

Democracy And Socio-Economic Transformation In India

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**Paper prepared for the Project on
State of Democracy in South Asia**
as part of the Qualitative Assessment of Democracy

Lokniti (Programme of Comparative Democracy) Centre for the Study of Developing Societies Delhi

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Social science engagements with contemporary India have mostly been around the question of change - social, economic, cultural, or political. Until some time back these engagements were envisioned primarily in the framework of "modernization" and "development". M.N. Srinivas, India's most celebrated sociologist, for example, identified three core processes of social change - westernization, modernization, and secularization - through which social scientists ought to make sense of the changing Indian society (Srinivas 1966). Industrial development and urbanization were seen to be essential if such changes were to materialize in a largely rural and agrarian society that India was at the time of its independence from the colonial rule. The political process, i.e., India's experiment with democratic polity was but an aspect of these boarder processes. Marxist social scientists writing on contemporary India too remained preoccupied with the questions of change, albeit with a different framework that approached it as a moment of transformation from pre-capitalist social formations to capitalist ones. The political processes, the new institutions of democratic governance were linked to this larger process simply in an instrumental manner, an epiphenomenon, or a functional prerequisite for the capitalist market to expand and gain legitimacy.

The unfolding of the democratic experiment, more than five decades of participation in electoral process, has produced a dynamic of change that does not necessarily confirm the expectations or predictions of the evolutionist modernization theory of social transformation. The Indian experience has also not been a mechanical replica of the development of bourgeois political institutions as had supposedly happened elsewhere in capitalist regimes of the Western world. This, however, is not to suggest that the political process underway in contemporary India has been completely independent or autonomous of the social and economic changes, instrumented by state intervention or by the expanding market. The two (democracy and the experience of socio-economic change) have of course reinforced each other, but the outcomes have not been entirely in conformity with any of the so-called classical models of social change/transformation. It is this experience - the dynamics of social and economic transformations on the one hand and the unfolding of the democratic process on the other hand - which I hope to capture in this paper. My working hypothesis would be that democratization is not merely an aspect of change. It could also be viewed as a perspective, a framework for understanding the dynamics of Indian society over the last five decades or so.

I

At the time of its independence from colonial rule in 1947 India was confronted with many challenges. Division of the sub-continent in Pakistan and India resulted in large scale migrations and blood-shed. While a substantial proportion of Muslims living in the Indian side of the newly drawn border left for Pakistan, the Hindu and Sikh populations of "East" and "West" Pakistan fled their homes for India. Partition of the sub-continent remains the single largest episode of uprooting of people in modern history. According to available estimates as many as 12 to 14 million people left their homes to take up residence across the borders. The estimates of people who died in the "communal" violence during the period vary immensely, generally hovering in the range of 0.5 to 1.5 million.¹

Along with the tragic violence that claimed the lives of so many South Asians, migrations also brought in a large number of "refugees", both from East and West Pakistan, who had to be rehabilitated by the newly formed Government of independent India. Bengal and Punjab were the most affected as these were the

two regions that had been partitioned. They also received much of the "refugee" inflow. While in the case of Punjab nearly an equal number of Muslims had moved out to Pakistan and the immigrants, Hindus and Sikhs, could be easily accommodated in the homes and lands vacated by the Muslim population, the story of Bengal was a little more complicated. Migrations on the eastern side had been relatively slower. Unlike Punjab, violence was much lesser in Bengal.

It was also more prolonged. Migrations generally occurred sporadically, invariably after a communal riot or in apprehension of a riot. One of the implications of this was that the Bengal refugees did not attract as much attention from the Indian state as those from Punjab did. Official efforts at rehabilitation were more concentrated around the Punjabi refugees and refugees in Bengal continued to live in camps for a much longer period. ²

Apart from the immediate challenge of dealing with a large number of refugees, providing them shelter and viable sources of livelihood, the partition and violence that accompanied India's independence also had many other long term implications for the new state of India. Notwithstanding India's espousal of secularism as a state ideology, partition became a mode of defining territorial identities along communal lines.

Further, communal violence and the influx of refugees were not the only problems that the new state of India was confronted with at its "birth". Unlike the nation-states of Western-Europe, India had not evolved as a homogenous "political community". It was primarily the experience of participation in the freedom movement against the colonial rule that had brought the people from different walks of life together. The new institutions of governance and communication introduced by colonial rulers had also helped in making the Indian nationalism possible (Desai 1947). On the ground, however, India was still characterized by a large number of diversities. Writing on the 'idea of India' Khilnani describes this rather well:

The possibility that India could be united into a single political community was the wager of India's modern, educated, urban elite, whose intellectual horizon were extended by ... modern ideas and whose sphere was expanded by ... modern agencies.... The nationalist elite itself had no single, clear definition of this idea, and one of the remarkable facts about the nationalist movement that brought India to independence was its capacity to entertain diverse, often contending visions of India (1998:5-6).

These political elite who came to acquire the reins of power in 1947 also had a rather narrow social base. They were mostly from the traditional upper castes of Indian society, who had acquired Western education in the schools and colleges opened in India by the colonial rulers. Some of them had also gone and studied further in the British universities and had returned to join modern professions in colonial India.

The diversity of India was not confined to visions of India's selves and futures that its elite had. Diversities also had some concrete social and historical dimensions. Culturally and linguistically Indian people differed quite significantly. There were more than a dozen well-developed linguistic regions and languages with a sense of independent identity and culture. Speaking of regional and linguistic diversities, India also had a substantial population of groups and communities whom the British had classified as Scheduled Tribes. Though they constituted a little more six percent of the total population of India at that time, a large majority of them were concentrated in certain pockets where they invariable were the largest communities. They spoke several different dialects and had diverse ways of life. The question of bringing them to the national mainstream became a serious issue of contention among the academics and political elite around the time of Independence.

Caste was yet another factor that made Indian society complex. Ideas of hierarchy and pollution were common to caste everywhere. However, the actual structures of caste varied considerably from region to region. Though classically caste was a local level institution, which organized social life typically in the rural setting, with growing integration of Indian society, caste also began to take a different shape. Right from the days of colonial censuses caste groups had begun to consolidate themselves into regional blocks and were to play an important role in democratic politics in the days to come.

Religion was another important source of diversity. Though a large number of Muslims moved from the Indian side of the sub-continent to the new state of Pakistan, the number of those who stayed back was substantial. The proportion of Muslim population in India was around ten percent at the time of partition and has marginally gone-up since. At the level of cultural mores and social/kinship network and language,

there have always been diverse communities among the followers of Islam in India. The Christians (around 2 percent) and Sikhs (around 2 percent) too were important minority groups of the independent India, with significant presence in certain pockets of the country. India also had several other religious communities, Buddhists, Jains, Zoroastrians and even Jews.

II

The Promise

It was in this context of the challenges posed by partition and existence of significant diversities that India chose to follow the path of parliamentary system of democracy. After prolonged deliberations, the Constituent Assembly under the leadership Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, framed a Constitution for independent India, which acknowledged most of these diversities, reflected diverse visions of India's elite, granted limited rights to different communities to regulate their "personal" lives as per their cultural traditions, and made provisions for dealing with historically inherited disabilities of certain underprivileged groups, the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

Notwithstanding these diversities, the Indian Constitution also made a clear and unambiguous statement about the vision of an India that was to modernize itself within the framework of democratic politics. This is perhaps best reflected in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution. India was to be a 'sovereign democratic republic' to which were added the terms 'socialist' and 'secular' later in 1976 after the 42nd Amendment of the Indian Constitution. The new nation promised social, economic and political justice to its entire citizenry. It also granted them freedom of thought, expression, and faith. It promised to work for equality of status and opportunity that would enable every individual citizen a life of dignity and self-respect. It was in one of his speeches delivered in the Constituent Assembly in 1946 that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru spelt out this promise explicating the path of development India proposed to pursue after independence. He said,

The first task of this Assembly is to free India through a new Constitution, to feed the starving people, and to clothe the naked masses, and to give every Indian the *fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity*₃ (emphasis added).

Thus, apart from making legal provisions and installing an autonomous judicial system, the independent Indian state initiated the process of planning for development. Inspired by the successes of socialist countries of Eastern Europe, particularly the erstwhile Soviet Union, and without compromising on the liberal form of democratic polity, India chose 'mixed economy' as a path for economic development. The State was to not only provide a regulative mechanism for the economy and markets to function in a manner that would bring growth and prosperity but was to also invest in building economic infrastructure and industrial production. The Indian philosophy of planning was best summarized in the second chapter of the Second Five Year Plan document in the following words:

Economic development is intended to expand community's productive power and to provide the environment in which there is scope for the expression and application of diverse faculties and urges.... The task before an underdeveloped country is not merely to get better results within existing framework of economic and social institutions but to mould and refashion those so that they contribute effectively to the realization of wider and deeper social values....These values have been summed-up in the phrase 'socialist pattern of society'. Essentially, this means that ...the benefits of economic benefits must accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society and there should be a progressive reduction of the concentration of income, wealth and economic power₄

As evident, there are three different sets of agenda that are spelt out in this statement. First and foremost was to evolve an institutional framework of democratic politics. Second was to raise the basic standard of living by increasing incomes and improving distribution. The third was to expand the capability of the Indian population by providing social security and opportunities, which could include education, health and a general atmosphere of well-being that would encourage a culture and institutionalization of equal opportunities for all citizens of independent India.

