proposed by myriad individuals and agencies. The paper then presents some facts related to both the versions viz. the "official" and the other - to show that the strategy of inclusive growth pursued in India runs the risk of serious flaws. The paper concludes by hinting at the sources of such flaws and the possible neo-liberal intent responsible for them.

## II. Official Version

It is intriguing, indeed, to note that notwithstanding the overarching fad with the idea of inclusive growth, the 11th plan document has remained, somehow, conspicuously obscure in terms of its "actual" content. The document recognises the "impressive growth performance of Indian economy" and feels that the performance has "overcome the cyclicality" and, thus, is on a sustainable path (GoI, 2007: p.1). However, the plan document also observes that "a major weakness in the economy is that the growth is not perceived as being sufficiently 'inclusive' for many groups, especially Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and minorities". It is further admitted that "gender inequality also remains a pervasive problem" and "some of the structural changes taking place have an adverse effect on women" (ibid: p1). The document, therefore, candidly confesses that despite commendable growth performances, there is lack of inclusiveness on several dimensions; and, hence, aims at making the growth "more inclusive".

Notwithstanding a complete chapter on inclusive growth in the plan document, no "specific definition" is provided as to what constitutes so-called "inclusive growth" as such. One can, nevertheless, trace *likely* elements of inclusion in the plan document and possibly bind them together to obtain the broad contour and vision of the *official* meaning of the term. The chapter talks of, inter alia, "broad-based improvement in quality of life of the people, especially the poor, SC/ST and other backward castes (OBC), minority and women" (ibid: p.2). It then refers to inclusive growth as "process which yields broad-based benefits and ensures equality of opportunity for all" (ibid: p.2). The basket of "benefits" and "opportunities".

it seems, includes poverty reduction, employment creation, better access to essential services like education and health, improved connectivity, enhanced opportunity for upward mobility to all sections and above all good governance. It is not difficult to see that central to this vision is the acknowledgement that growth "should not be treated as an end in itself, but only as a means to an end" (ibid: p.23). This is best done, according to the plan document, by adopting monitorable targets which would reflect "multi-dimensional economic and social objectives of inclusive growth" (ibid: p.23). The plan, therefore, identifies 27 monitorable targets in its pursuit for inclusive growth in the country as a whole, and 13 more to monitor the progress of inclusive growth at the state level. The 27 monitorable targets, so proposed, are classified into six categories viz. income and poverty, education, health, women and children, infrastructure, and environment. The, strategy outlined, accordingly, is to "bridge the divides" or "redress inequality" across various dimensions – spatial, gender, caste and category; the idea behind is that more the *gap* is *reduced*, more is the *inclusion* achieved.

The 12th plan approach also maintains similar position regarding the idea of inclusive growth. The proposed approach paper of the 12th plan retains the objective of "accelerated and more inclusive growth" for the period 2012-2017. It seems that the planning commission continues to be concerned with the "multidimensionality of inclusion" and tries to evaluate achievements of 11th plan in terms of poverty reduction, agricultural growth, access to basic services, gap between the marginal communities and the rest, inequality in consumption so on (Ahluwalia, 2011).

Very recently, the Economic Survey 2010-11 has provided interesting "micro-foundations of inclusive growth" (p.21). It has echoed almost the same concerns stated above and reiterated that in order that growth becomes inclusive, its "gains" were to be shared "widely" (p.22). It has tried to articulate a "sharper form" of "gains" in terms of the "progress of the poorest segment, for instance, bottom 20 percent of population". It has been postulated that if the per capita income of the bottom quintile is growing faster, then the growth process *necessarily* has to be *inclusive*. The Survey, further, has declared that the policy discussions in the country though do not "explicitly refer to", but are, in fact, "inspired by" this idea of "inclusive growth" (p.22).






It is important here to recall that the 11th plan document categorically mentioned that the kind of inclusive growth which is envisaged by the planners requires an "environment" wherein "the economy is much more integrated into the global economy". The "micro-economic foundations" offered necessitates such "environment" to have an "*enabling* government". The projected idea of an enabling state is that "it does not try to directly deliver to citizens everything they need". Instead, it creates an "enabling ethos for the *market* so that individual enterprise can flourish and citizens can mutually cater to the needs of one another. An enabling state is mandated to step in to help *only* those who do not *manage* to do well for themselves (Economic Survey 2010-11, p. 23). The departure in the statecraft in this new policy regime is underlined by the important fact that when in doubt regarding any voluntary exchange or transaction, an *enabling* state simply *does not act*, whereas, earlier the *interventionist* state used to *prevent* it (ibid: p24).

We may, therefore, summarise the "official version" of the inclusive growth and its strategy this way: inclusive growth is a rather amorphous concept in India encompassing almost every single perspective, attribute and dimension. In fact, it is a curious blend of diverse stances, *mostly* opaque and arbitrary. It is, somehow, based on the assumption of positive growth elasticity of poverty. It is generally concerned with the multi-dimensional divides (or inequalities) in the society which needs to be bridged by targeted public spending. This, in turn, calls for constantly increasing government resources which can come only through faster growth. In order that such faster growth is realised, the state must behave as an enabling state and economy needs to be integrated into world economy. The simple logic of this strategy is allowing the growth to take its own course, and if it creates divides, then the state should try bridging them via targeted subventions with the belief that resources required would be generated by the growth process itself. How this official understanding of inclusive growth seriously lacks in perspective and clear focus, and so, remains deficient in terms of effective strategy is briefly discussed below.

### III. Possible Interpretations

Academic discussions relating to so-called inclusive growth, in fact, have started during the last decade or so with a meteoric rise around 2006

onwards. It is noteworthy that most of these discussions emanated, directly or indirectly, from organisations and agencies like Asian Development Bank, World Bank, IMF and UNDP (Klasen, 2010; Datt and Ravallian, 2009; Rauniyar and Kanbur, 2009; Habito, 2009; Ali and Son, 2007; Mody, 2005). There are, however, individual scholars as well, debating the issue of inclusive growth (Thorat, 2011; Datta, 2010; Suryanarayana, 2008; Bhalla, 2007). Major approaches to interpreting inclusive growth presented by this wide array of literature can be summed up as under:

The economic growth, technically, refers to increase in output (i.e. total production of goods and services) and/or income (when measured in money value). Notwithstanding the constricted scope of this well-known definition, it implies that inclusive growth is a sub-set of it since not all growth episodes are inclusive. Characterisation of the qualifying sub-set has been attempted from two perspectives – one from the *process* involved in the growth and the other is the *outcome* thereof. Although entwined, one needs to distinguish these for their specific policy implications; something seems to be missing in the *official* understanding of the term.

Inclusive growth, from the *process* point of view, requires greater *employment* of inputs in the growth process. Obviously, growth is possible even without augmenting employment, provided *productivity* improves, but *such process* clearly does not qualify as *inclusive*. In a limited sense inclusive growth resembles *broad-based growth* as the planning commission maintains, but, in reality, goes beyond it. The term "inclusive" carries with it a notion of *non-discrimination*, which broad-based growth does not take into account. This has, evidently, immediate policy implication for affirmative actions. This also entails "equality of opportunity" in terms of *employment* or *productive participation* by different sections of people.

Aligned to this, idea of "social opportunity function", similar to that of social welfare function, has been offered for examining *inclusiveness* (Ali and Son, 2007). It is argued, social opportunity function depends on two things – average opportunity available to the population and how opportunities are shared by the population. Maximisation of the social opportunity function should produce maximum inclusiveness such that greater weights are attached to opportunities enjoyed by the *disadvantaged*.






This simply means that if the opportunity enjoyed by an individual is transferred to a relatively disadvantaged person then social opportunity must increase, thus making growth more inclusive. This idea, in fact, is found to be akin to that of Bonferroni developed as early as 1930 (Silber and Son, 2010).

Looking at the *outcome* perspective, inclusive growth will imply that the "growth" benefits many people. Now benefit of growth can come in array of possibilities including more *income* and/or more *opportunities*. This option is closer to the concept of *pro-poor* growth. In *absolute* sense, pro-poor growth refers to increase in income of the poor, while in *relative* sense it refers to *faster* growth of income of the poor. The latter is, therefore, accompanied by declining income inequality. It is important to realise that both should invoke different policy responses – interpreted in absolute term the strategy would be simply *poverty reduction*, construed in relative term the strategy would be *redressing inequality*. Most importantly, the second also allows income of the non-poor to grow which is vital in maintaining aggregate demand providing growth impetus to the economy. The perspectives of inclusive growth presented here can be extended to cover non-income aspects too, and if so done, the notion will transcend to that of inclusive development. We, however, limit ourselves to the former only.

It should, thus, be clear that the "official" notion of inclusive growth is a mixed-bag, referring to all sorts of *views* ranging from "broad-based" to "pro-poor" and, therefore, lacks clear perspective. It may also be seen that attributes like *income* and *opportunity* can be attended to both from the "process" and "outcome" standpoints, each requiring differential policy treatments. In absence of any explicit perspective, results derived by sort of "confused" strategy are bound to be underprovided.

## IV. Recent Empirics on Inclusion

Let us now turn to some facts. Most remarkable "achievement" of India's growth performance has been "projected" as the secular decline in the country's overall poverty rates. As per the planning commission's estimate India's poverty has gone down significantly from 45.3 percent to 37.2 percent during 1993-94 and 2004-05 (by Tendulkar method). The

tentative estimate for 2009-2010 has been put at 32.2 percent. Going by the pro-poor growth perspective, in absolute sense, India's growth can be surely termed as "inclusive". However, multi-dimensional divides in poverty rates make this decline non-inclusive still. For instances, as per the 2004-05 data rural poverty is about one and half times of the urban poverty (data for 2009-10 still under processing). Divides are also prominent across socio-religious groups – among ST it is 44.7, among SC 37.1, among Hindus 28 and among Muslims 33 percent (Thorat, 2011). Nevertheless, gaps are *believed* to be narrowing apparently indicating greater inclusiveness. For example, the rural-urban poverty gap has reduced from 18.3 in 1993-94 to 16.1 in 2004-05.

Along with poverty, one may also pick-up couple of "monitorable" indicators, which mostly relate to *outcome* rather than the *process* of growth to examine the extent of inclusiveness. For instance, let us take indicators of Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), say, at upper-primary level. It will be seen that the IMR has declined from 58 to 50 during 2004-2009. Notwithstanding, there exists an evident gulf between rural and urban as rural IMR is 55 and urban IMR is 34 in 2009. In 2004, the rural IMR was 64 while urban IMR was 40. It is popularly viewed that the rural urban gap, therefore, has reduced from 24 to 21. Needless to point out, through, gaps also exist along other dimensions such as gender or social groups. Coming to the GER, one would find that in 2004-05 the rate was 69.9, which has risen to 77.5 in 2008. Nevertheless, clear gap is seen among boys and girls – rate for boys is 77.0 and that for girls is 69.5 in 2008 which was 74.3 and 65.1 respectively in 2004-05.

The data on employment, on the other hand, depicts a disastrous picture. Recently released 66th round NSSO data on employment shows clear deceleration in aggregate employment between 2004-05 and 2009-10, a period proclaimed as a period of inclusive growth. The first point that is revealed by the data is that there is virtually no increase in employment opportunities during the period. The total employment has grown during the period just by about half a million against the promise of 58 million during the 11th plan period. The rate of employment growth has been mere 0.83 percent against the previous rate of 2.66 percent during 1999-2000 to 2004-05. The most strikingly, the deceleration is all






pervasive and in case of females, employment the rate, in fact, is negative, both in rural and urban areas. The deceleration is prominent in non-agricultural activities. The result portrays a situation of so-called "jobless growth", and, placed in an awkward situation, the government has come down heavily on the NSSO alleging it of adopting "faulty methodology".

Scholars have pointed out two possible explanations for the present employment scenario in the country - first, it is held that the observed deceleration is partly due to educational preference of youths belonging to 15 to 24 age groups (Ghosh and Chandrasekhar, 2011). Second, the slow down in the labour market is due to present recession leading to depressing exports, which are mostly women labour oriented (Chowdhury, 2011). There, however, also prevails scepticism that the decline in female labour force participation rate across all age-groups indicates some fundamentally exclusionary character of present growth process against women (ibid: p. 24).

It is, thus, obvious that notwithstanding the "positives" in *outcome* indicators, there is hardly any "positive" in the *process* term in the so-called inclusive growth regime in India. Given the fact that labour force was assumed to grow at 1.92 percent during the 11th plan period, one can easily imagine the employment scenario with meagre 0.8 percent employment growth during the period. The immediate outcome of this is an ever increasing "labour-reserve" in the country, which is left excluded. Situation is predictably going to worsen when those within the age group of 15 – 24 will start seeking employment after completing education coupled with the constantly increasing labour-reserve.

How does one reconcile these two opposite trends both supposed to be reflecting the same inclusive growth? If on process side the present growth process is exhibiting vividly exclusionary character then how come "inclusive features" are generated on the outcome front? Very briefly, the sources of this fallacy are given below.