However, it may be useful to qualify here that such a direct involvement of the state in economic sphere was not guided merely by the lofty ideas of socialism. The native bourgeoisie (the local industrial class) was also keen that the State mobilizes its resources and invests in vital sectors, such as infrastructure and basic industries. The so-called Indian bourgeoisie at that time was too “weak” to be able to mobilize such resources privately (Moore 1966). The famous Bombay Plan (originally titled The Economic Development of India), was drawn-up by a few native industrialists under the leadership of JRD Tata in 1944 in which they had called-upon the independent Indian state to play an active role in laying the ground work for future industrialization of India (Sen 1982:91-2).

Further, the ability of the Indian state to intervene in the economic sphere of post-1947 India was also enhanced by the fact that the other powerful class, viz. the big landlords were greatly weakened during the freedom movement and following ‘the departure of the British’ (Moore 1966:431) with whom they had aligned to perpetuate their power in the countryside. This however, is not to suggest that the post-colonial Indian state was completely autonomous of the existing economic interests. Its autonomy was limited by the pressure exerted by various lobbies in the process of designing as well as implementation of various social and economic programmes for change. The dominant classes such as the landlords and industrialists continued to be important actors in the emerging power structure.

III

Demographics: One of the distinguishing features of India in the modern world has been its large population. In 1951, when the first Census was carried out in 1951, India had a population of above 361 millions. It has been rising at a steady rate over the last five decades. By the turn of the century, it had crossed the billion mark. Over the years the nature of India’s population has been changing. As shown below in Table 1, its urban population has increased both in relative as well as in absolute terms. From around 17 percent in 1951 it has gone up to nearly 28 percent. Interestingly, though the rural population of India has been decline in relative terms, the absolute number of those living in India’s more than half a million villages has not gone down. On the contrary, it has increased quite consistently over the last five decades.

Table 1: India’s Rural and Urban Populations over the five decades.

Year	Rural	Urban	Total
1951	298,644,381 (82.7)	62,443,709 (17.3)	361,088,090
1961	360,298,168 (82.0)	78,936,603 (18.0)	439,234,771
1971	439,045,675 (80.1)	109,113,977 (19.9)	548,159,652
1981	523,866,550 (76.7)	159,462,547 (23.3)	683,329,097
1991	628,691,676 (74.3)	217,611,012 (25.7)	846,302,688
2001	741,660,293 (72.2)	285,354,954 (27.8)	1,027,015,247

Source: Developed from <http://www.censusindia.net> (the official website of Census of India).

Another important feature of India’s demographics is its regional unevenness. While in some parts of South India, such as Kerala, the population has virtually stopped growing; in some other parts the rate of population growth continues to be quite high. Same is the case with sex-ratios. Though the all India

average has remained, more or less, same over the past five decades (see table 2 and Table 3 below), there are significant variations across states. These variations also reflect the uneven nature of development that India has experienced over the last five decades and even before independence from the colonial rule in 1947.

Table 2: Population growth rates, density and sex ratios.

Census	Decadal Growth (per cent)	Annual Growth	Density (Per sq. km.)	Sex Ratio Years
1951	13.31	1.25	117	946
1961	21.64	1.96	142	941
1971	24.80	2.20	177	930
1981	24.66	2.22	216	934
1991	23.86	2.14	267	927
2001	21.34	1.93	324	933

Source: *Economic Survey 2001-2002*, Government of India, Table-10.14.

Table 3: Sex Ratios across States of Indian Union 2001.

India/State	Persons	Males	Females	Sex ratio
India	1,028,610,328	532,156,772	496,453,556	933
Jammu & Kashmir	10,143,700	5,360,926	4,782,774	892
Himachal Pradesh	6,077,900	3,087,940	2,989,960	968
Punjab	24,358,999	12,985,045	11,373,954	876
Uttaranchal	8,489,349	4,325,924	4,163,425	962
Haryana	21,144,564	11,363,953	9,780,611	861
Delhi	13,850,507	7,607,234	6,243,273	821
Rajasthan	56,507,188	29,420,011	27,087,177	921
Uttar Pradesh	166,197,921	87,565,369	78,632,552	898
Bihar	82,998,509	43,243,795	39,754,714	919
Sikkim	540,851	288,484	252,367	875
Arunachal Pradesh	1,097,968	579,941	518,027	893
Nagaland	1,990,036	1,047,141	942,895	900
Manipur	2,166,788	1,095,634	1,071,154	978
Mizoram	888,573	459,109	429,464	935
Tripura	3,199,203	1,642,225	1,556,978	948
Meghalaya	2,318,822	1,176,087	1,142,735	972
Assam	26,655,528	13,777,037	12,878,491	935
West Bengal	80,176,197	41,465,985	38,710,212	934
Jharkhand	26,945,829	13,885,037	13,060,792	941
Orissa	36,804,660	18,660,570	18,144,090	972
Chhattisgarh	20,833,803	10,474,218	10,359,585	989
Madhya Pradesh	60,348,023	31,443,652	28,904,371	919
Gujarat	50,671,017	26,385,577	24,285,440	920
Maharashtra	96,878,627	50,400,596	46,478,031	922
Andhra Pradesh	76,210,007	38,527,413	37,682,594	978
Karnataka	52,850,562	26,898,918	25,951,644	965
Goa	1,347,668	687,248	660,420	961
Kerala	31,841,374	15,468,614	16,372,760	1058
Tamil Nadu	62,405,679	31,400,909	31,004,770	987

Source: Primary Census Abstract Census of India 2001. Developed from <http://www.censusindia.net> (the official website of Census of India)

Planning for development:

Perhaps the single most prominent feature of the newly emergent 'Third World' countries during the post-second World War period was the dependence of large proportions of their populations on a stagnant agrarian economy. The struggle for freedom from colonial rule had also developed aspirations for better social and economic life among the 'masses' and the 'elites' of these societies. In some of these struggles, the peasantry and other "subaltern" categories of population had played important role. Thus the primary agenda for the new political regimes was the transformation of their "backward" and stagnant economies. Though the strategies and priorities differed, 'modernization' and 'development' became common programmes in most of the Third World countries. In the given context development also became a useful ideological source for new political formations that took the charge of ruling these nations.

The Constraining Structure: In the language and ideology of development, India at the time of its independence from the colonial rule was largely a backward country, with low level of national income and stagnant economy. In terms of demographic distributions only around 17 percent of its population lived in urban centers. Of the 83 percent or so who lived in rural India were dependent, directly or indirectly, on agriculture (see Table 1 above).

As a consequence of colonial policies and the historically evolved structures of social hierarchy and dependencies, the prevailing state of affairs in rural India was rather dismal. After his extensive tours of different parts of independent India, the well known economist Daniel Thorner offered an interesting conceptualization of the social structure of Indian agriculture. Speaking at the Delhi School of Economics in 1955 he argued that a few landlords and moneylenders (who usually belonged to the local upper castes) continued to dominate the rural scene. The nature of existing property relations, the local values that related social prestige negatively to physical labour and the absence of any surplus with the actual cultivator for investment on land, ultimately produced a situation that perpetuated stagnation and backwardness. He described this as "a built-in depressor" (Thorner 1956:12).

Krishna Bhardwaj (1974), Amit Bhaduri (1984) and several other economists also pointed to the undemocratic nature of prevailing economic structures, which were directly responsible for perpetual stagnation of Indian agriculture. The real producers - the peasants and labourers - not only did not possess ownership rights over the lands they cultivated, they were also tied to the local landlords. Their indebtedness made them involuntarily participate in markets that were nearly completely controlled and manipulated by these dominant landlord-moneylenders. Such "inter-locking" of land, labour and product markets produced a stagnant agriculture and an authoritarian power structure. No viable democratic institutions could work in such semi-feudal social relations of production.

Even before Indian attained independence, the "agrarian question" had become an issue of contention within the nationalist movement. The Indian national congress debated in its various sessions on the ways and means of dealing with it. The predominant view that emerged in the nationalist movement recognized the fact that reforming/ transforming existing structures of land relations would have to be an immediate priority after Independence, for democratization of rural society and also for increasing productivity of land. However, there were differences among the leaders of nationalist movement on how far should the question of institutional reforms be pursued (see Joshi 1987). As I would discuss below, these differing approaches towards agricultural modernization have persisted in the post-independence period as well and have been reflected in the official policies and programmes on agricultural development. While programmes like Land Reforms and promotion of co-operatives reflected the institutional reform approach, the Community Development Programmes and Green Revolution either avoided the question of reforms or emphasized more on technological modernization of farm practices.