### V. Sources of Fallacy

The first source of the fallacy lies in the *methodology* of measuring the so-called "inclusiveness" of the outcomes itself. A careful look will

reveal that this essentially entails measurement of group-differentials. Any measure of evaluating socio-economic indicators that compare two sub-groups over two situations should exhibit some sensitivity to their *levels*. Analogous to the "transfer-sensitivity" property of poverty indices, any measure of group-differential should also indicate that: "a given hiatus between two groups should acquire a greater salience the lower (if failure indicator)/higher (if attainment indicator) the level at which the hiatus arises" (Mishra and Subramaniam, 2006). A class of measures that satisfies a set of desirable properties has been proposed for both failure and success indicators by Nathan and Mishra (2010). The following two measures fulfil all the desirable properties (see ibid for details) and hence, may be used:

For attainment indicator (i.e. more is better)
$(I_a - I_b)/(1-I_b/2)$; and
For failure indicator (i.e. less is better)
$1-(I_b/I_a)$; where *a* and *b* are sub-groups, and I is the chosen indicator such that, $I_b$ is non-zero

Let us now examine the *outcome* indicators used earlier viz. poverty rate, infant mortality rate and the gross enrolment rate. The following is the table of measurements across the sub-groups over two different periods.

| Indicator (I) | Type of | Period 1 | | Period 2 | | Period 1 | Period 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| and Sub-group | Indicator | a | b | a | b | Differential | Differential |
| Poverty Rate | Failure | 50.10 | 31.80 | 41.80 | 25.70 | 0.365 | 0.385 |
| IMR | Failure | 64.00 | 40.00 | 55.00 | 34.00 | 0.375 | 0.382 |
| GER | Success | 65.10 | 74.30 | 69.50 | 77.00 | 0.254 | 0.200 |

The results demonstrate that trend is not so "inclusive" as it has been popularly perceived and projected. The source of this perceived fallacy lies in extreme reductionism regarding the measure of inclusiveness as simple subtraction, which is not at all "level-sensitive" and which is unable to distinguish between "success" and "failure" *outcomes*. As a result, more often than not, it simplistically tends to overestimate so-called inclusiveness and breeds a false sense of complacency amongst people in






general, and amongst those around the policy circle. We will see in conclusion how this sense of complacency helps in furthering and continuing with the status-quo.

Second source of fallacy relates to the official poverty figures itself. The secular decline in poverty has widely been alleged as "doctored". This is simply because proclaimed decline in poverty rate is not corroborated by other facts. For instance, growth in agriculture, which is the mainstay of about 75 percent of population, has been minimal - hovering around paltry 2 percent for a long time, aggregate employment is decelerating as shown above, then what could be the possible source of decline in poverty rates. It has been held that the decline shown by the Planning Commission is methodologically faulty: it updates a "poverty line" by using the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers which only partially covers the consumption basket of the labourers (Patnaik, 2006). Moreover, an essentially income poverty estimate based on consumption expenditure ignores phenomenon like "dis-savings". Therefore, the poverty, even by official standard, it is argued, has been on the rise, or at best has not declined in this so-called high-growth period. Once accepted, the two fundamental logics behind the present growth regime – reduction in poverty and reduction in unemployment – are completely falsified by facts. This is because, as scholars have argued quite emphatically that it is not the magnitude of the growth rate, but the nature of it, and hence the regime within which it occurs, that is crucial for addressing poverty and unemployment. This takes us to the third source of fallacy.

The third source is contained in the stylised relationship between employment and growth and its basic tenets. The stylised theory requires that more labour entering into the production function together with the capital *stock* at a particular point of time should produce growth. It typically assumes productivity of labour as *datum*. It ignores the possibility of non-using up of ever increasing "labour reserves", thus, making the process vulnerable to an in-built source of inequality. When growth process necessitates increasing demand for *products* which entails production system biased towards technology and highly productive labour, the rate of growth of labour demand does not necessarily exceed the rate of growth of labour supply. Clearly, linking employment with the growth *process*

needs a perspective which must be translated into policy if growth process is to beget employment at all. Any growth strategy for India, therefore, if it is to address the basic social needs, must be capable of rapidly absorbing the ever expanding labour reserves. Herein, lies the need for a growth strategy stimulated by an expansion of agriculture, which, in turn, must be based on non-expropriation of the peasantry from land (Patnaik, 2011; 2009).

The discussion above highlights the centrality of employment creation to inclusive growth strategy in Indian context. The proliferation of low productivity informal or casual employment, which has grown in India in recent past during the high growth episodes, however, is not the right kind of result. The present strategy of almost "jobless growth" cannot be a long term approach to inclusive growth. The approach of bridging the divides by increased public spending on wide ranging social sector facilitated by higher growth is self-limiting on two counts – first, ever increasing unemployment will ultimately dampen the aggregate demand and shove the growth cycle into depression and second, there is a limit to public spending as well, which cannot go on for ever. This said, however, the kind of growth process obsessively pursued after "so-called" period of neo-liberal reform is *unlikely* to cause employment expansion. It is, therefore, not surprising at all that "skill development" rather than "employment creation" is receiving overriding priority in 12th plan approach. The crucial role of employment expansion, or more technically, the condition of *near* full-employment, if not absolute full-employment, in making growth process "inclusive" can be seen from certain historical facts.

## VI. Facts from History

It is both worthwhile and imperative to recount historical experiences of development practices worldwide at this point. A careful examination of these experiences would show that well-established crisis of capitalism in 1930s had resulted in some sort of "class compromise" between "capital and labour" which, in turn, has produced subsequently a political-economy organisation now referred to as "embedded liberalism". Central to the embedded liberalism was the idea that capital was to be "contained" by state imposed precincts. Scholars argue that this kind of embedded






liberalism has yielded high rates of economic growth in advanced capitalist countries in 1950s and 1960s. Following the crisis that occurred in these capitalist countries during 1970s, neo-liberal project offered dis-embedding capital as the *only* panacea. The inherent class character of the neo-liberal project has been adequately discussed by David Harvey (2005). He shows in detail the conditions under which neo-liberalism emerged victorious over all possible escape-routes. The class compromise between capital and labour during 50s and 60s mentioned earlier provided grounds in many advanced capitalist countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal for communist and socialist forces to emerge strongly. These unique political-economic configurations tended to ensure a larger share of economic pie to working class at the expense of the shares of the economic elites and ruling classes. For instance, it has been shown that in the US, the share of the national income taken by top 1 percent of income earners fell from a pre-war high of 16 percent to less than 8 percent by the end of the Second World War and stayed close to that level for nearly three decades (Harvey, 2005). This could happen basically due to the kind of "tightness" the contemporary labour markets of the Europe and the US were subjected to. During the 1950s and 1960s, the unemployment rates in the Europe and the US were relatively lower than those of the 70s and 80s; Data reveal that during the 1950s and 1960s, unemployment rates in most of the European countries has remained as low as 1, 2 or 3 percent which subsequently mounted to about 16 percent in the mid 80s (Pissarides, 2003, Aldcroft, 2001). Tempting though, discussion on causes of such "tightness" in the labour market is avoided, lest there should be a digression from our main focus. It needs to be recognised that peculiar political-economy configuration referred to above was made possible by the low unemployment rates at that point of time or, in other words, by the near full employment condition implying thereby that this would not have been possible had there been a high unemployment rate as is the case that the Indian economy is witnessing presently, which, in fact, was the case even with those countries during 1970s and onwards when unemployment rate had risen enormously and political-economy configuration had altered consequently.

These historical facts notwithstanding, it is not difficult to see that while growth rates were impressively high, such decline did not matter since *absolute* size of the income share of the richest kept increasing still. But when growth slumped in the 1970s, together with falling rate of

interest yielding lower dividends from investment, economic elites felt threatened. It is, therefore, may be argued that intention of a neo-liberal growth trajectory is to re-establish the hegemony of the economic elites and ruling class, usually by both acting in connivance. Harvey clearly demonstrates that benefits of revived capital accumulation have remained highly skewed under neo-liberal regime across the globe and increasing social inequality, thus, has been almost "structural" to the neo-liberal project. Evidently, therefore, the notion of inclusive growth within a neo-liberal policy regime appears to be an oxymoron, particularly at a time when unemployment rate is evidently increasing.

## VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is possible to argue that evident overall bewilderment regarding the idea of inclusive growth leading to misspecification of strategy to achieve it is intended to buttress neo-liberal reforms and policy in the country. Growing concern over rising inequalities on diverse fronts during the post-reform period has started capturing peoples' imagination in early 2000s. The culmination is seen during the 2004 general election when people rejected the idea of "shining India". Many started arguing that "verdict 2004 was a vote against neo-liberal economic reforms" (Chandrasekhar, 2004). The impact of the election result was felt in the stock market as well. The situation has rung a bell of alarm not only domestically but also outside. The Asian Development Bank, for instance, constituted a Group of Eminent Persons in its bid to re-structure it for overcoming the "new challenges" in "transforming Asia". In March, 2007 the Group submitted its report which suggests three basic lines of restructuring – "The *New ADB* must be much more focused, driven by three complementary strategic directions: moving *from* extensive poverty *to* supporting 'faster and more inclusive growth', *from* economic growth *to* environmentally sustainable growth, and *from* a primarily national focus *to* a regional and ultimately global focus" (ADB, 2007: p.1). While articulating importance of inclusive growth the Group takes the view:

In many countries, rising incomes, while reducing overall poverty, have been associated with rising disparities. These disparities, left unchecked, could threaten the *fragile political consensus for economic reforms*, or even political stability. Increasingly, political leaders in Asian






countries are searching for *ways to manage this challenge*, a challenge arising directly from their success in achieving growth. ... The solution lies in *continuation of pro-growth* economic strategies – but with a much sharper focus on ensuring that *economic opportunities created by growth are available to all*.... (pp.13-14, emphasis added).

There is no reason to believe that India is an exception to this understanding and perception. It is, thus, clear that reference to inclusive growth is an imperative on the part of the government to finding a *way for managing* fragile and threatened *political consensus* to continue with the pro-growth strategy and push forward neo-liberal reforms. Obviously, the interest of the neo-liberal state is best served in keeping the concept wide open as far as possible so that discourse becomes highly accommodative. It may, therefore, be concluded that while the content of India's inclusive growth strategy is arguably misplaced, its intent is thoroughly motivated by the interests of the neo-liberal state. The fall out noticed, therefore, is hardly surprising.

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# Neo-liberal Paradigm of Development and Challenges of Health Security: India in Comparative Perspective

**Akhil Ranjan Dutta***

*Two significant findings published recently tend to show where India stands in regard to health security. India has achieved a major milestone in polio eradication with no case of polio caused by natural (wild) poliovirus being reported in the year 2011. The cyclical outbreak of the disease in 1998, 2002 and 2006 in big number kept the country in a tight rope in regard to possible outbreak in 2010. In 2006 there were around 700 cases, which got reduced to less than 100 cases each during 2007-09. In 2010 total 18 cases were reported and only one case on January 13 2011- none since. Such an achievement is however, shattered by other findings, particularly the high prevalence of malnutrition in the country. The Hunger and Malnutrition Survey Report, 2011, reveals that in the backward districts (100 focus districts as per the survey) 42 percent of the children under five are underweight and 59 percent are chronically malnourished. Although the number of underweight has declined from 53 percent in 2004 to 42 percent in 2011, yet the figure is unacceptably high and even higher compared to the Sub-Saharan average of 22 percent in 2005-06. The contrast in achievement need to be analysed not from the perspective of medication and immunization alone but from the perspective of what India has really done and achieved in domains those have impact upon the health security of a country. The present paper is an attempt to understand the present state of health security predicaments in India by putting it within the overarching development paradigm that Indian state had embarked upon which is defined as neo-liberal development. Comparative mapping of select countries will be used to measure the achievements and setbacks of India in health security.*

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## I. Putting India's Health Security within the Neo-liberal Development Paradigm

Of late India has embarked upon a series of social intervention programmes that apparently conform to a comprehensive notion of health security. Taken together, these programmes, however fragmented, are supposed to address various social determinants of health security like food, livelihood, housing, poverty etc. These interventions have occurred within the neo-liberal paradigm of development i.e. allowing the private sector and the market to take care of social security. A close scrutiny reveals that the introduction of economic reforms in 1991 brought into being huge a number of private players in various domains of social security like health, education, food and water etc. A series of policy initiatives were undertaken like the model of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) or amendments to the National Drug Policy 1978 as well as relaxation in import of technology to facilitate the private participation in sectors like health. Health insurance, particularly private health insurance, was presented as a solution to the high rise of expenses in health care. Although such a paradigm has succeeded in arousing private entrepreneurship and participation, yet it has not significantly succeeded in the reduction of challenges and predicaments to health security in India. Not only have the social security indices not really improved compared to the developed world, but also to that of medium developed countries in which group India is placed in UNDP Human Development Index (HDI).