Apart from agriculture, nationalist leaders and social scientists also wrote a great deal on the Indian village. Indian village has been an important ideological category in the modern imagination. As Beteille pointed out, the village 'was not merely a place where people lived; it had a design in which were reflected the basic values of Indian civilization' (Beteille 1980:108). Though the British colonial rulers were the first to construct India as a land of "village republics", they were certainly not the only ones. In much of the nationalist imagination also "village" remained the primary constituent unit of "traditional" Indian social order. However, unlike the colonial administrators, the nationalist leadership did not see the village simply as constituting the "basic unit" of India. For most of them, village represented "the real" India that needed to be liberated and transformed. Even when they celebrated village life, they did not lose sight of the actual state of affairs marked by scarcity and ignorance.

As I have argued elsewhere (Jodhka 2002a) we could identify three broad positions that the nationalist leadership had on the village. First and foremost was that of Gandhi, who saw in the village not only the pasts of India but also its future. True freedom from colonization could be attained only by recovering and re-inventing the "lost village", the village that had been degenerated by colonial policies and rigidities of the caste system. He wanted to construct a harmonious and self-contained village, uncorrupted by the modern life of the city and Western technology.

Nehru's vision of Indian village was typically modernist. Though he shared with Gandhi the notions of traditional Indian village having been a "community" in the past, the actual existing villages of India were marked by unequal class divisions, backwardness and ignorance. The political agenda for him was not revival of the old "community" but development of the village through the use of new technology and abolition of "outdated" structures of agrarian relations.

Another view of village could be found in B.R. Ambedkar, who looked at the village from below, from the standpoint of those who were made to live outside the village and were treated as untouchables by the "village community". For him village was a site of oppression, "the ruination of India... a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness" (Moone 1994: 62). The hope for democracy did not lie in its revival/ reconstruction, or for that matter, even in technological development, but in a total transformation of society, perhaps through urbanization, where anonymity could make the practice of caste difficult.

Development and Democratization: Notwithstanding the mention of 'socialist pattern of society' in the plan document mentioned above and radical language of some leaders, Indian planners remained quite ambivalent about the paths to development and democratization. The first and foremost initiative towards democratization of social economic life in rural India was the introduction of Land Reform Legislations.

Land Reforms: As mentioned above, the 'agrarian question' had become an important point of contention even before India's independence from colonial rule. Two competing views emerged on the subject. The first view was that of the 'institutionalists', who argued that the way out for the Indian agriculture lay in a radical reorganization of land ownership patterns that would not only democratize the village and revive the independent 'peasant economy' but would also increase the productivity of land. Thus the slogan, 'land to the tiller' (Thorner 1956; Herring 1983). They also argued that smaller sized holdings gave higher productivity (see Herring 1983:239-67). The second viewpoint argued against the redistribution of land on the grounds that it was both unviable, as not enough land was available for every one, and that it worked against the logic of 'economics'. Modernization of agriculture, they argued, required a reorientation of the landlords. They needed to be motivated to cultivate their own land with wage labour and by using modern technology. Land Reforms, according to them, would only divide the land into 'unviable holdings', making them too small for the use of modern technology (Bauer and Yamey 1957; Lewis 1963).

However, the process of agrarian reforms is inherently a political question (Ghose 1984:6) and not a purely technical or economic one. The choices made by the Indian State and the actual implementations of Land Reforms were determined by the 'politics' of the new regime rather than by the theoretical superiority of a particular position. The Indian State chose to reorganize the agrarian relations through redistribution of land, but not in a comprehensive and radical manner. Joshi described it as 'sectoral or sectional reforms' (Joshi 1987:56). The government of India directed state governments to pass legislations that would abolish intermediary tenures, regulate rent and tenancy rights, confer ownership rights on tenants, impose ceilings on holdings, distribute the surplus land among the rural poor, and facilitate consolidation of holdings. Following these directives a large number of legislations were passed by different state governments over a short period of time. The number of these legislations was so large that, according to Thorner, they could be 'the largest body of agrarian legislations to have been passed in so brief a span of years in any country whose history has been recorded' (Thorner 1956:14).

The actual implementation of these legislations and their impact on the agrarian structures is however, an entirely different story. Most of the legislations had intentionally provided loopholes with the help of which dominant landowners could tamper with land records by redistributing land on paper among relatives, evict their tenants, and use other means to escape legislations. In the absence of a concerted 'political will' (Joshi 1976), Land Reforms could succeed only in regions where the peasantry was politically mobilized and could exert pressure from below (Radhakrishnan 1989). For example the implementation of Land Reforms was much more effective in regions like Kashmir, Kerala and West Bengal

where peasantry had been mobilized by existing political formations. Similarly, there were also instances, such as in Karnataka, where the issues of Land Reforms suited a particular section of the political elite at a given time and consequently some Land Reforms legislations got implemented (see, for example, Damle 1993).

Despite their overall failure, Land Reforms succeeded in weakening the hold of absentee landlords over the rural society and assisted in the emergence of a 'class of substantial peasants and petty landlords as the dominant political and economic group' (Bell 1974:196). In a village of Rajasthan, for example, though the 'abolition of *jagirs*' (intermediary rights) was far from satisfactory, it made considerable difference to the overall land ownership patterns and to the local and the regional power structures. The Rajputs, the erstwhile landlords, possessed much lesser land after the land reforms than they did before. Most of the village land had moved into the hands of those who could be called small and medium landowners. In qualitatively terms, most of the land began to be self-cultivated and incidence of tenancy declined considerably. (Chakravarti 1975:97-98). The fear of losing land induced many potential losers to sell or rearrange their lands in a manner that they escaped the legislations (Byres 1974).

However, it was only in rare cases that the landless labourers living in the countryside, mostly from the ex-"untouchable" castes, received land. The beneficiaries, by and large, belonged to the middle level caste groups who traditionally cultivated land. However, these reforms played an extremely important role in strengthening the impetus for democracy. They weakened the classes of parasitic landlords and prepared ground for a general broad-basing of Indian democracy. The rise of middle level caste groups in the regional politics would perhaps not have happened in absence of the Land Reforms. In terms of economic development also Land Reforms played a positive role by giving incentive to the tillers to work hard and invest in the development of land. It may be important in this context to look at some other development initiatives as well.

Provision of Institutional Credit: While Land Reforms were supposed to deal with the problem of landlordism, the hold of moneylenders over the peasantry was to be weakened by providing credit through institutional sources, initially by credit societies and later by the nationalized commercial bank

According to the findings of an official survey carried out immediately after Independence up to around 91 per cent of the credit needs of cultivators were being met by informal sources of credit (RBI 1969:15). Much of this came from the usurious moneylenders (69.7 per cent). It was in recognition of this fact that the Indian State planned to expand the network of co-operative credit societies. With the imposition of 'social control' and later their nationalization, commercial banks were also asked to lend to the agricultural sector on priority basis. Over the years, the dependence of rural households on informal sources came down significantly. While in 1961, on an average only 18.4 percent of the total credit needs were being fulfilled by institutional sources of credit, by 1981 it had gone up to 62.6 per cent (Gadgil 1986:296).

However, this is not the entire story. The assessment studies on the co-operative credit societies showed that much of their credit went to the relatively better off sections of rural society, and the poor continued to depend on the more expensive informal sources (Thorner 1964; Oommen 1984). This was largely a consequence of the prevailing structure of land tenures (Herring 1977). In order to reform cooperatives, the State bureaucratized their working. While in some regions this helped in releasing the credit societies from the hold of big landowners, bureaucratization also led to rampant corruption and increased apathy among those whom they were supposed to serve (Jodhka 1995a).

The commercial banks which began to lend to the agricultural sector on priority basis after the introduction of "social control" over their operations in 1967, and their subsequent nationalization in 1969, had never been under the direct control of the rural rich. However, the benefit of their credits also accrued largely to those who had substantial holdings (Jodhka 1995b).

Despite this inherent bias of institutional credit against the rural poor, its availability played an important role in making the Green Revolution a success, and it definitely helped in marginalizing the professional moneylender in the rural power structure.

Community Development Programme(CDP): As a strategy of development, the Community Development Programme was conceptually very different from both the Land Reforms and the idea of making cheap

institutional credit available to the cultivators. While the earlier programmes reflected an 'institutionalist' perspective, the CDP had emanated from the 'productionist' approach to rural development. It had been inspired by the agricultural extension service in the United States (Dube 1958:8) and was based on a notion of harmonious village community without any significant internal differences and conflict of interests (Dhanagare, 1984). There was hardly any mention of the unequal power relations in the village. Its objective was to provide for a substantial increase in agricultural production and improvement in the basic services, which would ultimately lead to a transformation in the social and economic life of the villages (Dube 1958). Its basic assumption was that 'the Indian peasant would of his own free will, and because of his 'felt needs', immediately adopt technical improvements the moment he was shown them' (Moore 1966:401).

The Programme was launched on 2 October 1952 in a few selected 'blocks' and soon it was extended to the entire country. However, the enthusiasm with which the programme was started could not be sustained for very long. A non-political approach to agrarian transformation resulted in helping only those who were already powerful in the village. Most of the benefits were cornered by a small section of the rural elite.

The Green Revolution and After: Of all the developmental programmes introduced during post-independence period, the Green Revolution is considered to be the most successful. It was celebrated the world over and has been studied and debated upon quite extensively in academia. The Green Revolution led to a substantial increase in agricultural output, to the extent that it almost solved India's food problem. It also produced significant social and political changes in the Indian village and, in a sense, did bring about an 'agricultural revolution' in India. In purely economic terms, the agricultural sector experienced growth at the rate of 3 to 5 per cent per annum (Byres 1972), which was many times more than what it had been during the colonial period (less than 1 per cent).

Advocates of the Green Revolution conceptualized agrarian change in purely technological terms. The questions of social inequality and distributions were to be taken care of by the 'trickle down' effects of economic growth. The expression 'Green Revolution' was deliberately coined to contrast it with the phrase 'red revolution'. It carried the conviction that 'agriculture was being peacefully transformed through the quiet working of science and technology, reaping the economic gains of modernization while avoiding the social costs of mass upheaval and disorder usually associated with rapid change (Frankel 1971:V). The United States played an active role in its conception and implementation. Many have argued that this was because of the strategic, geopolitical interests that the US had at that time in the changing social and economic conditions in the countries of the Third World (Harriss 1987).

The term 'Green Revolution' had been first used during the late 1960s to refer to the effects of the introduction of higher yielding variety (HYV) seeds of wheat and rice in developing countries. However, it was not just about the use of HYV seeds. It came as a package, which included new technology and knowledge of agricultural production systems, and completely undermined the "traditional wisdom" of agriculture. Under direct supervision of the Ford Foundation an Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) was launched in 1961, initially in 14 districts on an experimental basis, and later extended to 114 districts (out of a total of 325) under the name of Intensive Agriculture Areas Programme (IAAP) in 1965.

Its advocates argued that the new technology was 'scale neutral' and could be used with as much benefit by the small, as by the big landowners. However, in actual implementation, small holdings were not found to be viable units for technological change. Joan Mencher during her field work in South India observed that the concerned agriculture officers were far from neutral. 'What they thought was needed to further the Green Revolution was to forget about small farmers...because they could not really contribute to increased production. To these officials, progressive farmers are those who have viable farms and who are fairly well-off' (Mencher 1978:239-40). Interestingly though, a study from Punjab showed that not only were the smaller landowners as eager to adopt the new technology but that their per-acre income from land was slightly higher than that of bigger farmers (Bhalla and Chadha 1983:78).

However, participating in the Green Revolution did not mean the same thing to smaller farmers as it did to bigger farmers. While the bigger farmers had enough surplus of their own to invest on the new capital intensive farming, for the smaller landowners it meant additional dependence on borrowing, generally from informal sources. My study of three villages in a Green Revolution district of Haryana showed that

their average outstanding debt from informal sources was the highest even in absolute terms when compared with other categories of farmers (Jodhka 1995c:A124). Thus, though theoretically the new technology was 'scale neutral' it was certainly not 'resource neutral' (Harriss 1987:231). The new technology also made everyone compulsively get involved with the market. Unlike traditional agriculture, cultivators in the post-Green Revolution agriculture had to buy all farm inputs from the market for which they often had to take credit from traders or institutional sources. In order to clear the debts, they had no choice but to sell the farm yield in the market even when they needed to keep it for their own consumption.

One of the manifestations of the growing market orientation of agrarian production was the emergence of a totally new kind of mobilizations by the surplus producing farmers who demanded a better deal for the agricultural sector. Interestingly, these 'new' farmers' movements emerged almost simultaneously in virtually all the Green Revolution regions. Though initiated in the late seventies, these movements gained momentum during the decade of the eighties. Using the language of neo-populism (Dhanagare 1999; Brass 1994) and in some cases also invoking traditional social networks and identities of the landowning dominant castes (Gupta 1997), its leaders argued that India was experiencing a growing division between the city and the village. The village, i.e. the agrarian sector, was being exploited by the city or the industrial sector through the mechanism of 'unequal exchange'.

Those who led these movements were mostly substantial landowners who had benefited most from the developmental programmes and belonged to the numerically large middle level caste groups, whom Srinivas had called the 'dominant castes' (Srinivas 1994). This new 'social class' not only emerged as a dominant group at the village level they also came to dominate the regional/state level politics in most parts of India. They had an accumulated surplus that they sought to invest in ever more profitable enterprises. Some of them diversified into other economic activities (Rutten 1991), migrated to urban areas (Upadhyaya 1988) or entered agricultural trade (Harriss-White 1996). Culturally also, this new class differed significantly from both the classical peasants and the old landlords. As an observer comments,

a typical family of this class has a landholding in its native village, cultivated by hired labour, *bataidar*, tenant or farm servants and supervised by the father or one son; business of various descriptions in town managed by other sons; and perhaps a young and bright child who is a doctor or engineer or a professor. It is this class that is most vocal about injustice done to the village (Balagopal 1987:1545).

The changes produced by the Green Revolution also generated an interesting debate among Marxist scholars on the question of defining the dominant 'mode of production' in Indian agriculture. Though the debate raised a large number of questions, the most contentious was 'whether capitalism had become dominant in Indian agriculture or whether it was still characterized by the semi-feudal mode of production'. A good number of scholars, with some variation in their formulations, argued that capitalist tendencies had started in India with the disintegration of the old system during colonial rule, and that after independence the process of accumulation had gathered greater momentum (Patnaik 1990; Thorner 1982). Another set of scholars, on the basis of their own empirical studies mostly from eastern India, asserted that Indian agriculture was still dominated by a semifeudal mode of production. This position was best articulated by Bhaduri. He argued that the landlords cum moneylenders continued to dominate the process of agricultural production. Peasants and labourers were tied to them through the mechanism of debt that led to 'forced commercialization' of labour and agricultural yield. This produced a self-perpetuating stagnant and exploitative agrarian structure that could be at best described as 'semi-feudal'. The internal logic of this system worked against any possibility of agricultural growth or the development of capitalism in Indian agriculture (Bhaduri 1984).

However, towards the end of the debate there seems to have emerged a consensus that though it may have its local specificities and considerable regional variations, the capitalist mode of production indeed was on its way to dominate the agrarian economy of India and most certainly that of the regions that had experienced the Green Revolution (Thorner 1982).

Agrarian Changes and Agricultural Labour: Did the benefits of the Green Revolution 'trickle-down' to the agricultural labourers? How did it affect them relationally? These have been among the most debated questions in the literature on agrarian change in India.

In a study comparing wage rates of a pre-green revolution year with those of a year after the new technology had been adopted, Bardhan showed that while cash wages of the agricultural labourers had gone up after the introduction of new technology their purchasing power had in fact come down due to an overall increase in prices (Bardhan 1970). Though not everyone would agree with Bardhan, few would dispute that though the Green Revolution brought in an overall prosperity in the countryside, it also multiplied income inequalities within the village as also among different regions of the country (Bagchi 1982; Dhanagare 1988). In a way, it was in recognition of the failures of the 'trickle down' thesis that the 'target group' oriented programmes for poverty alleviation were started during the second half of the 1970s.

During the decade of the seventies, the proportion of agricultural labour to the total population dependent on land also experienced a significant increase. According to one estimate it went up from 16.7 per cent in 1961 to 26.3 per cent in 1971 (Prasad 1994:15). However, micro level studies have shown that the increase was not an effect of land sales by marginal landholders. A substantial part of the new labourers were tenants evicted from land after the Land Reforms or were those who did not own land but were earlier self-employed in their traditional occupations (Bhalla 1976). The Green Revolution made many of the traditional occupations redundant and 'jajmani relations' disintegrated rapidly (Aggarwal 1971; Karanth 1987).

It is generally believed that the process of agricultural modernization is accompanied by a change in the social relations of production leading to freeing of agricultural labour from relations of patronage and institutionalized dependencies. Some scholars did report in their studies that such a process was underway in the Indian countryside, particularly in regions where the Green Revolution had been a success. Breman, for example, observed a process of 'depatronization' being experienced in the farmer-labourer relationship in the villages of South Gujarat (Breman 1974). In a later study he again argued that the inter-generational bondage characterized by extra-economic coercion no longer existed in South Gujarat and that the existing system of attached labour was no longer an unfree relation (Breman 1985). In his study of a Tanjore village in Tamil Nadu, Beteille had also observed a process of formalization in the relationship of landowning castes with the village artisan and landless labourers. They had 'acquired a more or less contractual character' (Beteille 1971). On the basis of her study in the same region as that of Beteille, Gough too reported that the old type of attached labour that was mainly paid in kind was being replaced by the casual day labour, paid largely in cash (Gough 1989: 142). Similarly, despite the elements of continuity that she observed, Bhalla reported that in the Haryana countryside also the relations between farmers and attached labourers were changing into formalized contractual arrangements (Bhalla 1976).