India witnessed two significant political developments after it had embarked on the path of economic reforms. One is resurgence of regional political parties and their growing importance in national politics and erosion of dominance of the Congress Party both at the national and state levels. No other national party emerged as an alternative to the Congress, although Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tried to do so. Resultantly, coalition politics emerged as a permanent feature in Indian politics since 1996. The other significant development has been unprecedented political activism outside the domain of electoral politics accompanied by equally unprecedented peoples' awareness of their rights. Such developments have challenged the legitimacy of the parties in power to ride on conservative neo-liberal policies i.e. policies based on the philosophy of reducing the role of the state in social security domains. These developments have forced the Indian state, particularly the Congress led UPA regime- both I

& II, to embark upon a series of social intervention policies and initiatives to address growing popular discontents as well as to restore its own political legitimacy. So, one witnesses a shift in focus of the successive governments from 'growth of GDP' to 'inclusive development'. Writing the foreword to the *UPA Government's Report to the People* (2004-08), Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh asserted: "Building on the initiatives taken during the first three years, especially the launch of our Flagship Programmes, namely, *Bharat Nirman*, National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, National Rural Health Mission, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, modified *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* with expanded Mid- Day Meal Programme, the Government has put in place an "architecture for inclusive growth" during its four years in office. The 11th Five Year Plan, launched during the year, is based on this architecture. The central vision of the 11th Five Year Plan is to trigger a development process that ensures broad-based improvement in the quality of life of our people, especially the poor, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Minorities. The Plan also seeks to ensure more regionally balanced development." This shift in approach is also evident in the Economic Survey (2010-11) of Government of India. The survey asserts: "The ultimate objective of development planning is human development or increased social welfare and well-being of the people. Increased social welfare of the people requires a more equitable distribution of development benefits along with better living environment. Development process therefore needs to continuously strive for broad based improvement in the standard of living and quality of life of the people through an inclusive development strategy that focuses on both income and non-income dimensions. The challenge is to formulate inclusive plans to bridge regional, social and economic disparities. The Eleventh Five Year Plan sought to address this challenge by providing a comprehensive strategy for inclusive development, building on the growing strength of the economy." (Economic Survey 2010-11: 291).

Such a change in approach invited praise from an economist like Joseph Stiglitz, who is known as a strong critic of IMF and World Bank led globalization and structural adjustment programmes. It is to be noted here that India has also followed the IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programmes under the banner of economic reforms. While reflecting on the ambitious food security initiatives undertaken by Indian government in the recent past, Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz said "India






has recognized the right to food as a basic human right, leading the way for the rest of the world, and is on the verge of a historic implementation of the world's largest social protection programme against hunger." (Stiglitz, *The Hindu*, January 13, 2012: 1) Stifglitz also said that one out of every seven Americans faces food insecurity, but the debate on basic economic rights like right to food is still not a part of social and political discourse in America.

It was under this changed approach but within neo-liberal framework, that Indian government introduced National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) 2005-12. NRHM has been an ambitious project and it has tried to understand health security focusing on greater social security predicaments. However, what is to be noted here is that India has not abandoned the neo-liberal paradigm of development. This paradigm is intact and the initiatives undertaken for social security fall into this paradigm. Therefore, even while acknowledging the importance of the new initiatives for improving the public health care system, it is crucial to raise the structural issues that put hindrance on the path towards a healthy society in India. It is also to be noted that the neo-liberal development paradigm is rooted in global capitalism and directed and controlled by international financial institutions like International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. The macro economic development paradigm in India today is controlled by people who have long association with those international financial institutions and are trained by its ethics. Both the Economic Advisory Council of Government of India and also the Planning Commission of India are manned by economists who worked in IMF and World Bank. Some of them interchangeably work both in Indian government and in those international financial institutions. Present Deputy Chairperson in the Planning Commission of India Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia and former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Bimal Jalan, are glaring examples in this regard. Both Ahluwalia and Jalan worked for quite a long time in IMF and World Bank and had held key positions in economic decision making spheres of government of India. They played a crucial role in determining the neo-liberal policy framework in India. Almost all political parties in India are in agreement with those policies today. Accordingly, these polices continue to marginalize the larger majority of the population in almost all domains of social and economic life. Independent Peoples' Tribunal on World Bank in India which has compiled a volume titled *The World Bank in India: Undermining Sovereignty, Distorting Development*

(Edited by Michele Kelley & Deepika D'Souza 2010). Essays in the volume comprehensively analyse the effect of the World Bank policies in all social and economic domains of India and asserts "The World Bank plays an important role in the dominance of neo-liberal economic theory in today's policy, media and academic circles. While certainly not the only player, it is a part of formidable nexus, which for nearly three decades has drowned out alternative view points and forced through a major overhaul of the way in which we view society, the state and ourselves." (Kelley 2010:1)

The statistics drawn from World Health Organization (WHO) and cited in this essay on issues related to malnourishment, under-five mortality rate or underweight under five years cannot be understood without questioning these structural issues. It has indeed given birth of lot of paradoxes. One of such paradoxes in India is "intense hunger and malnutrition in India experienced alongside almost double-digit economic growth, and where agricultural production has outpaced the growth of the population for many decades up to 1990s" as pointed out by Harsh Mander. In simple terms, Mander argues: "the growing economy means we have enough food and economic resources to feed all our people; yet one in every two children are is malnourished, around a third of the country's women are anemic, and the number of people who sleep hungry every night is estimated to be anything between 80 million to 200 million" (Mander 2010: 141). Mander also argues that it is difficult to explain the paradox that countries far poorer than India, with far lower rates of economic growth and lower agricultural production, have done far better than in India in terms of fighting malnutrition and acute hunger. (Mander 2010: 141). The World Bank dominated discourse on rights and human rights has also brought about a binary distinction between economic, social and cultural rights and that of civil and political rights. For the World Bank economic, social and cultural rights are aspirational in nature and therefore cannot be enforced by the cout of law. It is only the civil and political rights which should be enforceable in a court of law. Mander writes: "In simple terms, if you are tortured to death, then rightly you can take the civil servant who is responsible for the torture to court and hold him liable; but if you die of starvation because of wanton failures by local authorities, no one can be held liable" (Mander 2010: 142-43).

This paradox is evident from the actual stock of food items in FCI






gowdowns in India and the level of malnutrition in the country.

**Table 1: Food Items: Buffer Stock Norms and Actual Stocks (in lakh tones)**

| As on | Wheat | | Rice | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Minimum Buffer Norms | Actual Stock | Minimum Buffer Norms | Actual Stock | Minimum Buffer Norms | Actual Stock |
| January 2008 | 82 | 77.12 | 118 | 114.75 | 200 | 191.87 |
| April | 40 | 58.03 | 122 | 138.35 | 162 | 196.38 |
| July* | 201 | 249.12 | 98 | 112.49 | 299 | 361.61 |
| October | 140 | 220.25 | 52 | 78.63 | 192 | 298.88 |
| January 2009 | 112 | 182.12 | 138 | 175.76 | 250 | 357.88 |
| April | 70 | 134.29 | 142 | 216.04 | 212 | 350.33 |
| July | 201 | 329.22 | 118 | 196.16 | 319 | 525.38 |
| October | 140 | 284.57 | 72 | 153.49 | 212 | 438.06 |
| January 2010 | 112 | 230.92 | 138 | 243.53 | 250 | 474.45 |
| April | 70 | 161.25 | 142 | 267.13 | 212 | 428.38 |
| July | 201 | 335.84 | 118 | 242.66 | 319 | 578.50 |
| October | 140 | 227.77 | 72 | 184.44 | 212 | 462.21 |

**Notes:** * Buffer norms include Food Security Reserves of 30 lakh tones of wheat from 1 July 2008 and 20 lakh tones of rice from 1 January 2009 onwards.

**Source:** Economic Survey 2010-11, p 211

More paradoxical has been the high inflation rate in India despite having such surplus reserves in godowns. Pointing out that India currently has the highest inflation rate among the major economies of the world, V Upadhyay asserts: "The poor sections of the society are the worst sufferers since even their food security is at stake. We have off and on seen the price spiral assuming menacing proportions during the period associated with economic reforms, playing havoc with the none-too-high living standard of the most vulnerable sections of society. High inflation is eroding the assumptions of the policy of marketization, deregulation, opening up and privatization that assured that it would result in moderate and stable rate of high price rise." (Upadhyay 2010: 139) As a result of the high inflation the purchasing power of Indian currency has gone down. In such a situation the wages paid under the schemes like MNREGA or monetary

incentives paid under different schemes of NRHM do not really help out the people. The following table shows the decreasing purchasing power of the Indian currency over the last two decades.

**Table 2: Purchasing power of Rupee in Paisa (Base 1990-91=100 Paisa)**

| | Amount | |
|---|---|---|
| **Year/Period** | **Based on WPI** | **Based on CPI-IW** |
| 1990-91 | 100 | 100 |
| 1993-94 | 74 | 75 |
| 1997-98 | 55 | 53 |
| 2000-01 | 47 | 43 |
| 2006-07 | 36 | 34 |
| 2009-10 | 30 | 26 |
| April 2010 | 29 | 25 |

Source: V. Uadhyay, 2010: 140

This high level inflation has resulted in the high price hike in essential commodities.

**Table 3: Inflation Rate of Essential Commodities**

| Commodity | Month | Inflation Rate (percent) (year to year) |
|---|---|---|
| Rice | October 2009 | 14.29 |
| Wheat | November 2009 | 12.66 |
| Pulses | December 2009 | 41.58 |
| Vegetables | December 2009 | 39.22 |
| Potatoes | December 2009 | 123.85 |
| Onions | October 2009 | 33.10 |
| Fruits | November 2009 | 10.64 |
| Milk | December 2009 | 13.36 |
| Eggs, Meat and Fish | November 2009 | 29.75 |
| Sugar | December 2009 | 53.98 |

Source: V. Upadhyay 2010: 142






It is against this background that one needs to analyse the state of social insecurity in general and health insecurity in particular in India. The paradoxes stated above intensified multidimensional poverty in India. Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is an innovation of the United Nations Development Programme which replaces human Poverty Index (HPI) used by UNDP since 1997. The MPI indicates the share of the population that is multidimensionally poor adjusted by the intensity of deprivation in terms of living standards, heath, and education. According to this parameter, as acknowledged by Economic Survey 2010-11, Government of India, "India with a poverty index of 0.296 and poverty ratios of 41.6 percent (in terms of PPP $ 1.25 a day) and 28.6 percent (national poverty line) is not favourably placed when compared with countries like China and Sri Lanka. In fact, the difference in population below the poverty line (BPL) widens substantially in case of India when this indicator is used instead of the national poverty line indicator, which for other countries, there is less of a difference and in some cases even a fall." (Economic Survey 2010-11: 296)

The following table indicates the miserable state of India in terms of Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

**Table 4: Multidimensional Poverty Index and National poverty Line**

| | | Population below Income Poverty Line | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Country** | **MPI (HDI Rank)** | **PPP $1.25 a day 2000-08** | **National Poverty Line 2000-08** |
| Poland | - (41) | Less than 2 | 14.8 |
| Malaysia | - (57) | Less than 2 | 12.8 |
| Brazil | 0.039(73) | 5.2 | 21.5 |
| China | 0.056(89) | 15.9 | 2.8 |
| Sri Lanka | 0.021 (91) | 14 | 22.7 |
| Indonesia | 0.095 (108) | 29.4 | 16.7 |
| **India** | **0.296 (119)** | **41.6** | **28.6** |
| Pakistan | 0.275(125) | 22.6 | — |

Source: HDR, 2010, quoted from Economic Survey 2010-11, GoI: 296

It is to be understood from the above table that the countries like Poland, Malaysia, and Brazil etc. have adopted more rigorous and

comprehensive criteria of measuring poverty for which their national ratio of poverty is higher compared to MPI. In case of India, as is evident from the table the picture is just opposite. Available data reveals that there is convergence between health indicators and the MPI.

**Table 5: Life and Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth**

| Member States | Life Expectancy at Birth (Years) | | | | | | | | | Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth (Years) | | | Neonatal Mortality Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | | Female | | | Both Sexes | | | Male | Female | Both | |
| | 1990 | 2000 | 2008 | 1990 | 2000 | 2008 | 1990 | 2000 | 2008 | 2007 | | | |
| Poland | 67 | 70 | 71 | 75 | 78 | 80 | 71 | 74 | 76 | 64 | 70 | 67 | 4 |
| Malaysia | 68 | 69 | 71 | 73 | 74 | 76 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 62 | 66 | 64 | 3 |
| Brazil | 63 | 67 | 70 | 70 | 74 | 77 | 67 | 70 | 73 | 62 | 66 | 64 | 11 |
| China | 68 | 70 | 72 | 69 | 73 | 76 | 68 | 71 | 74 | 65 | 68 | 66 | 11 |
| Sri Lanka | 61 | 62 | 63 | 71 | 73 | 76 | 66 | 67 | 69 | 61 | 65 | 63 | 9 |
| Indonesia | 60 | 64 | 66 | 62 | 66 | 69 | 61 | 65 | 67 | 60 | 61 | 60 | 19 |
| **India** | **57** | **60** | **63** | **58** | **62** | **66** | **58** | **61** | **64** | **56** | **57** | **56** | **37** |
| Pakistan | 58 | 61 | 63 | 59 | 62 | 64 | 58 | 61 | 63 | 56 | 55 | 55 | 53 |

**Source:** World Health Statistics, 2010. pp 47-58

In India life expectancy at birth has improved from 58 years in 1990 to 61 years in 2000 to 64 years in 2008. However, the achievment is 12 years lesser than what has been achieved by Poland (76 years) and 10 years lesser than what has been achieved by China (74 years). In case of healthy life expectancy at birth India's achievment is 56 years in 2007, which is 11 years lesser than Poland (67 years) and 10 years lesser than China (66 years). In case of neonatal mortality rate India's position is very pathetic with 37 deaths per 1000 compared to 4 in case of Poland and 11 in case of China.

The poor achievement of India in primary index of health security i.e. life expectancy at birth is determined by other social conditions like access to nutrious food by mothers, access to safe drinking water, access to affordable improved health care facilities, access to safe sanitation and essential drugs etc. These are in turn are determined by multidimensional poverty and social ineqaulity.







**Table: 6: Percentage of people undernurished, underweight and under-five mortality**

| Country | Proportion of undernourished in the population (%) | | | Prevalence of underweight in children under 5 years (%) | | | | Under five mortality rate (%) | | | | GHI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 90-92 | 95-97 | 00-02 | 05-07 | 88-92 | 94-98 | 99-03 | 04-09 | 1990 | 1996 | 2001 | 2009 | 1990 (with data from 88-92) | 1996 (with data from 94-98) | 2001 (with data from 99-03) | 2011 (with data from 04-09) |
| Poland | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Malaysia | 3* | 1* | 2* | 2* | 22.1 | 17.7 | 16.7 | 7.0 | 1.8 | 1.3 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 9.0 | 6.7 | 6.6 | <5 |
| Brazil | 11 | 10 | 9 | 6 | 6.1 | 4.5 | 3.7 | 2.2 | 5.6 | 4.2 | 3.2 | 2.1 | 7.6 | 6.2 | 5.3 | <5 |
| China | 18 | 12 | 10 | 10 | 12.6 | 10.7 | 7.1 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.5 | 3.4 | 1.9 | 11.7 | 9.1 | 6.8 | 5.5 |
| Sri Lanka | 28 | 25 | 20 | 19 | 29.9* | 26.1* | 22.8 | 21.6 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 20.2 | 17.8 | 14.9 | 14.0 |
| Indonesia | 16 | 11 | 15 | 13 | 31.0 | 28.9 | 22.5 | 19.6 | 8.6 | 6.5 | 5.4 | 3.9 | 18.5 | 15.5 | 14.3 | 12.2 |
| **India** | **20** | **17** | **19** | **21** | **59.5** | **41.1** | **44.4** | **43.5** | **11.8** | **10.6** | **8.9** | **6.6** | **30.4** | **22.9** | **24.1** | **23.7** |
| Pakistan | 25 | 20 | 24 | 26 | 39.0 | 34.2 | 31.3 | 27.5* | 13.0 | 11.8 | 10.5 | 8.7 | 25.7 | 22.0 | 21.9 | 20.7 |

Note: * indicates International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) estimates.
Source: Global Hunger Index: The Challenge of Hunger: 2011

Most strange has been India's failure to address undernourishment over the years. 20% of the population suffered from undernourishment in 1990-92, which decreased to 17% in 1995-97. It, however increased to 19% in 2000-02 and increased further to 21% in 2005-07. Except for Pakistan, all countries have succeeded towards gradual elimination of its undernourished people over the years.

In case of prevalence of underweight children in India under the age of 5 years, although it recorded decrease from 59.5% in 1988-92 to 43.5% in 2004-09, however, the proportion is unexpectedly high compared to countries like Malaysia (7.0%); Brazil (2.2%) or China (4.5%) and even Sri Lanka (21.6%).

Undernourishment and underweight children under five years have definite impact on under five mortality rate. India has succeeded in reducing under five mortality rate from 11.8% percent in 1990 to 6.6% in 2009. However, 6.6% under five mortality rate is unexpectedly high compared to 0.6% in Malaysia, 2.1% in Brazil, 1.9% in China, 1.5% in Sri Lanka, and 3.9% in Indonesia. Only Pakistan's achievment in this regard is worse than India with 8.7% under five mortality rate in 2009.

**Table 7: Selected infectious diseases**

| Member States | Number of reported cases | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cholera | Japanese Encephalitis | Leprosy | Malaria | Polio-myelitis | Tuberculosis | Neonatal tetanus | Total Tetanus |
| | 2008 | 2008 | 2008 | 2008 | 2009 | 2008 | 2008 | 2008 |
| Poland | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | 2650 | ..... | ..... |
| Malaysia | ..... | 17 | 218 | 588489 | ..... | 10441 | 13 | 29 |
| Brazil | ..... | ..... | 38914 | 315642 | ..... | 37697 | 6 | 333 |
| China | 174 | 2975 | 1614 | 135467 | ..... | 462596 | 1786 | 1786 |
| Sri Lanka | ..... | 118 | 1979 | 670 | ..... | 4683 | 1 | 29 |
| Indonesia | 1007 | ..... | 17441 | 2106957 | ..... | 166376 | 183 | 183 |
| **India** | **2680** | **294** | **134184** | **95734579** | **723** | **615977** | **811** | **3714** |
| Pakistan | ..... | ..... | 447 | 4554247 | 87 | 100102 | 809 | 984 |

**Source:** World Health Statistics, 2010. pp 74-81

India is prone to communicable diseases. This is evident from the above mentioned table. In the year 2008, India recorded highest number






of cases among the countries mentioned in the table. In case malaria the number is 9.5 crore, i.e around 9.5% people being reported to have suffered from malaria.

Communicable diseases are caused by lack of the very basics of health i.e. access to improved sources of water and improved sanitation. India claims to have achieved great deal of success in providing improved sources of water to its population. However, such a claim is debatable. The water, particularly ground water, has problems like iron, arsenic, flurosis etc. which are very often neglected while showing access to improved sources of water. It is evident in a state like Assam. In Assam almost all districts are suspected to have contaminated by arsenic. The rest has flouride contamination. Therefore, water coverage through means like piped water supply may not mean improved sources of water. In case of sanitation India has remarkably failed. Open defecation is a serious threat. Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), although has achieved momentum, however, its real success is very measurable. The following table is illustrative in this regard.

**Table 8: Use of improved drinking-water sources and sanitation**

| Member states | MDG*7 Population using improved drinking water sources (%) | | | | | | MDG*7 Population using improved sanitation (%) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Urban | | Rural | | Total | | Urban | | Rural | | Total | |
| | 1990 | 2008 | 1990 | 2008 | 1990 | 2008 | 1990 | 2008 | 1990 | 2008 | 1990 | 2008 |
| Poland | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 96 | 96 | ... | 80 | ... | 90 |
| Malaysia | 94 | 100 | 82 | 99 | 88 | 100 | 88 | 96 | 81 | 95 | 84 | 96 |
| Brazil | 96 | 99 | 65 | 84 | 88 | 97 | 81 | 87 | 35 | 37 | 69 | 80 |
| China | 97 | 98 | 56 | 82 | 67 | 89 | 48 | 58 | 38 | 52 | 41 | 55 |
| Sri Lanka | 91 | 98 | 62 | 88 | 67 | 90 | 85 | 88 | 67 | 92 | 70 | 91 |
| Indonesia | 92 | 89 | 62 | 71 | 71 | 80 | 58 | 67 | 22 | 36 | 33 | 52 |
| **India** | **90** | **96** | **66** | **84** | **72** | **88** | **49** | **54** | **7** | **21** | **18** | **31** |
| Pakistan | 96 | 95 | 81 | 87 | 86 | 90 | 73 | 72 | 8 | 29 | 28 | 45 |

**Source:** World Health Statistics, WHO, 2010, pp102-108
**Note**: MDG* stands for Millenium Development Goals

Sanitation coverage, as is evident from the table is as low as 21% in the rural areas in 2008. Even in the urban areas it is only 54%. India's achievement in this regard is terribly poor, worse than Pakistan. In all

public institutions and offices and also in manufacturing sectors both access to improved water sources and improves sanitation is a challenge. Educational institutions and hospitals are the worst cases in this regard. Gender inequality is also very high within whatever sanitation facility is offered. Besides, neither water nor sanitation is integrated with the transportation system. Such a state of affairs makes people vulnerable to communicable diseases.

The rate of poverty or rate of undernourishment and under five mortality rate are determined by how resources are distributed among different sectors like defence and health etc. and also who controls the social security domains like health and education. This may be called the political economy of development. It has been mentioned that under the neo-liberal economic reforms the private has received attention and also patronage from the end of the state. In the social security domains like health and education the private has consolidated its grip gradually. Comparative analysis reveals that the low public expenditure and high consolidation of the private in social security sectors have negative impact on health. The following table may be illustrative in this regard.

**Table 9: Health Expenditure**

| Member States | Health Expenditure Ratio | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total expenditure on Heath as % of GDP | | Private Expenditure on Health as % of Total expenditure on Health | | General Government Expenditure on health as % of Total Government expenditure | | Out-of-pocket expenditure as % of Private expenditure on Health | |
| | 2000 | 2007 | 2000 | 2007 | 2000 | 2007 | 2000 | 2007 |
| Poland | 5.5 | 6.4 | 30.0 | 29.1 | 9.4 | 10.8 | 93.2 | 83.2 |
| Malaysia | 3.2 | 4.4 | 47.6 | 55.6 | 6.2 | 6.9 | 75.4 | 73.2 |
| Brazil | 7.2 | 8.4 | 60.0 | 58.4 | 4.1 | 5.4 | 62.7 | 58.8 |
| China | 4.6 | 4.3 | 61.3 | 55.3 | 11.1 | 9.9 | 97.3 | 92.0 |
| Sri Lanka | 3.7 | 4.2 | 52.1 | 52.5 | 6.8 | 8.5 | 83.3 | 86.7 |
| Indonesia | 2.0 | 2.2 | 63.4 | 45.5 | 4.5 | 6.2 | 72.9 | 66.2 |
| **India** | **4.4** | **4.1** | **75.5** | **73.8** | **3.8** | **3.7** | **92.2** | **89.9** |
| Pakistan | 3.0 | 2.7 | 78.7 | 70.0 | 2.4 | 3.5 | 80.3 | 82.1 |

**Source**: World Health Statistics, 2010, WHO page: (130-136)







In case of India, total expenditure in health as % of GDP was 4.4% in 2000 which got reduced to 4.1% in 2007. 4.1% of GDP in health, although is not a satisfactory figure once compared with 6.4% in case Poland or 8.4% in case of Brazil, however, it is not that bad when it is compared with 4.4% in Malaysia and 4.3% in China. However, what is critical here is the share of public versus private within the total share of GDP in health. In 2000, the public expenditure in health was lesser than 1% of the GDP. Although, public expenditure has slightly increased by 2007, it is still around 1% of GDP. This is indeed evident from the table which shows private expenditure of health as total expenditure on health. In India the share of the private expenditure in health was 75.5% in 2000 which got marginally reduced to 73.8% in 2007. This 73.8% private hold in health expenditure is extremely high compared to 29.1% in Poland, 55.65% in Malaysia or 55.3% China. Higher investment by private means that there higher out of pocket expenditure in health care. It only makes poor people more vulnerable. The table also reveals that the government expenditure on health as % of total government expenditure is equally low. It means the government has other priority areas of expenditure like defence.

With the private consolidating in the health care system over the years, there has also been a shift in hospitalized treatment from the public to the private although the expenditure in the private is higher compared to the public. The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) data reveals that both in the rural as well as in the urban areas there has been gradual shift towards the private hospitals for treatment. By 1986-87 itself, the private had occupied a dominant position in hospitalized treatment, around 40% of the total hospitalized treatment. The private dominated almost equally both in the rural and urban areas. By 2004 the dominance of the private has gone up to 60%.

**Table 10: Percentage of Cases of Hospitalized Treatment and Average Medical Expenditure by Types of Hospital: Rural and Urban**

| NSSO Rounds | Cases of hospitalized treatment | | | | Average expenditure per hospitalization (Rs.) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rural | | Urban | | Rural | | Urban | |
| | Govt. | Private | Govt. | Private | Govt. | Private | Govt. | Private |
| 1986-87 (42nd Round) | 59.7 | 40.3 | 60.3 | 39.7 | | | | |
| 1995-96 (52nd Round) | 43.8 | 56.2 | 43.1 | 56.9 | 2195 | 5344 | 2080 | 4300 |
| 2004 (60th Round) | 41.7 | 58.3 | 38.2 | 61.8 | 3877 | 11533 | 3238 | 7408 |

**Source**: Planning Commission (2008) quoted from quoted from Tara S. Nair, 2010, p 327

Planning Commission of India, while analyzing the factors behind shift in favour of the private and growing lack of trust in the public has listed number of reasons like critical shortage of health personnel, inadequate incentives, poor working conditions, lack of transparency in posting of doctors in rural areas, absenteeism, long wait, inconvenient clinic hours, poor outreach, time of service, insensitivity to local needs and inadequate planning, management and monitoring of service facilities. Tara S Nair has pointed out that "the central government shows great understanding of the reasons for low utilization of public health facilities. But, ironically, these reasons are used to build a case for promoting the private players." (Tara S Nair, 2010:327-28 ).

The above analysis presents the terrible state of the health care system and health security in India. It has exposed the myth of 'inclusive growth' in India under economic reforms which has revolutionized the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Such an exposition provoked the Indian government to launch series of social intervention programmes including National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) 2005-2012.