Arguing in a very different mode, Brass questioned the claims that offered a positive conceptualization of attached labour. Contesting the assumption that the voluntariness of attached labour meant freedom, Brass argued that 'while the recruitment may itself be voluntary, in the sense that labourer willingly offers himself for work, it does not follow that the production relation will be correspondingly free in terms of the workers capacity to re-enter the labour market' (Brass 1990:55). Brass argued that in the post green revolution Haryana, where he did a field study, farmers used the mechanism of debt and attachment to 'discipline' labour and 'decompose/ recompose' the labour market, that led to 'deproletarianization' of labour. He asserted that the indebted labourers of Haryana countryside were in fact 'bonded slaves'.

On the basis of my study (Jodhka 1994) in the same region, I argued that while the attached labourers in Haryana were certainly not like the permanent employees of the organized sector, as had been suggested by Rudra (1990) and that elements of lack of freedom were obviously present in their relationship with the farmers, they could not be viewed as bonded slaves because of the overall change in the social framework of agricultural production in contemporary Haryana. I suggested that attached labour in the post-Green Revolution agriculture should be seen more as 'a system of labour mortgage' where the labourers, despite an acute dislike for the relationship, were compelled to accept attachment for an interest-free credit. However, their loss of freedom being temporary in nature, they could not be characterized as bonded slaves. There were many cases where the labourers after having worked as attached labourers for some time had come out of the relationship. The growing integration of the village in the broader market and the increasing availability of alternative sources of employment outside agriculture along with the changing political and ideological environment had been leading to a process that weakened the hold of landowners over the labourers.

The question of unfree labour has continued to be an issue of contention among students of agrarian change in India. While literature coming from different regions seems to confirm that the erstwhile system of attached labour is indeed declining (Sen 1997; Breman 1993; 1996; da Corta and Venkateshwarlu 1999; Lerche 1998; 1999) the nature of change is enormously complex. Agrarian relations are changing in a variety of different ways in different parts of the country. For example, in their study of the Tamil Nadu agriculture, Athreya et. al. found that ecological differences had a role to play in determining agrarian relations. While in dry agriculture family labour was more important, in wet agriculture it was hired labour. A large majority of labourers in both the settings were employed on casual basis and only bigger farmers kept a small core of them as permanent farm servants to complement or substitute family labour. However, it was only in the less developed dry areas where family labour predominated, that a large proportion of attached labourers were bonded to their employers (Athreya et. al 1990). Against this, in the relatively less developed pocket of South Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, the tradition 'vetti' system (attached/bonded labour) had nearly completely disappeared. All labour was employed on casual basis (Vaddiraju 1999). In fact, it was the absence of Green Revolution technology in the region that had weakened the hold of locally dominant castes.

Similarly, several scholars have pointed to the fact that this process of change in labour relations has an interesting gender dimension. While men were leaving attached labour or in some cases even agricultural employment, women were forced to step-in to fulfill the space vacated by them. In other words, the employer farmers allowed male tied labourers to leave more easily if they substituted their female kin, usually their wives to work on land (Kapadia 1996; 1999). This mobility of male labourers to casual or non-farm employment has not only led to what has been described as 'feminization of agriculture labour process' but also to some kind of 'neo-bondage' of female labour (Kapadia 1999; Lerche 1999; da Corta and Venkateshwarlu 1999).

IV

Industrial Development:

As mentioned above, at the time of Independence, India mostly lived in its more than half a million villages. Its stagnant agrarian economy could barely meet the needs of its population. As a consequence more than half of the Indian population could not meet its minimum caloric requirement, and lived below the "poverty line". Famines had been quite a frequent phenomenon during the colonial period.

Though the colonial rulers introduced new technology and laid railways and modern transport system, India did not see any major industrialization during the colonial period. In fact some scholars have argued that India experienced a process of de-industrialization as the traditional craft and industry declined after it was made redundant by the changes introduced by the colonial rule (Gadgil 1933; Moore 1966). This also increased burden on agricultural land.

India's new political elite, and those involved with the planning process had realized quite early in the day that if India was to develop and become a modern democratic society, it would need to industrialize fast. While restructuring agrarian relations was necessary for providing food security and breaking the anti-democratic agrarian social structures through Land Reforms, the future of India lay in its ability to develop itself industrially. The disagreements were mainly on the mode of industrialization. Whiles some advocated for a state-led industrialization, others favoured a purely market driven industrialization by the private capital. However, as mentioned above, at the time of Independence the private capital in India was not strong enough to initiate any large scale industrialization. The state needed to invest in those crucial industries which the private sector would either be not interested in or would not have the capacity to invest in. The fast growth experienced by the socialist countries through direct involvement of the State was also a motivating example (Rubin 1986).

India adopted a framework of mixed economy where the private sector was allowed to operate but within a regime of licenses and quotas. Or in other words, the industrial policy that India evolved reserved certain areas exclusively for the State and kept open some for the private sector. Within the restricted list, certain industries were kept for the central government and some for the state governments. The central government reserved to itself all new enterprises in heavy and basic industries and the national networks

of air transport and telecommunications. The state governments were made responsible for some other infrastructural investments, such as water, power and education. Other industries, mainly consumer goods were left for the private sector. Within the private sectors some areas were also kept reserved for the low technology, small scale industries (Rubin 1986). Economists also make a distinction between the export oriented industrialization and import substitution industrialization. India, during the initial years after Independence, chose the second approach.

How has the Indian industry performed? Though the industrial growth has been consistently positive during the last 50 years or so, the rate of growth has varied considerably. As shown below in Table 4, over the first 15 years (1951-65) of development planning, industry grew at the rate of 7.7 percent. However, it slowed down around the mid-sixties and during the next 15 years (1966-80) it grew only at the rate of 4.4 percent. It picked-up again during the 1980s and went back to the earlier growth rate i.e. above 7 percent.

Table: 4 Growth of industrial production during the post-independence period

Period	Overall	Mining and quarrying	Manufacturing	Electricity
1951-1965	7.7	5.1	7.8	12.7
1966-1980	4.0	3.4	3.6	8.7
1981-1989	7.7	8.4	7.3	9.0

Source: Mohan 1992: 103.

The share of industry in the GDP has also gone up substantially. It went up from less than 12 percent in 1950-51 to 24.6 percent in the 1990-91, and that of manufacturing doubled from mere 10 percent to 20.6 percent during the same period (Mohan 1992:101). The composition of industry also underwent a major change during this period. At the time of independence, the consumer goods industries accounted for almost half of all industrial production. By early nineties, they accounted for only about 20 percent. In contrast the capital goods production went up from less than 4 percent to around 24 percent during the same period. Similarly, the share of basic goods went up from 20 percent to around 40 percent.

With industrial growth, employment in the industrial sector also witnessed growth. The rate of growth of public sector manufacturing employment grew by more than 12 percent during the first 15 years after independence and the corresponding figure for the private sector was around 5 percent. However after the mid-1960s, employment in industrial sector grew at a much slower pace. While it declined to nearly half, to around 6 percent in the public sector, it grew only by a little over 1 percent in the private sector (Rubin 1986:72).

Growth rate of employment in the industrial sector has continued to be slow during the subsequent years. Even when the rate of industrial growth picked-up during the 1980s and in the post-reforms period, employment grew at a much slower rate than the first two decades or so after independence. According to one estimate, during 1981-91, the public sector generated 38.55 lakh new jobs and the private industry generated another 2.82 lakh new jobs. In the following decade, however, the total increase in organized sector employment was mere 12.27 lakh. Within this, most of the new employment was generated in the private sector (9.70 lakh) and the share of public sector declined considerably (2.57 lakhs). From 1997 onwards, total employment in the organized sector, both public and private has, in fact, been declining (Thomas 2002: 166-7). This would appear even more worrying if one was to look at the growth figures of trends in employment in organized sector in relation to the increase in population. According to one estimate, between 1977-8 and 1987-8 the number of workers in the total population grew by 26.80 percent, while the growth in employment during the same period was merely 1.95 percent (Mamkoottam 2003:1278).

The possible factors that could have been responsible for such a scenario are the growing use of new labour saving technologies, and the changing organizational patterns of industries, particularly in the big industries. Beginning with early 1980s, labour-saving technological changes have taken place almost in all braches of Indian industry (Papola 1989).

Indian industry has been undergoing some fundamental changes with regard to its organization. There has been a move towards a two-tiered segmental labour force. In such a system the workforce is often divided into a stable core of permanent workers on the one end, and a large peripheral workforce hired on contractual basis on the other. This makes the employers' obligation towards their workforce much lighter.