## II. NRHM and Health Security in India

NRHM in its Mission Document elaborately highlights the miserable state of affairs in the domain of health security in India. This has more extensively been elaborated in the Draft Nati onal Health Bill 2009. The Mission document has pointed out that the public health care system in India is based on inequality and favours the rich. It states: "Curative services favour the non-poor: for every Re.I spent on the poorest 20% population, Rs.3 is spent on the richest quintile." The country where only 10% of the population has some form of health insurance, which is also mostly inadequate, forces around 40% of those who undergo hospitalization to "borrow heavily or sell assets to cover expenses". The Mission document also pointed out that over "25% of the hospitalized Indians fall below poverty line because of hospital expenses" Recognizing that such a terrible state of affairs in the health care domain is mainly due to poor public investment in the health sector, which was as low as 0.9% of the GDP of the country, it promised to increase the same to 2-3% over the years. However, along with this poor investment, the mission document has also highlighted many other social factors that contribute towards the poor state of health security in the country. Based on this understanding NRHM endeavours to bring about an 'architectural change' in the public health care system in India.

First of all, NRHM emphasizes on community ownership of the health care programmes. This has been intended to be facilitated through different committees at all levels of health care institutions- sub-centres onward, by involving PanchayatiRaj Institutions. Village Health and Sanitation Committees (VHSC) and Rogi Kalyan Samitis (RKS) are mandatory institutions under NRHM. It also serves the purposes of decentralization of governance in conformity with the 73rd Amendment to the constitution. It is expected that such arrangements will ensure efficiency, accountability and effectiveness. It has also been realized that public health needs to transcend treatment and medication. Therefore, NRHM aims to integrate health concerns with social determinants of health like sanitation & hygiene, nutrition, and safe drinking water through a District Plan for Health.

Most important innovation under NRHM is the female health activist-Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) who acts as a link between the community and the health care institutions. For Government of India NRHM aims to provide 'an overarching umbrella to the existing

programmes of Health and family Welfare including the reproductive Child Health Project (RCH-II) and Malaria, Blindness, Iodine Deficiency, Filarial, Kala Azar, T.B., Leprosy and Integrated Disease Surveillance programmes by strengthening the public health delivery system at all levels" (Economic Survey 2010-12, GoI, p 314). Increasing the public expenditure in health is an important key towards realizing the mission objectives.

One of the pledges that the Mission Document made in 2005 was to increase the public expenditure on health to 2-3% of GDP. The Five Year Report (2005-10) states that although the expenditure of the state and union governments on health has been substantially increased, however, it is far away from the promised hike. As per Economic Survey 2010, the increase is from 1.19 percent in 2004-05 to 1.45 percent in 2009-10. The estimate of the National Health Accounts has however shown that the increase is from 0.84 percent in 2004-05 to 1.1 percent in 2008-09.

In absolute number the allocation has, however, considerably increased. The following table is indicative in this regard.

**Table 11: NRHM Outlays in Union Budget (Rs. In crore)**

| Year | Total outlay | Release |
|---|---|---|
| 2005-06 | 6730 | 5703 |
| 2006-07 | 9000 | 7486.6 |
| 2007-08 | 10890 | 10310 |
| 2008-09 | 11930 | 11260 |
| 2009-10 | 14050 | 1003.01 (till January 31, 2010) |

**Source:** Five Years of NRHM, GoI

It has been pointed out by the above mentioned Report that the absorption capacity and also pace of utilization of fund by the state governments have considerably increased over the years. In this regard the states of Northeast India have benefited considerably. The increase in allocation of fund in public health had its impact on considerable impact on the development of public healthcare infrastructure in a state like Assam. It is to be mentioned here that in case of Assam, the almost dying public health care system got a new lease of life under NRHM. Following table shows the increase in allocation of fund in public health care system in the states of Northeast India.






**Table 12: Eleventh Plan Outlay for the North Eastern States (Rs. In Lakh)**

| State | 11th Plan Outlay | 2006-07 Actual Exp. | 2007-08 Actual exp | 2008-09 RE | 2009-10 BE | 2010-11 BE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arunachal P | 28762.00 | 3755.00 | 3014.66 | 1018.00 | 2900.00 | 7052.00 |
| Assam | 135559.00 | 3923.56 | 6695.10 | 16095.00 | 41211.00 | 57176.00 |
| Manipur | 10305.00 | 981.62 | 1774.19 | 6780.66 | 2617.00 | 8270.33 |
| Meghalaya | 63381.00 | 4736.16 | 6040.00 | 6700.00 | 5500.00 | 10200.00 |
| Mizoram | 49592.00 | 2400.00 | 4181.17 | 10612.00 | 3500.00 | 3850.00 |
| Nagaland | 22169.00 | 2563.00 | 2281.89 | 3303.00 | 3325.00 | 4917.00 |
| Tripura | 71147.70 | 3703.82 | 6035.19 | 10526.34 | 15548.14 | 12562.04 |

**Source:** National Health Profile, 2010 p 148

Shortage of healthcare personnel and infrastructure has been the important challenges for the Indian public health care system. As per the Planning Commission estimate (2008), India had shortage of health care infrastructure at all levels. For example, there was 40.8 percent shortage of health care personnel at CHCs as per accepted norms. There were 60 percent shoratge of specialists at the CHCs. It was also reported that there was 51.3 percent shortage of Male Health workers at different levels.

Under NRHM, steps have been taken to recruit health personnel in the country as well as to add health care infrastructure. As per the Report of Five Years of NRHM (2005-10) the following personnel have been added to the public health care system in India.

**Table 13: Recruitment under NRHM**

| Health Infrastructure/Health Personnel | Number |
|---|---|
| **ASHA** | |
| Selected | 7.49 lakhs |
| Trained up to first module | 7.05 lakh |
| With the drug kit in the field | 5.20 lakh |
| **ANM** appointed on contract | 46,690 |
| **Staff Nurses** appointed on contract | 26,793 |
| **MBBS** Doctors appointed on contract | 8,624 |
| **Specialists** appointed on contract | 2,460 |
| **AYUSH** doctors appointed on contract | 7,692 |
| **Paramedic staff** appointed on contract | 14,490 |

**Source**: Five Years of NRHM (2005-10)

Improvement and expansion of health care infrastructure have also been undertaken under NRHM. 24X7 and ambulance services have also been added to the health care institutions. Various schemes have been introduced both by the state and Union governments under NRHM with monetary incentives to make the public health care system attractive and credible in public eyes.

It was mentioned that bringing community participation in one of the important strategies of NRHM. Accordingly PRIs have been given the key role in planning and implementing the schemes under NRHM. At all levels of the public health care system various committees have been formed to monitor and guide the process of implementation of NRHM in India. As per the Economic Survey, GoI (20010-11) *Rogi Kalyan Samitis* (RKSs) have been constituted in 599 district hospitals, 1136 other than CHC hospitals, and 17,097 PHCs. Village Health and Sanitation Committees have been formed in 4.98 lakh villages i.e. in 78 percent villages have their VHSCs. VHSCs have also been provided Rs. 10,000 as untied fund per year. (Economic Survey, GoI, 201-11: 314)

The initiatives under NRHM have resulted in visibility of public health care institutions. However, the achievements in crucial areas like reduction of IMR and MMR are far away from the targeted goals. For example, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) was 58 per 1000 live births in 2005 which is targeted to be reduced to 30 by 2012. By 2008 it has gone down to 53. NRHM also targets to reduce Maternal Mortality to 100 per 100,000 by 2012. MMR was 301 in 2001-03 and 254 in 2004-06. Introduction of institutional delivery with monetary incentives under *Janani Suraksha Yojna* (JSY) has increased institutional delivery in the country. This has positive impact of reduction of MMR, but there is long way to go in for the achievement of the targeted goal.

## III. Conclusion: Does neo-liberal paradigm permit a peoples' health care system?

It has been outlined in the beginning that the new wave of populism has been invented within the neo-liberal development paradigm after India had embarked upon economic reforms in 1991. This has been done as a political instrument to generate legitimacy of the crisis-ridden Indian state






and its political elites. Recent debates on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the retail sector confirm the commitment of the government towards World Bank and IMF driven economic reforms. The debate and controversies over the Big River Dams in North East India also exposes the nexus between the state and corporate/private capital in the country. Both FDI in the retail sector as well as construction of big river dams in North east India poses threat to the life and livelihoods of millions of people in the country. It is amidst these regressive and also coercive policies that NRHM has been launched. It promised to bring about architectural shift in the health care system. In reality, however, it has failed to do so. First of all, the whole initiative is in line with the neo-liberal ethics. NRHM is a time bound programme and the recruitments are contractual. Uncertainty looms over the recruited health personnel. Although, number of infrastructures has been developed, the maintenance of the same will be in question once the Mission comes to an end, supposedly in 2012 itself. The official statistics has revealed that there has been no substantial hike in investment in the public health. Besides, the monetary incentives under various schemes of NRHM have not really gone well for a healthy public health care system. This has created rackets of patron-client relationship at different level of health care delivery system. The private continues to dominate the Indian health care system. There has been no serious attempt to regulate the profiteering tactics of private health care system. The Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model in health care system that aims to patronize the private health establishments has also not been abandoned. There are *Mritunjay*- 108 Ambulance Service under NRHM in Assam by which patients in critical conditions are immediately shifted to the hospitals. Trends in Assam show that the private hospitals have gained more profit out of it because patients in critical conditions prefer to go to private hospitals than to public hospitals. Therefore NRHM initiatives have failed to yield in desired outcomes. For example, the official graph of Institutional Deliveries and beneficiaries under *Janani Suraksha Yojna* (JSY) has moved up. However, it has failed to impact upon the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in the country. All these lead us to believe, what Imrana Qadeer has very correctly stated: "Public health is not about drugs, doctors and hospitals. It is about peoples' health, which in turn is an outcome of not just medical technology and services but a result of the ideas of welfare, democracy and socialism, ideas that ensure basic human rights."

(Qadeer 2010: 325). Neo-liberal paradigm pulls back those ideas which propagate structural changes for collective well-being. Therefore, initiatives like NRHM cannot really be a remedy to the crisis-ridden public health system in India.

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# Economic Growth & Women's Empowerment: Evaluating two lead sectors in Goa: Tourism & Mining

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*Women's empowerment is a social goal being pursued both through government's institutional programmes as well as through societal processes. The question we pose is: Does a high economic growth rate translate into more empowerment for women? Does it improve women's control over decisions about the family, their ability to earn and their ability to control finances? This paper looks at the highest per capita income state in India, namely, Goa and examines the status of women in two of its leading sectors – tourism and mining, that are also directly linked to the global production of goods and services and therefore to the dynamics of globalisation. We find mixed outcomes, some sector-dependent, while others may be continuation of disempowering relations in the larger schematic of woman's position in a patriarchal society.*

## I. Introduction

Women's participation in the workforce has been growing steadily but it is well accepted that they continue to face barriers to economic empowerment and entrepreneurship world over. Gender inequalities such as differences with respect to wages, working conditions, access to education, training, access to credit, job opportunities, right to own and inherit property, denial of promotion and the burden of greater domestic responsibilities for women are just some of the barriers that the literature has highlighted (Bardhan, 1985; Krishnaraj, 1988; Fine, 1992; Sen, 2008).

We use the term women's empowerment to understand the extent to which women have control over their own lives, bodies and the environment. It has been defined as 'control over material assets, intellectual

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resources and ideology' (Batliwala, 1994:193) and also the 'processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability'(Kabeer, 2005).

We address some of these issues in the context of Goa, a small state on the western coast in India, which has witnessed rapid economic growth in per capita income in the recent past and is currently the highest per capita income state in India (RBI, 2008).[1] We study two lead sectors of the Goan economy to see whether economic growth has improved the status of women with regard to basic indicators like family size, sex ratio, educational attainment, workforce participation and control in the household decision-making. Tourism and mining have been drivers of Goa's economic growth in the last few decades (Alvares, 2002; GoG (ES)). Expectedly, women's empowerment at least by way of trickle-down effect should be evident in these two sectors. It has been argued that sustained economic growth is not only a necessary condition but also a sufficient one to ensure the desired development outcomes (Dollar & Kraay, 2002; Pritchett & Summers, 1996). There are, of course, counter view-points which suggest that growth alone will not ensure desired developmental outcomes (Kalwij &Verschoor, 2007; Kenny, 2005; Ranis et al, 2000). We examine these viewpoints in the context of Goa's sectoral growth. This paper uses secondary data to highlight developmental outcomes in Goa and also the findings of two surveys in these sectors. The reasons for choosing Goa as a study site are manifold. There has been a widespread examination of the 'Kerala model of growth' (Kurien. 1995; Veron, 2001). Goa too presents an interesting developmental case study. Prima facie, it has high achievements in many of the development indicators – high literacy rate, per capita incomes, health indicators – life expectancy, fertility measures, age at marriage, etc. (Desouza, 2004b). However, the indicators of women's empowerment cast a shadow of doubt on the state's social development process.

This has serious implications not only for Goa but also for the nation as a whole as it embarks on rapid economic growth. Would growth translate into women's empowerment as some of the influential developmental literature would suggest or is there need for intervention to achieve specific goals of human development? Have positive economic outcomes been empowering and a move towards gender equality or are they a perpetuation of gender hierarchies? We find that if policy makers are complacent about these indicators the early developmental gains may be lost quickly.

## II. About Goa and the Study Site

Goa, an erstwhile Portuguese colony, joined the India union in December, 1961, as a Union Territory and became a state in 1987. One of the Portuguese colonial legacies has been the Common Civil Code that continues till now and which provides for equal inheritance between men and women in a family.[2] This is important as far as equality of inherited wealth distribution within the family is concerned.

Goa is ahead of most other States in India with respect to literacy rate, maternal mortality rate, female mortality rate and the average age at marriage for a woman. Goa also ranks high on maternity care indicators like antenatal check-ups, iron and folic acid supplementation, tetanus toxoid injections, delivery at medical facility, assistance at delivery from a trained health professional, check-ups after delivery, etc. (NFHS, 2007 & 2009). A low TFR (total fertility rate) is seen as a positive developmental outcome due to greater awareness and universal knowledge of contraception in the state among women of child-bearing age. This could either be due to women's control over their fertility choice or lack of it, if there is sex selection. The TFR is only 1.79 children per woman which, is below the replacement rate of population, but the use of modern contraceptive technology is low in Goa (NFHS, 2009).[3]

### *II. I Gender Indicators*

While Goa has many positives in demographic indicators, the gender-focused ones leave a lot to be desired. The sex ratio is an important indicator of the status that women enjoy in any society. There is growing evidence that in Goa, like the rest of the country there is a male child preference among eligible couples (NFHS 2009). The juvenile (0-6 years) sex ratio in 2001 (at 933F to 1000 M) is lower than the adult sex ratio (960F to 1000M) implying that in the near future there will be even less female to male adults.[4]

At the taluka level, in Bardez, where a part of the tourism study is located, the sex ratio is not favourable to women (956F to 1000M) with a difference in urban and rural areas (996F in the rural areas but only 929F to 1000M in urban areas) (see Table 1). The juvenile (0-6) sex ratio is more skewed (925F to 1000M) with a negligible urban rural difference.







In Sanguem taluka where the mining study is based, the sex ratio was a little higher than in Bardez (967F to 1000M) and here the sex ratio in urban areas (980F to 1000M) was higher than that in rural areas (964F to 1000M). The juvenile sex ratio was high (981F to 1000M) but a significant difference exists between the rural areas (997F to 1000M) and the urban areas (911F to 1000M). In both these talukas, the juvenile sex ratio was lower than the adult sex ratio.

We now turn our attention to the economic dynamics in Goa's tourism and mining sectors which have been the drivers of economic growth in the post-Independence period. This would set the ground for studying the status of women in these two sectors and hopefully give insights into future developmental policy needs geared towards women's empowerment in the state.

## III. Growth in Lead Sectors of Goan Economy

Goa's Net State Domestic Product (at factor cost, current prices) has grown from Rs 5570 to 19345 crores during the period 1999-2000 to 2007-2008 (ES 2010:90). The 'Trade, Hotels and Restaurants' sub-sector's contribution to the state grew from Rs 946 to Rs 2511 crores while the 'Mining and Quarrying' sub-sector grew from Rs 209 crores to 2539 crores in the same period (ES 2010: 90). By 2007-8 these two sectors were the highest contributors to the state domestic product.

Mining and tourism also absorb a large part of the labour force (DPSE, 2003-04:60) but they operate in geographically non-overlapping zones. While tourism is concentrated in the coastal areas – primarily Salcete and Bardez, mining is concentrated in the hinterland adjoining Maharashtra and Karnataka – the talukas of Sattari, Bicholim, Sanguem and Ponda (Noronha, 2000). Mining became the first engine of growth in the post-independence phase (1961) but by late 1980s tourism began to edge it out as the lead sector, partly because of stagnation in the world demand for iron ore at that time. While sectoral contribution to GSDP is available, there are no accurate estimates of the number of people employed in both these sectors.

The sub-sectoral contribution of these two sectors seems small but it is widely believed that they have widespread multiplier effects and bring

in substantial foreign revenues too (DPSE, 2003-04: 6).

### *III.1 Description of Tourism in Goa*

Tourism is seen as an income earner for the state and therefore its promotion has been a priority of the Government (Afonso & Rodirgues, 1989; Sreekumar et al, 1995).[5] Tourism in Goa is largely concentrated in the coastal areas (see Table 3).[6] The main beach stretch in North Goa is from Sinquerim to Baga, and in South Goa it runs from Velsao to Cavelossim.[7] The tourism sector in Goa is distributed between the two districts of North and South Goa in terms of: (a) hotel concentration, (b) size & category of hotels. However, there is wide heterogeneity in tourist concentration and therefore of infrastructure quality. In 2003, there were 2027 hotels in Goa (1637 in North Goa while only 390 in South Goa). However, the ratio of beds per hotel in North Goa was only 15 in comparison to 26 in South Goa (see Table 3).[8]

The category of hotels across the two districts also differs. While most of South Goa has a concentration of up-market accommodation, North Goa is largely for the mid-segment and budget category tourists except for the Taj group (Noronha et al, 2002). Tourist arrivals along with the accommodation data allows us to demarcate between the type of tourist destinations in Goa's two main beach stretches. We segmented the tourism areas into three – luxury, budget and back packing.[9] We now present a brief description of the mining sector.

### *III.2 Description of Mining in Goa*

The mining belt extends over 14 – 18 per cent of Goa's land area. In 2002 about 409 mining and quarrying licenses existed of which 279 were still in operation (DPSE, 2002-2003:60). the area occupied by mining in Goa spreads across 700 sq kms in 4 talukas and the Regional Plan report recorded 99 active mining leases in 2010 (RPG, 2011: 42). Mining operations are carried out in lease holdings of about 100 hectares or less. The share of state income from mining has been falling over the years from 12 per cent in 1970-71, 6 per cent in 1980-81, 5 per cent in 1990-91 and 4 per cent in 2000-1, but by 2007-8 the share had gone back to 13 per cent.







There is no local market for the 'low grade' ore produce of Goa so all of it is exported. Goa accounts for 60 per cent of India's iron ore exports (Noronha, 2000).[10] In the post-liberation period in the 60s, mining was the driver of growth and employment in Goa (Alvares, 1999). It also led to in-migration of workers from neighbouring states.

We focus on women who have been involved in the mining industry either as direct workers or as supporters, care givers, housewives to those employed in the mines.

Since there is little socio-economic data on women in the tourism and mining industries, we use information from two surveys on women residents of these areas (Desouza, 2003b; Mukhopadhyay, 2005). In the next section we describe the methodology of these two surveys followed in Section 5 by a discussion of the findings.

## IV. About the Surveys

These two surveys independently collected information from women in the age category of 15-65 in the mining area and 18 to 70 years in the tourism area and included not only those who were working (outside their homes) but also those who didn't undertake paid work. This was done to avoid selection bias and to estimate workforce participation rates. Information was collected from 300 households in each sector from a randomly selected sample. The questionnaires used were similar in nature and so allowed for comparison of results.[11]

### *IV.1 Tourism*

In the tourism area survey, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select a total of 300 women but due to non-response from 20 selected women a total of 280 were covered. The hotels and beds data (see Table 3) was taken as a proxy for tourism concentration. Bardez in North Goa and Salcete in South Goa had the highest number of hotels in the two districts and were selected for the study. The next stage was to identify one village representing each tourism service category described earlier. For the mid-segment and budget category we concentrated on Bardez and for the luxury segment we chose Salcete.[12]

Three villages were purposively chosen – Calangute, Vagator/Chapora – (North Goa), and Varca (South Goa). Calangute is the most frequented tourist destination in Goa attracting largely budget and mid-category domestic tourists. Vagator/Chapora attracts back-packing category tourist and is exclusively a foreign tourist destination of the low-budget category. Varca on the other hand is home to up-market luxury hotels (TERI, 2000).

In order to select respondents from each of these villages we used the Goa state electoral rolls (as updated in 2002) which was treated as the sampling frame which provided an up-to-date list of adult women in the above-18 years age category, our target group for the survey. The interviewee selection was done by picking a random sample from the electoral rolls of these three villages.

Of the 280 women interviewed, the village-wise breakdown was – North Goa: 69 from Calangute, 156 from Chapora and Vagator, South Goa: 55 from Varca. The data was collected during May- October, 2003.

### *IV.2 Mining*

A different strategy for respondent selection was followed in the mining area. The survey was conducted in the twin township of Savordem/ Curchorem (Sanguem taluka). The reasons for this are: (a) this town is the hub of the mining area in south Goa and is expected to show the greatest beneficial impact in socio-economic outcomes due to mining and, (b) the smaller hamlets in the mining area are sparsely populated and geographically distant. A listing of households was done in this town to ascertain which households had their chief source of income from mining activities. A random sample of 300 households was then selected based on the criterion that their chief source of income was from a mining related activity. This includes direct employment in mines as well as ancillary activities including transport. The data collection was done in April-May 2003.

Of the total 300 respondents interviewed for this study, 41 (of the total number of 52 working women) were paid workers in the mining industry. The remaining 259 had either husbands or children who were working in the mines or related activity.






## V. Is Women's Empowerment an Assured Outcome?

We now discuss findings from the surveys to get a comparative picture of the two sectors and their relative achievements. Women's empowerment here is viewed as achievement of independence in decision-making – in family size and composition, financial independence in terms of participation in the workforce, ability to control own finances, etc. (Malhotra et al, 1995)

### *V.1 Demographic Indicators*

Family size is regarded as an important demographic indicator and also reflective of women's position within the family (Jejeebhoy, 1995; Mason & Smith, 2003). In tourism areas the most frequently reported family size was 5-6 (36 per cent) closely followed by the 3-4 (34 per cent).[13] In the mining area the most frequently reported family size was 3-4 (46 per cent) followed by 5-6 (33 per cent). This indicates a preference for a smaller family size in mining areas in comparison to the tourism area. This difference in family size could be due to higher average economic status in tourism resulting in larger family size.

A related demographic indicator is the number and composition of children in the family. The power relations in a family dictate not only the number but also the sex composition of children (Basu & Das Gupta, 2001; Clark, 2000). Women are expected not only to be child-bearing but specifically male child-bearing (Sudha & Rajan, 2003). Since data on sequence of child birth was not collected it is not possible to infer whether the families which had proportionately more girl children, had their female child earlier or otherwise. The demographic literature records Indian families where the number of girl children is more than boys, the younger sibling is typically a boy(s) indicting a possible male child preference (Pakrasi & Halder, 1971).[14]

In the tourism area we found no families that have more than two children but no male child. Presumably, those who did not have male child within the space of two children presumably did not seek to have a third child. There are 32 families that have 1-2 girl children but no male children. In contrast there were 39 families that had children but no girl child.

In the mining area there were 51 families that had 1-4 girl children but no male child (of which 11 had 3-4). There were however 72 families who had only male children (ranging from 1-5 children of which 63 of them had 1-2 children and no girl child). These numbers need careful interpretation. In both these areas the number of women reporting single girl child exceeds single boy child. However, for higher number of children this trend reverses, lesser number of families have two or more girls than boys. This implies that while people are acceptable of one or two female child they prefer to have more male children than female as the number of children increases in the family. This could be interpreted as an indicator of male child preference.

The degree of equality achieved at home can be inferred from the extent of sharing of household duties (Kabeer, 2005). In our surveys, respondents were asked about the participation by wives and husbands (only for currently married couples) in four routine household jobs: cooking, washing, swabbing/sweeping and shopping. The total score (one for each activity, and zero if not) was calculated for each respondent and her husband. The maximum score indicating participation in all activities was four and minimum was zero. Only scores between one and four were considered for analysis as it is reasonable to expect that the husband would at least undertake shopping if not any of the other activities. While 81 per cent of the women in mining undertake all four activities, only 24 per cent of the husbands in mining do the same. In comparison, only 65 per cent of women in the tourism sector undertake all four activities while only 2 per cent of the husbands undertake all four activities. The gender gap in household activity is larger in the tourism sector.

### *V.2 Women in Paid Labour Force*

Our expectation was that workforce participation in the tourism and mining sectors would be significantly higher than the state average. Empowerment of women is associated with economic independence which is closely linked to their ability to participate in the workforce (Elson, 1999; Kabeer, 2005). It allows them the option of economic independence if they so desire, and also adds to the economic well-being of the family. Goa's combined (rural and urban) female workforce participation rate (PR) at 22 per cent is lower than the all-India figure 32 per cent (as per






Census, 2001). However, the urban female participation rate in Goa (18 per cent) is larger than the all-India average (11 per cent). The state's urban female PR was 18 per cent and rural was 26 per cent.

In the tourism area only 19 per cent of the women reported as being employed in comparison to only 17 per cent in the mining area which is near equal to the state's urban average and much higher than the all-India figure. The male workforce participation rate in Goa was about 54 per cent for both rural and urban segments indicating a large gender divide in the economic domain.

The low female PR in the two sectors is most likely a combination of a lack of opportunity on the demand side as well as social inhibitions from the supply side in the labour market. This would be especially true in the mining area which reported a lower PR as the work in this sector is probably considered 'dirty' or not women-friendly.