Not only are the workers in this peripheral workforce paid lesser wage, they can also be easily fired/retrenched and the employers virtually have no obligation of providing them any kind job benefits, such as provident fund, retirement benefits or even mandatory leave. Though subcontracting has always existed in industry, it appears have to gone-up considerably with the introduction of new technology (Mamkoottam 2003:1279).

Beginning with 1980, the Indian industry also witnessed the emergence of large number ancillary units. The large factories have been decentralizing production process whereby several small units produce exclusively for a big unit. As is the case with contract labour, such an arrangement works well for the big factories and takes care of the possible problems of dealing with trade unions of large bodies of workers working under one roof (Papola 1989).

This process is also linked with a related phenomenon, the informal sector. Though informal employment has always been an important sector of all Third World economies, it was formally conceptualized and promoted during the 1970s and 1980s. Informal sector classically included a large number of economic activities that were not registered anywhere and did not follow any official regulations with regard to employment of labour. Those who were employed in informal sector were invariably poor and marginal to the urban economy. Invariably, they would be also new migrants to the urban centers from rural hinterlands (Bremman 1996). Estimates of the size of the informal sector are not very precise and vary from 30 percent to 70 percent of the urban workforce. Given that a large proportion of those employed in this sector are women and children, there is always an under-reporting (see Bremman 2003; Papola 1981).

At the political level, the net result of these processes has been a growing fragmentation of labour. Decentralization and dispersal of production process have considerably reduced collective strength and bargaining power of the workers. This is clearly reflected in the manner in which the trade union movement has declined in the country during 1990s. Questions concerning labour have gone to the margins not only in the policy discourses on development, but also in research agenda of the social sciences in contemporary India.

V

Democratization and the Caste System

The promise of a modern and democratic society that the leaders of India's freedom movement made to the people when they assumed power from colonial rulers included abolition of the caste system, and caste related disabilities.

The Constitution of independent India made all forms of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, gender or place of birth punishable by law. In fact the independent Indian state went a step further and instituted certain legal and institutional measures, albeit temporarily, to enable the historically disadvantaged groups and communities of people, to participate in the game of democratic politics on equal terms. These included reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes in jobs, education and elected bodies in proportions to their population.

What has happened to the caste system during the last five or six decades? The dominant tendency in sociological literature on caste has been to view it from a cultural perspective or an ideological system, a system of values and ideas, which was peculiarly Indian, and an essential part of classical Hinduism. Such perspectives tend to also look at caste in unitary terms, a pan Indian reality, and without any significant variations in its structure or ideology across different regions or sub-regions of India/south Asia. Its association with Hinduism, where it supposedly had the sanction from some scriptural sources, further reinforces such a stance. The fact that caste differences exist among non-Hindu Indians is invariably seen only as an evidence of their Hindu ancestry (Jodhka 2004). Such perspectives also ignored the elements of power and domination that were so central to the everyday working of caste (Mencher 1975; Deshpande 2003).

However, despite its pan Indian presence, the actual frames of reference of caste are regional in character, which ought to be looked at historically. As is widely known, there are different sets of caste

groups in different regions. The specific historical trajectory, the patterns of politico-economic changes experienced during the colonial and post-independence period and the composition of different ethnic communities determine the actual working of caste relations in a given region. Overlooking these obvious facts about caste also makes it appear like an unchanging reality.

As discussed above bringing about a transformation in the rural power structure was an important component of the development process right from the beginning. One of the main objectives of Land Reform legislations was to weaken the power of absentee landlords and landed elite. Further, on the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee the three-tier Panchayati Raj system was introduced during the early 1960 in order to democratize the local level power structure and decentralize governance. Since then there have been several reviews of the working of the system by committees and commissions appointed by the Government of India. On the recommendations of these committees, several changes and reforms have also been introduced in order to make the system more effective.

The net impact of the developmental process and democratization on caste varies across different regions of India and so do the conceptualizations of these changes.

The studies carried out during the first two or three decades after independence pointed to the continued power of the traditionally dominant caste groups in most of rural India. In caste terms, the rural power revolved around the landowning dominant caste (Srinivas 1955) and in class terms, it was the rich landowners and moneylenders who controlled the rural economy (Thorner 1956). Independent studies by scholars from different regions tended to suggest that panchayats too became an arena of influence and power for the already dominant groups in rural India (for a broader review of this literature see Alexander 2000; Oommen 1985).

However, more recently, studies tend to suggest a loosening of the traditional structures of power/ domination. On the basis of his work in Rajasthan, Oliver Mendelsohn, for example, argued that though Srinivas was right in talking about 'dominant caste' during 1950, such formulation made lesser sense in the present day rural India. The 'low caste and even untouchable villagers were now less beholden to their economic and ritual superiors than was suggested in older accounts' (Mendelsohn 1993: 808). Similarly, 'land and authority had been de-linked in village India and this amounted to an historic, if non-revolutionary transformation' (ibid: 807).

Writing on the basis of his field experience in Karnataka, Karanth argued that the traditional association of caste with occupation was weakening and the Jajmani ties were fast disintegrating (Karanth 1996). I too found a similar kind of change being witnessed in rural Punjab. The older structure of Jajmani or Balutedari system had nearly completely disintegrated in most of rural Punjab. I conceptualized this process through the categories of dissociation, distancing and autonomy (Jodhka 2002a). As was also earlier argued by Karanth in the case of Karnataka, with the exception of a few occupations, no more was there any association between caste and occupation in rural Punjab. Further, Dalits in Punjab had also begun to distance themselves from the village economy and disliked working in farms owned by local Jats. They were also trying to construct their own cultural centres like religious shrines and community halls in order to establish their autonomy in the rural power structure. A study from rural Bihar also similarly reported an erosion of traditional jajmani ties. Here also hold of the village community over individuals' choice of occupation was virtually absent (Sahay 1998).

Those who have focused specifically on the practice of untouchability and discrimination against Dalits also point to similar processes. Dalits have almost everywhere become much more assertive about their human and political rights (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998:1). What ever might have been the case in the past, there would be very few among the ex-untouchables today who would regard themselves as impure or justify their low status on grounds of their misconduct in some previous life, a "fact of nature" (Charsley and Karanth 1998). Today they "all aspire to more comfortable material circumstances; all demand more dignity" (Deliege 1999:1999). This however has not necessarily resulted in an alleviation of their social conditions. Some scholars have argued that while ideologically caste has considerably weakened and older forms of untouchability are receding, atrocities committed on Dalits by the local dominant castes have in fact increased (Beteille 2000; Shah 2000).

Caste and politics: Notwithstanding the changes that have been experienced in every day practice of caste system, caste continues to play an important role in Indian politics. In some ways, its presence has become

more pronounced over the last two or three decades. This however, does not mean that caste has been able to sabotage the working of democratic system in India. On the contrary, literature on electoral politics points to a process of deepening of democracy (see Yadav 1999; Palshikar 2004). How could one make sense of such a scenario? And how does the continued presence of caste augur for the Indian democracy?

Unlike the pioneering political leadership of the nationalist movement, who laid the foundations of democratic institutions in India, sociologists and political scientists working on the changing realities of caste or the dynamics of polity-society interaction had a more realistic attitude towards caste. Notwithstanding their personal predispositions towards liberal democracy and faith in evolutionist notions of social change, the inevitability of Western style of modernization, many of them recognized the tremendous resilience that caste could have. Quite early on they had begun to report on the likely impact that caste could have on the working of democratic institutions, and in turn the implications of a new form of politics for the system of caste hierarchy. For example, some of them were quick to recognize the fact that instead of completely replacing the traditional "ascriptive structures" of caste society to an open system of social stratification based on individual choice and achievement, new modes of governance and growing use of modern technology could in some ways strengthen caste.

Commenting on the nature of change being experienced in caste with the rise of non-Brahmin movements in southern provinces, G.S. Ghurye had argued as early as in 1932 that attack on hierarchy by such mobilizations did not necessarily mean end of caste. These mobilizations generated a new kind of collective sentiment, "the feeling of caste solidarity" which could be "truly described as caste patriotism" (Ghurye 1932: 192).

Similarly, M. N. Srinivas, argued that far from disappearing with the process of modernization, caste was experiencing a "horizontal consolidation" (Srinivas 1962:74-75). In order to be able to take advantage of opportunities opened up by the new system or representative democracy first introduced by the British rulers, "caste groups, as traditionally understood, entered into alliances with each other to form bigger entities" (Srinivas 1962:5).

However, this was not a one-way process. The caste system too was undergoing a change. The horizontal solidarity of caste, which also meant a kind of 'competition' among different castes at the politico-economic plane, eventually weakened the vertical solidarity of caste (Srinivas 1962:74; Bailey 1958). This process received a further impetus with the introduction of democratic politics after India's independence.

Political scientists working on the electoral process or social mobilizations during the post-independence period also tried to come to terms with the continued significance of caste in Indian politics. Beginning with the late 19th century, different parts of the sub-continent began to witness the emergence of 'caste associations'. Viewed from the classical assumptions of the modernization theory, they could be seen simply as examples of Indian tradition trying to assert itself against the modernizing tendencies unleashed by an alien ruler or the new democratic system of representation based on individual/secular citizenship of the modern nation state.