An oft asked question is whether marital status affects workforce participation among women (Dasgupta, 2002; Sudarshan & Bhattacharya, 2008). Do women lose their independence when they get married? At first glance the women who were never married seemed to have an equal representation by proportion in the workforce as the married category which suggests that the hypothesis may not be true. However, a closer look shows that married women are less likely to be part of the workforce than the never married category in both the sectors in Goa. This is interesting because some see such a phenomenon as reversion to patriarchy – once a woman is married, she has to follow the stereotypical role of a housewife rather than a working independent woman.

### *V.3 Education*

The next question we pose is: 'does education matter'? Education is capability-enhancing so women who are better educated are more likely to be independent and empowered than others (Sen, 1999; Mukhopadhyay & Tendulkar, 2006).

In both the sectors, the most women belonged to the category 'upto 10$^{th}$ class'. The next largest group was the 'illiterate' segment followed by

'upto Class 6 category'. The proportion of illiterate respondents was significantly higher in the mining area. This could be due to: a) access to better education infrastructure in the tourism areas, b) social demand for literacy in tourism areas (which has traditionally) been a more economically prosperous area, and c) demand for better educated labour force considering that the clientele is largely non-Goan (Indian as well as foreign).

The employment outcomes suggest a non-linear relationship in both the sectors. There is a U-shaped relation between education and work status (see Figure 1). In the tourism belt, 31 per cent of the women who are in the paid labour force are in the graduate and above category and it declines to 8 per cent for those who have less than Class X but rises to 11 per cent for women who have less than Class VI attainment. However, for the illiterate category, the percentage increases to 22 per cent. In the mining area the story is similar except that the highest participation is from the 'illiterate' category.

The data suggests that those who are literate but have only studied upto 10th have lower levels of absorption in the workforce than the other three groups in both the sectors. It seems that those who are illiterate take on unskilled work while those with higher secondary education and above are more likely to be in the workforce than anyone else. Those who do not complete higher secondary education are the least likely to be in the workforce either because the skills required are higher than they have and/ or they are unwilling to accept wages that are paid to unskilled workers.

This throws up interesting differences in the empowerment debate of the two sectors. It seems that the nature of work that these two zones offer result in educationally empowered women to participate more in the workforce in tourism than in mining. So, educational intervention seems to be economically empowering if it has a conducive industry in the vicinity (i.e. in a segmented labour market). It is possible that the tourism sector which is part of the services sector offers better opportunities to educated women. This has important policy implications for Goa where the drop-out rate at 22.5 per cent (at primary level) is alarmingly high (Jayachandran, 2007).






### *V.4 Independence in Decision-Making*

A woman may or may not be part of the workforce but her ability to control the purse-strings is a good indicator of her position in the family. The presence of an individual bank account is one such indicator. It is true that even now the penetration of the banking system is rather poor but in Goa the average is quite extensive.[15]

The percentage of women who had individual accounts is marginally higher in the tourism sector (19 per cent) than the mining sector (17 per cent). In the tourism sector, half of those who have individual accounts are also involved in paid labour. In mining, however, the proportion of those who have an individual account and are part of the workforce is much less.

In the following section we conclude this paper by a quick summary of the findings of this study and a discussion of their policy implications.

## VI. Conclusion

Women's empowerment in this paper was discussed along 3 broad measures – demographic, social and economic. The broad questions that were addressed are: Have these indicators out-performed the state average? Have they moved closer to their male counterparts in the economic sphere and bridged the gender gap? Is there a difference in the outcome between the two leading industries in Goa?

The family size in mining areas was smaller but more families had only male children in comparison to the number that had only female children than that in tourism. Expectedly, husband's contribution to household work was significantly lower than their wives and husbands in tourism areas contributed a lot less than in the mining sector. In the paid labour market, while the women's participation rate (in the studied sectors) was much higher than the national average it was not different from the state average (urban) with tourism having marginally higher rates than mining. In any case women had much lower workforce participation rate than the male in Goa. Interestingly, fitting the stereotypical traditional women's profile we find (in our sample) that married women are less

likely to be in the paid labour force than unmarried women.

In terms of educational attainment, the literacy rate in the mining area matches the state average but in the tourism areas it is significantly higher. Did this help women achieve economic independence? In the tourism sector the graduates and above had the highest participation rates while in mining it was the illiterate category that had the highest contribution to paid labour (though the second highest category was graduate even in mining). So education does seem to matter. Also, women are better off pursuing a higher degree than dropping out after 12 years or less as they have a better chance of employment. This seems to payoff in the labour market as the average reported incomes among women there is Rs 4000 but the mining figures are significantly lower.

This has policy implications. If the state expects the tourism sector to grow in size or value and the government also wants to fulfil its promise of women's empowerment, then it must ensure a decline in the drop-out rate of the girl students so that they have better chance to avail of employment opportunities that become available at the post-higher secondary level. The least participation rate in both sectors is seen in the category of less than Class 10. In terms of policy it may be important to find ways in which we can get this category of women to be able to cross the threshold of educational attainment that would make them more qualified to join the paid labour force (if they so desired). It is evident that economic growth of a region is not a sufficient condition to ensure women's empowerment and gender equality, at least in a cross-sectional context.[16] It is significant that even in the lead sectors, women have not been able to break the glass ceiling. Also increased economic opportunity does not lead to automatic breaking of traditional patriarchal shackles within the household. However, emergence of a modern service sector offers hope for entering into the paid workforce with higher educational attainment and is an area of public intervention that needs to be further explored. It is also clear that links to the global dynamics does not necessarily imply libertarian options that enhance women's empowerment. The nature of the industry makes a significant difference in the nature of employment offered.





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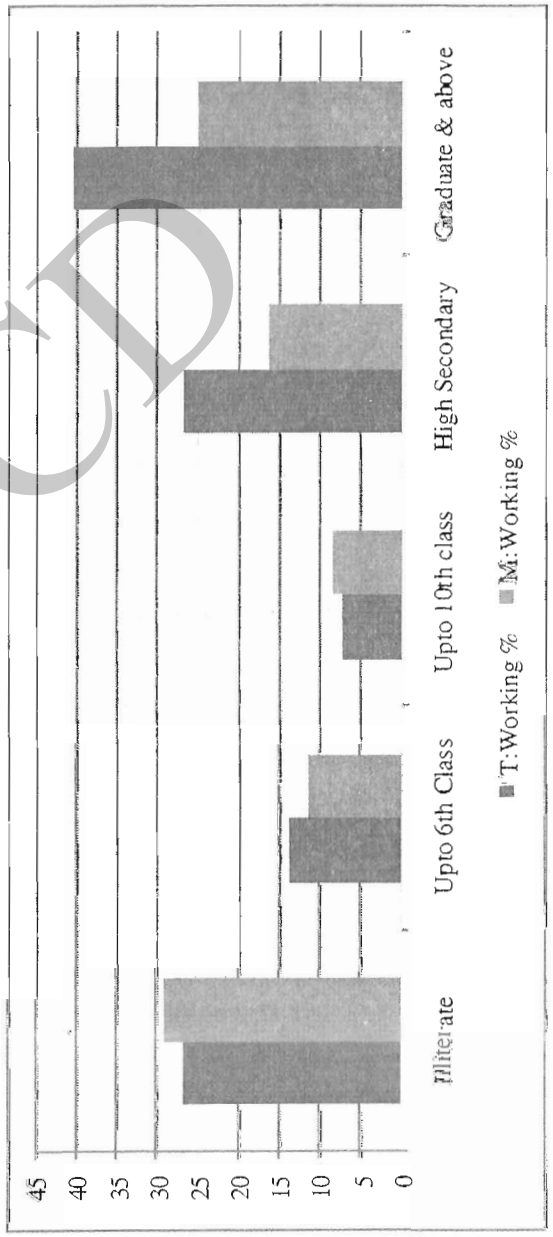


Figure 1: **Workforce participation in percentage within each educational category**

**Table 1: Sex ratio in different talukas in Goa (Census 2001)**

| State/ District/ Taluka | Total Population | | | Age Group 0-6 years | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rural | Urban | Total | Rural | Urban | Total |
| Goa | 988 | 934 | 961 | 952 | 924 | 938 |
| N Goa | 970 | 931 | 953 | 939 | 935 | 938 |
| Pernem | 943 | 942 | 943 | 921 | 827 | 907 |
| Bardez | 996 | 929 | 956 | 926 | 924 | 925 |
| Tiswadi | 1013 | 947 | 969 | 932 | 972 | 958 |
| Bicholim | 946 | 938 | 943 | 939 | 914 | 928 |
| Satari | 961 | 964 | 962 | 935 | 980 | 941 |
| Ponda | 959 | 893 | 937 | 970 | 921 | 953 |
| S Goa Dist | 1018 | 937 | 972 | 972 | 913 | 937 |
| Mormugao | 1026 | 868 | 893 | 917 | 889 | 893 |
| Salcete | 1065 | 986 | 1019 | 1000 | 928 | 957 |
| Quepem | 975 | 970 | 973 | 937 | 909 | 924 |
| Sanguem | 964 | 980 | 967 | 997 | 911 | 981 |
| Canacona | 996 | 921 | 975 | 925 | 998 | 944 |

*Source: DPSE (2004-05)*

**Table 2: Sectoral composition of GSDP at current prices (%)**

| Sector | 1970-71 | 1975-76 | 1980-81 | 1985-86 | 1990-91 | 1995-96 | 2000-01 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary Sector | 31 | 26 | 19 | 15 | 12 | 11 | 8 |
| Secondary Sector | 27 | 30 | 35 | 32 | 36 | 38 | 40 |
| Tertiary Sector | 43 | 43 | 46 | 53 | 52 | 51 | 51 |
| GSDP | 100 | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Source: DPSE (2003-04)*







**Table 3: Taluka-wise — Number of boarding and lodging houses, total bed capacity, & tourist visitation 2003-04**

| Sl. No. | State/District Taluka | Number of | | Average Number of Beds per hotel | Number of tourists | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Hotels | Beds | | Domestic | Foreign |
| 1 | Goa | 2027 | 34914 | 17 | 17,27,446 | 3,21,399 |
| 2 | North Goa | 1637 | 24851 | 15 | 1043629 | 182908 |
| | Tiswadi | 244 | 7101 | 29 | 507627 | 59628 |
| | Bardez | 1227 | 16638 | 14 | 423602 | 119017 |
| | Pernem | 143 | 468 | 3 | 10154 | 3640 |
| | Bicholim | 8 | 129 | 16 | 12877 | 78 |
| | Sattari | - | - | | -- | -- |
| | Ponda | 15 | 515 | 34 | 89369 | 545 |
| 3 | South Goa | 390 | 10063 | 26 | 683817 | 138491 |
| | Sanguem | 1 | 40 | 40 | 6950 | 344 |
| | Canacona | 30 | 730 | 24 | 7338 | 11654 |
| | Quepem | - | - | | -- | -- |
| | Salcete | 303 | 7625 | 25 | 463714 | 106603 |
| | Mormugao | 56 | 1668 | 30 | 205815 | 19890 |

*Source: Directorate of Tourism, Panaji – Goa as given in DPSE 2003-4 and 2004-5, & Directorate of Tourism, Panaji – Goa*

## Endnotes

1 Goa has enjoyed a higher per capita income than the national average from even before it joined the Indian union. As various studies on convergence of India's growth rates have pointed out, the states above the national average have continued to expand their distance from the low performers, barring a few exceptions (Marjit & Mitra 1996, Singh *et al* 2003). In the last few years Goa has had the distinction of being the highest income earning state (RBI 2008).

2 Many researchers feel that there has been a lax implementation of the Uniform Civil Code in Goa which is why this law has not fulfilled the aspirations of equal inheritance (Desouza 2004b).

3 There has been wide-spread concern that the family size is being controlled by means other than contraception (Jha et al 2006).

[4] Many have expressed surprise that this should happen at all in a state which has such high levels of literacy. The literacy rate in Goa is 82 per cent in comparison to the all-India average of 65per cent as per Census 2001.

[5] However, the growth in the tourist arrivals has been viewed with apprehension by women's groups and environmentalists because of adverse impacts on the local host population, women and children in particular, and the environment (Mukhopadhyay & Desouza 1997, Rowbotham 1992). Of particular concern have been issues like stress on natural resources water and land, pollution and the impacts on culture, drug abuse, crime and prostitution (BS undated).

[6] Even though there is an attempt in the recent years to develop the hinterland areas for eco-tourism, there has been relatively low investment in the tourism infrastructure in the non-coastal areas.

[7] There are other smaller coves, which are segregated from these main beach zones, but are relatively small.

[8] The beds per hotel ratio is an indicator of average hotel size and so the bulkiness of investment. A lower ratio reflects a smaller average hotel size while a larger ratio reflects a bulkier investment.

[9] This categorization is adapted from the existing literature (Sreekumar *et al* 1995 and TERI 2000).

[10] Mining too has had a negative effect. It has affected the environment by contamination of air, water, land, etc. which has impacted on the health of the local community apart from the mine-workers. The run-off from the mines inundated fields affecting agricultural productivity. The iron ore extracted from the mines is transported in open trucks and as a result these towns and its surroundings are covered with a coating of red dust. Tuberculosis, respiratory disorders, blindness etc are some of the common complaints of those residing in the area. The vegetation that exists is also covered with the red dust from the mines (Rao 1996, CSE 2008).

[11] One limitation of this data set is that it did not survey women who may be dependent on either tourism or mining but were not living in these areas. However, this number is likely to be small and so there is no *a priori* reason to suspect selection bias.

[12] Tourist arrivals disaggregated at the taluka level also confirms the information in the infrastructure data.

[13] This is close to the Census 2001 finding that the average family size in Goa is 5 (and 4.2 according to NFHS 2009).

[14] Earlier writing on this issue found that there was a very high proportion of male first born but the authors were cautious in drawing any conclusions due to recall data unreliability (Pakrasi & Halder 1971, pp.383).

[15] The bank penetration in Goa is one of the highest in the country. As compared to the all-India figure of a commercial bank catering to an average of 15,828 persons, in Goa, there is a commercial bank for every 5423 persons (in 2004) (RBI website http://www.rbi.org.in).

[16] Since we do not have access to a similar time series data set, it is not possible to confirm if there has been an increase over time in the demographic, social or economic outcomes for women in the areas we have considered for our study.

*Book Review*

# Looking into the Tragedy of Becoming a Borderland

Abikal Borah*

***Becoming a Borderland: Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India* by Sanghamitra Misra, New Delhi, Routledge, Rs 695, 236 pages**

One of the remarkable achievements that the practitioners of spatial history have pulled off in our times is that they have managed to cultivate a culture of rescuing history from the hegemonic and repressive regimes of the nation. The possibilities of diverse spaces for history might have been lost amidst the histories written in the Enlightenment model as they very often misappropriated, repressed and excluded histories of regions, and specially of peripheries, while framing narratives keeping the nation at the core. Perceptibly, writing histories of a region located in the space amongst nations becomes an arduous task as adjoining nations continuously tend to appropriate the region's history into the respective nation centred narratives and yet, such regions remain in a liminal space, as nations' borderland.

The recent scholarship on colonial and postcolonial North East India have made an attempt to look at the frontier region of the present Indian nation-state, or the bordering region of China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, in relation to the shifts of the region's administrative geography with respect to changing temporalities. This practice began with David Ludden's suggestion that 'how we might locate social realities in multiple, changing and mobile spaces that impart to territories like Assam in kaleidoscopic appearance, open to many disparate interpretations and analytical approaches, in the fullness of time, that is, in the fulsome context of history in the short term, long term, ancient past, immediate

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present, and currently unfolding future.'[1] A supportive gesture came from Bodhisattva Kar when he discussed the politics of history writing and the attempts of appropriating Assam's history in various agendas of the colonial and as well as, the nationalist historiographical practices.[2] On another instance, Kar delineated the history of the politics of the constructed, violated and reconstructed administrative Inner Line in colonial Assam with respect to capital's expansionist mode.[3] Probably, nothing could have been more apt in this continuation than Sanghamitra Misra's engagement with the politics of Goalpara's tragedy of *Becoming a Borderland* with a brilliant opening line: "Contestations, appropriations and subversions marked the politics of space and identity in Northeastern colonial India."

Misra begins her introductory chapter by placing the central problematic of her book, both in relation to the existing historiographical practices and also in the context of changing administrative geography of Goalpara within her chosen temporal frame, that is, between the years 1800 to 1930. Misra points out that the major problems with the existing historiographical practices, on Goalpara and its surrounding region, has been caused by the 'reluctance not just to think outside of the boundaries of modern nation state but also outside of the colonial spatial order.' Thus, Misra states that one of the major concerns of her work is to break free from the cultural hegemonies of the nation and to engage with the histories of 'mobility, context, agency, contingency, and change'. In furtherance of her argument Misra discusses the tragedy of peripheralisation of Goalpara,

1 David Ludden, "Where is Assam? Using Geographical History to Locate Current Social Realities", in Sanjib Baruah ed. CENISEAS Papers Series, No. 1, (Guwahati: Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, 2003), Pg. 1

2 See Bodhisattva Kar's "What is in a Name? Politics of Spatial Imagination in Colonial Assam", in Sanjib Baruah ed. CENISEAS Papers Series, No. 5, (Guwahati: Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, 2003). Also see Kar's discussion on the first generation of nationalist historians in "The Tragedy of Surjya Bhuyan", Biblio: A Review of Books, May-June, Vol. XIII, Nos. 5&6.

3 See Bodhisattva Kar's "When was the Postcolonial?: A History of Policing Impossible Lines", in Sajib Baruah ed. *Beyond Counter Insurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), Pg 49-77

'a victim of cartographic surgery', for always being in the periphery of either Bengal or Assam; of either British Indian state or post-colonial Indian nation-state. By moving away from writing 'biographies of nation' Misra chooses to critically engage with the 'deep, tenacious and...repressive connection between history and the nation'[4] and she prefers to dwell upon the 'connected histories'[5] of Goalpara whose history so far has appeared only as marginalised histories of borderland in the mainstream hegemonic historical accounts.

Misra's narrative begins by tracing the history of state making of a precolonial frontier of Mughal Empire, i.e. Goalapara and its surrounding region, where the empire itself was reluctant to administer the region in an organised manner. The frontier was conceived just as a protective zone against foreign invasions where the local chieftains were powerful enough to enjoy certain degree of political sovereignty. The ecology of the region was little known to the empire and the economic interests were mostly concentrated on the supply of elephants and raw cotton. After the defeat of the Koch king Parikshit in 1603, the practice of agrarianisation on the Mughal model was tried out but the resistance shown on the part of the locals in various corners did not allow such settlements to become permanent. Though the colonial accounts are suggestive of a more stable organisation of a land revenue system according to the Mughal imperium's ideology, Misra suggests that the communities were in a state of flux

[4] Misra quotes from Prasenjit Duara's Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), Pg 4. Duara engaged with the 'complex interactions between time and event through which the cunning of national consciousness becomes embodied in the strategies of narrative form' of nationalist histories.

[5] See, Subramanyam, Sanjay, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia", *Modern Asian Studies,* Vol. 31, No. 3, Pg 735-762. Misra deploys Subramanyam's idea of 'connected histories' where he argues "that we not only compare from within our boxes, but spend some time and effort to transcend them, not by comparison alone but by seeking out the at times fragile threads that connected the globe even as the globe came to be defined as such... if we ever get to them (the inhabited localities in the early modern period) by means other than archaeology, the chances are that it is because they are already plugged into some network, some process of circulation."






characterised by 'cultures of mobility and interdependencies'.

Misra then moves on to discuss the attempts of the East India Company's regime towards expansion of agrarian order in Goalpara and the neighbouring region. The primary interest of the colonial state was vested in utilising the resources and extracting land revenue and thus, permanent settlement in the southern part of Goalpara was strongly endorsed through the network of the *zamindars* and the *jotedars*. But the traditional methods of shifting cultivation was characterised by constant mobility of the people. Furthermore, the oppressive taxation regimes contributed additionally to this pattern of mobility resulting into often unnoticed practices of sovereignty. In the northern part of Goalpara, in the areas of Duars, adjacent to Bhutan, the politics of space, territoriality and sovereignty was even more complex with a unique pattern of overlapping of political control of the Bhutanese king and the *zamindars* of Bijni. Misra lucidly delineates the confusion of the colonial rulers while categorising these regions and they, very often, ended up producing contradictory accounts on the polity and economy of the region.

Moving beyond her argument regarding the overlapping territoriality of Golapara and the neighbouring region, Misra describes how the culture of trade, taking place in the markets of this region connected Bhutan, the Ahom kingdom, the Garo hills, Dhaka, Mymemsingh and Bengal through a shared network. However, with the rise of colonial powers in the region, the markets were gradually taken under the control of the colonizers which brought Bengal more into prominence, displaced Bhutan from the network of trade and marginalised the Garos by representing them as an unruly group of people. Misra's success lies in unearthing the politics of reorientation of the network of trade according to the new colonial imagination of spatial order. Furthermore, cartographic representation and new methods of enumeration and demarcation of the geography made Goalpara a strictly defined territorialised space and yet, mobility and practices of sovereignty among the locals continued to persist.

In the depopulated region of Assam Proper affected by foreign invasions and also, characterized by constant mobility of people due to the traditional practices of shifting cultivation, land was abundant leaving enough spaces for the new colonial regime to function according to the

utilitarian principles of capital. Due to the peculiar nature of agrarian structure, the colonial regime adopted strategic policies while incorporating the wasteland of the region into the global market of capital. Misra delineates this history of transition in Goalpara and the neighbouring region with a detailed discussion on the agrarian structure and the new emigration policy adopted in the early twentieth century in order to convert the wastelands and the forest areas of Goalpara into permanent settlements. There appeared certain changes in the crop pattern as well and jute now became the second most important cash crop, as the region was now well connected to Bengal. As a huge pool of peasants from East Bengal migrated to Goalpara, the demographic composition of the region considerably changed leading to newer formation of social spaces and identities. Misra further shows that, when the debates over the new tenancy rights was going on, in the courts and the legislative assembly, 'history, culture, economy and the state', all were forged together which bears testimony of the chaos created by artificial administrative and demographic engineering of a region.

From 1765 to 1912, Golapara's administrative location was in a state of flux. On top of that, the demographic engineering of the region by bringing the peasants from Bengal made Goalpara's regional identity go through a turbulent politics of appropriations, contestations and negotiations. In this context, Misra discusses the history of the Bengali and Assamese nationalists' claims over the linguistic identity of the region. At the same time, the local landed gentry, the influential group of *Zamindars* tried to project an independent linguistic identity of the region nullifying the claims of the Assamese and Bengali language activists. The colonial state adopted a policy of convenience and never recognised the actual troubles caused by the linguistic complexities of the borderland. Misra's analysis throws light on how the administrative reorganisation of shared territories creates extremely complex spaces of linguistic identities where the state policy is always contestable. The tragedy of arbitrary state policies and the anti-historicist character of colonial reorganisation of space were quite pervasive and in the postcolonial times, we get to see the remnants of these tragedies in the ongoing militant movements for the liberation of Kamatapur.

With colonial modernity, in the wake of a new historical consciousness and amidst the rapid growth of vernacular print media the issues of






territoriality in Assam became even more complex as the local intelligentsia actively participated in the making of national histories. The alliance of the colonialists with the enthusiastic nationalist historians produced positivist histories in the Enlightenment model with an indubitable objective of identifying the nation. Misra points out that Goalpara appeared quite significantly in relation to the classical past of Assam in the standard Assamese nationalist historiography. But, in relation to early twentieth century spatial imagination, Goalpara was projected as a territorial borderland. Misra points out that the local intelligentsia of Goalpara also became quite active on this front by inculcating a practice of contesting the Assamese hegemonic accounts. Textual analysis of precolonial vernacular literature and cartographic representations in a conceived adherence to scientific methods played major roles in the making of these narratives of contesting order. Misra also does an analysis of the folk cultural forms which exhibits the multiplicity of the borderland spaces and tells a telling narrative about the mobility of people.

In relation to the artifice of history, it would be a pertinent digression to notice that in postcolonial Assam, the Secondary Education Board of Assam, for the longest of time, prescribed the nationalist historians' writings which continued the production of the grand narrative of Greater Assam. Interestingly, though these histories were reproduced by the ideological state apparatuses, the most aggressive anti-state militant political movements drew its strengths from the wide scale dissemination of such histories. Certainly, there is a need to take Misra's queries forward and to engage with these *Creative Pasts,*[6] the popular domain of community histories of a region, whose political culture is entrenched by the issues of ethnicity, identity and territoriality.

As I began the review with a note on the tragedy of the artifice of history under the repressive and hegemonic regimes of the nation, the utmost imperative lies in placing the book under discussion in the larger economic, social and political context of the present. Histories, repressed and lost, once retrieved, reconstructed and narrativised, do throw light on

[6] Deshpande, Prachi, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India 1700-1960,* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007). Deshpande reminds us that 'popular memory need not remain marginal and emancipatory, but can become majoritarian, dominant, and divisive.'

the politics of shaping and reshaping of subjectivities, identities, territories and political spaces. As the politics of administrative engineering of geography and reorganisation of spatial order have been mostly driven by economic and political reasons and that too, ever changing ones, the prudence lies in finding answers to the emerging challenges of our times by deriving some lessons from Misra's revealing analysis of the tragedy of *Becoming a Borderland.*




# Note for Contributors

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# Journal

The journal Social Change and Development intends to provide an academic platform to scholars belonging to the northeastern region of India as well as outside to project issues focused particularly on the region, express their views and analyse the issues putting them in proper perspective, both historically and as guidelines for the future. However, issues cutting across the region's border are also welcome.

The unique diversity of the region in terms of ethnicity, culture, language and social institutions makes the region a challenging area of study for the researchers. Although, there has been a prolific growth of literature on the region, it is still lacking discussions with academic rigour. It is therefore, strongly felt that the social scientists would take up issues for academic debate and the journal acts as a platform for the exercise. This is expected to create a better understanding amongst the people of the region and the rest of the country. The geographical seclusion of the region from the rest of the country is sought to be broken through vibrant academic interactions.