Some scholars, however, went beyond such simplistic notions and argued that these mobilizations had a qualitatively different meaning. Rudolf and Rudolf, for example, argued that a caste association was

....no longer an ascriptive association in the sense in which caste taken as jati was and is. It has taken on features of the voluntary association. Membership in caste association is *not* purely ascriptive; birth in the caste is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for membership. One must also "join" through some conscious act involving various degrees of identification.... (Rudolf and Rudolf 1967:33 emphasis in original)

A little later Rajni Kothari too argued, more or less, on similar lines while talking about caste associations (Kothari 1970: 21-22). Thus, it is not only the politics that gets "caste-ridden" but in this process caste also gets "politicized", which eventually weakens/erodes the caste system, as we understand it (ibid:20). Taking Kothari's argument further, Sudipta Kaviraj has once again reminded us about the plasticity of tradition and the fact that 'caste groups, instead of crumbling with historical embarrassment, in fact, adapted themselves surprisingly well to the demands of the parliamentary politics'. Their participation in electoral politics also transformed 'the structural properties of caste in one fundamental respect: it

created a democracy of castes in place of a hierarchy' (Kaviraj 2000:103). In competitive electoral politics what mattered for a political party was the number of votes a given caste group had and what was the extent of its spatial concentration. Thus, in the Indian case "democratic equality", the experience of participating in electoral politics, "has mainly been translated as *equality between caste groups*, not among caste-less individuals" (ibid:109, emphasis added).

While, in a sense, Kaviraj is right, his formulation also has its limitations. We must recognize the need for differentiated discussion of caste when we discuss it in relation to democratic politics. The experience of participating in democratic politics varies significantly among different caste groups. In other words, we must begin with the question, 'which caste's participation in democratic politics are we talking about'? The meanings and experiences of caste vary significantly across caste groups. The experience of being a member of a Dalit caste, for example, is very different from that of being a member of the "upper" or landowning "dominant" caste.

It was rather easy for the caste groups above the "pollution line" to horizontally consolidate themselves after the colonial rulers introduced modern technology and later, after independence with the introduction democratic political institutions at various levels. One could identify several such caste communities that were able consolidate themselves through the formation of caste association and experienced considerable social mobility. The best example in this context would be of the Nadar of Tamil Nadu (see Hardgrave 1969; Rudolf and Rudolf 1967; also see the volume edited by Kothari 1970). One could also count in the same wane the experience of social, political and economic mobility of a large number of other caste groups, such as Reddys and Kammas of Andhra Pradesh, Vokkaliga and Lingayats of Karnataka, Yadavas and Jats in northern India. However, the experience of Dalit castes has been very different. While the upper and dominant castes were able to politicize themselves quite easily, autonomous Dalit politics came to the scene much later, only during the 1980s (Jodhka 2005).

Myron Weiner (2001) and many other scholars⁵ have rightly pointed to the fact that the rise of caste based political mobilizations among Dalits and other "backward caste" was made possible by "the deconstruction of the ideology underlying caste" (Weiner 2001:199), which itself was a consequence of the modernist consciousness promoted by the freedom movement, and the legal strictures against the practice of untouchability or caste discrimination introduced in the Constitution of India adopted in 1950. However, as mentioned above, caste is not about ritual hierarchies alone. It was also bound by the local level political economy. Thus, even when ideologically caste had lost its "moral basis", the subjugation of Dalits in the agrarian economy remained nearly intact. It was only after the disintegration of rural political economy, as has happened in Punjab during the post-Green Revolution period, that Dalits could acquire a certain degree of autonomy and began to assert in local politics.

VI

The Schedule Tribes:

Along with Scheduled Castes the Indian Constitution also identified some other communities and groups of population worthy of special treatment or protective discrimination, viz. the Scheduled Tribes. As with the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes were also extended the benefits of reservation policy - in education, government jobs and electoral system - roughly in proportion to their population.

With the exception of the state of Haryana, Punjab, Delhi and Chandigarh, the Scheduled Tribes population is spread all over India. However, nearly 85 percent of them are concentrated in the nine or ten states of central/ middle India. Interestingly however, the predominantly tribal inhabited states of the country where they are more than 50 percent of the total population are all in the Northeast of India, viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland. The Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep also have a majority of Scheduled Tribe population.

There are as many as 533 tribes included in the Schedule in Article 342 of the Constitution of India. They vary significantly in terms of their size. While Gonds (roughly 7.4 million) and Santals (approximately 4.2 million) are among the larger communities, Chaimals in the Andaman are perhaps the smallest group. They were only eighteen in number in 1991. As a whole the proportion of Scheduled Tribes population has been

growing quite consistently during the post-Independence period, which also implies that the Scheduled Tribe population in India has grown at a higher rate than the total population of India. Some of this could have also been because of the addition of new communities to the scheduled list. In 1951 the Scheduled Tribes constituted 5.29 percent of the total population of India. It went up to 6.93 percent in 1971 and further to 8.1 percent in 1991. However in the following decade it increased only marginally. In 2001 the Scheduled Tribe population stood at 8.2 percent of the total Indian population.

Apart from the statutory provision of reservations, Government of India and the state government have also initiated various development programmes for their welfare. However, the developmental experience of Scheduled Tribes has been very different from that of the Scheduled Castes. While the later have certainly gained out of the process development and democratization over the last five decades, the experience of the former has been mixed.

Notwithstanding the significance diversities in the groups included in the Scheduled list, unlike the Scheduled Castes, who were mostly property-less, the tribals in most cases had control over productive resources. A good number of them lived "away" from the "mainland", in jungles and hills, but they had de-facto ownership of those productive resources.

Beginning with British colonial rule, and introduction of formal private ownership on land, tribals in most parts of India were systematically dispossessed of their traditional sources of livelihood. The colonial rulers saw in forests a lucrative source of earnings. Some of the forests were handed over to contractors for commercial felling of trees for wood. The area under forest cover declined drastically and came down from around 40 percent in 1854 to a mere 22 percent in 1952 of the total mass of land (Xaxa 2003: 388-9).

Incidentally, after Independence there was no major change in State's attitude towards forests and the traditional rights of tribals over these resources (Guha 1994; Roy-Burman 1994). On the contrary, the tribals were severely affected by some of the developmental projects launched by the Indian state during the post-independence period. As per a report of the Ministry of Tribal Welfare, though they have been less than 8 percent of India's population, they constitute around 55 percent of all the displaced people in India (as in Nathan 2004:33). According to another estimate, during the first three Five Year Plans more than 50,000 Scheduled Tribes were forced to vacate their ancestral homes in the present day state of Jharkhand alone for the setting-up of government initiated projects. The number of ousted tribal population would be much larger if one was to also add those affected by the setting-up of coal mines by private operators in the region.

While many of the large development projects were set-up in tribal areas, the beneficiaries of these new economic ventures were invariably "outsiders". The Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste got employment only at the lower level. In fact, the massive in-migrations that accompanied the industrialization of some of the tribal regions also resulted in their further marginalization (Xaxa 2003:389). In some cases this marginalization also produced mobilizations and violent movements among different tribal communities. The emergence of a small middle class among them has also heightened the sense of separate identity among them.

The Scheduled Tribe population is perhaps among the least developed and perhaps among the most marginalized sections of the Indian society. As per 1991 Census, the literacy rate among them was far below the national average. Against the all India figure of 52.2 percent, only 29.6 percent of the Scheduled Tribe population was literate. Similarly as many as 44 percent of the Scheduled Tribes lived below poverty line in 1999-2000, while the comparable figure for the general category population was only 16 percent (Nathan 2004:33). Same holds true for most other indicators of development. Given their low level of education, and perhaps general state of exclusion from the "mainstream" India, they have also not been able to benefit from the special measures initiated for their welfare/ development by the Indian state. For example, when compared with their counterpart Schedule Castes, they have benefited far lesser from the reservation policy in education and government jobs (Xaxa 2001).

VII

Democratization and Gender Relations:

Though the category of gender is of a rather recent origin, the question of equality between men and women has been an issue for quite some time in India. In the context of modern India, this question emerged with social reforms during the colonial period and remained an important issue all through the freedom struggle.

Inspired by the modern values of Western liberalism, the 19th century reformers worked with the British colonial rulers in getting legislations passed against some of the then prevailing practices that denied basic human rights to upper caste Hindu women. The prominent questions during this period were those of sati, child marriage and prohibition on widow re-marriage. However, "the women question" went to the background as Indian nationalists emphasized on 'the spiritual distinctiveness of Indian culture' in opposition to the materialist West (Chatterjee 1993). Women were to continue taking on the primary function of maintaining this cultural essence, and thus were to keep away from becoming westernized. In other words, the ideological framework of nationalism drew upon 'the identification of social roles by gender' in the home versus its binary, the outside material world. The material world was external, nationalists argued, while the essential spirit lay within, inside the home, and which remained 'undominated, sovereign, master of its own fate'. Thus women could be educated, and indeed should be so, but also be respectable, against the Western women who moved freely in the material world (ibid:121-127).

Notwithstanding such "conservative" aspects of nationalist ideology, women continued to actively participate in the nationalist struggle. From Gandhi's satyagrahas to communist and peasant mobilizations, women could be seen everywhere in the freedom movement. The first women's organizations in the sub-continent also came-up during the nationalist struggle. The All India Women's Conference was formed in early 1927. Besides, the Indian National Congress also deliberated upon the question during its annual sessions, and appointed committees to look into specific issues relating to women's inclusion in the agenda for the new nation (see Chaudhuri 2004).

When India adopted its new Constitutions after Independence, women were granted equal political and civic rights, without any qualifications, whatsoever. Special provisions were also made for women's uplift. However, women/feminist scholars have rightly pointed to the fact that up to the fifth Five Years Plan the emphasis was on providing 'women' with welfare and 'protection' rather than helping them develop their potentials as equal citizens (Chitnis 2004:17). In other words, until around the middle of 1970s the planning models adopted by the Indian state largely remained gender-blind. Most of the economic analyses were carried-out using house-hold as the basic unit of economic activity and social life. The intra-household differences - difference between men and women - with regards to the social and economic status or distribution of scarce resources among individuals of the two categories were rarely analyzed or discussed while formulating Plans and programmes for development.

The decade of 1970s was an important turning point in this regard. The United Nation declared 1974 as the International Women's Year. Government of India had already appointed an independent committee to look into the specific problems of Indian women during the early years of 1970s and its report *Towards Equality* was released in 1974. This report turned out to be a watershed and became a base for rethinking the question of women in planning for development.

The autonomous women's movements that emerged during the 1970s and in the following decade also developed critiques of approaches to women's development. They criticized one of the fundamental assumptions of public policy and liberal thinking, the public-private dichotomy. Such gender-blind thinking rarely recognized the value of household work, reproduction and procreation. They emphasized on the critical need of incorporating women's experience in the knowledge about cultures and society (Harding 1987). They criticized the simplistic assumptions about evolutionary change underlying much of development thinking, liberal or Marxist. Implicit in both Marxist and liberal theory was the assumption of a simple correlation between labour force participation and women's status (Verma 2004).

Some of these critiques were eventually accommodated in the planning process. From the sixth Plan onwards emphasis shifted from 'welfare' and 'protection' to involving women as 'partners in development' (Chitnis 2004:17). Under the new 'target group' oriented schemes for poverty alleviation and other programmes, separate quotas were allocated for women.

Though much awareness and progress in the sphere of understanding gender/women is question has taken place over the last four or five decades, changes on the ground have been fairly limited. The gender question was incorporated in the conception of planning, but there has been very little monitoring of 'the actual practices of the state, which get reflected through the implementation of policy on the ground' (John 2004 251). In fact some have argued that the position of women in India has seen no significant change. The prevailing scenario is well articulated in the following words by Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen:

In much of the country, women tend in general to fare quite badly in relative terms compared with men, even within the same families. This is reflected not only in such matters as education and opportunity to develop talents, but also in more elementary fields of nutrition, health, and survival. Indeed, the mortality rates of females tend to exceed those of males until the late twenties....One result is a remarkably low ratio of females to males in Indian population compared with the corresponding ratio not only in Europe and North America, but also in Sub-Saharan Africa (Dreze and Sen 2002: 229).

The growing availability of new technologies that help knowing sex of the fetus in early stages of pregnancy has significantly increased sex selective practice of aborting fetus. Given that there has not been much societal effort at changing patriarchal cultural values that make families prefer male children, such a trend was not hard to predict. As the available data from the 2001 Census has shown, the ratio of women against men has generally declined the most in relatively developed states of India.

Recognizing their continued marginal position in the social and economic sphere, the Indian state initiated some new steps towards politically empowering them. One of the most talked about initiative in the recent years has been the 73rd Constitution Amendment passed by the Indian Parliament in 1990 under which 30 percent seats were reserved for women at all levels of representation in the local level institutions, in village Panchayats. This was followed by the 74th Constitution Amendment under which similar arrangement was made for local level institutions in urban India. Women groups have also been demanding extension of this quota to state legislatures and the national parliament.

What difference has the participation of women in the local level representative institutions made? Scholars who have looked at the actual working of quotas for women in Panchayati Raj institutions have come up with mixed findings. Some of them have pointed to the obvious fact that women were working only as nominal heads and the real power remained with their men. Some of them also criticized the conception of such reforms. How could they be effective without implementing more fundamental reforms, they ask (Kumar 1995).

However, others have argued that the presence of women in these positions of power did make some difference, not only to those who got elected to panchayats but also to the village as a whole. Datta, for example, reported that in villages where women were in power, corruption was lesser and there was greater demand from official agencies for providing better services to the village communities (Datta 1998). Similarly, on the basis of her study of rural Karnataka Gowda argued that women's participation in local level institutions enabled them to emerge as effective leaders and also to act as catalytic agents by inspiring confidence and providing stimulus for social change among rural women (Gowda 1998; also see Baviskar 2002) Notwithstanding such positive achievements, much remains to be done to transform the prevailing structures of gender relations in contemporary India.

VIII

Democratic Experience of India's Ethnic Minorities:

The minority question in India has perhaps been one of the most complicated ones. Unlike class, caste, tribe and gender, there has virtually been no recognition of ethnicity as a dimension of social stratification/discrimination or backwardness in the planning documents. Partition of the sub-continent on communal lines is perhaps the most obvious factor behind such a "silence". The term "ethnic minorities" has also not been very popular with the social scientists working on Indian society. There have also been problems with the question of identifying ethnic minorities. One could identify minorities on various grounds, religion, language, region, or even caste and tribe. As discussed above, the trajectory of social science and policy discourses on 'caste' and 'tribe' has been very different.

Though questions relating to ethnic minorities and cultural identities have not been much talked about, the independent Indian state has had to deal with these issues right from the day it came into existence. Questions of language and regional identities, for example, came up as challenges almost immediately after independence. Starting with the movement for a separate Andhra Pradesh, different regions mobilized themselves for autonomous status and asked for a federal structure that would redraw provincial boundaries on linguistic grounds (Brass 1974). Much of this was resolved following recommendations of the State Re-organization Commission which submitted its report in 1956. However, some regions, such as Punjab and the Northeast, were more difficult and the simple principal of language could not be applied for their re-organization. The question of territorial boundaries remained contentious in these regions even after they were re-organized.

Further, regionalist mobilizations did not end with linguistic reorganization of the states. As the democratic process took root in India, new interests began to take shape. The newly emerging mobile classes developed new aspirations. The decades of 1960s and 1970s witnessed the 'second wave' of regionalist movements (Kaviraj 1997; Gupta 1990). These were the movements by 'sons of the soil' and, in a way, signaled the growing consolidation of regional elites, who mostly came from the middle level castes, and aspired to replace the erstwhile dominant "upper" castes (Weiner 1978; Gupta 1982).

The third and perhaps the most difficult wave of regionalist mobilizations emerged during the 1980s. These movements arose mostly in India's peripheries, the Northeast, Punjab, and Kashmir. Apart from being much more violent in comparison to the earlier regionalist mobilizations, they also questioned the sovereign authority of the Indian nation-state. The Khalistan movement in Punjab and the autonomy movements in the Northeast and Kashmir demanded secession from India. It was perhaps for the first time after independence that the Indian nation-state encountered such challenges. While the situation has returned to near complete normalcy in some regions, such as Punjab and Assam, the problem still persists in Kashmir and parts of the Northeast.

India's Religious Minorities: More than language and region, the expression of majority-minority has been used for religious groups. Notwithstanding internal diversities, the Hindus constitute an overwhelming majority religious group. As per the 2001 Census, Hindus were around 81 percent of India's total Population. Among the religious minorities, the largest are Muslims. According to the 2001 Census, they were around 12 percent of the total population of India. The others, such as Christians (2.3 percent) and Sikhs (1.9 percent) though smaller in the all India context, have their own pockets of presence. The Buddhists (0.8 percent) and Jains (0.4) are also not insignificant.

The experience of being a member of a minority group varies significantly across communities in present day India. While Buddhists and Jains have perhaps never felt marginalized as ethnic communities in the Indian population, the Muslims have borne the maximum brunt of being a minority. The experience of the Christians and the Sikhs has been mixed in nature.

Given that the subcontinent was partitioned on communal lines, the Indian Muslims continued to be target of prejudice even though India chose secularism as its state ideology. The partition affected Indian Muslims in yet another way, particularly in north India. The better-off among them left for Pakistan, while the relatively poor stayed back. This created a peculiar crisis of leadership among them. Notwithstanding the significant socio-economic and cultural differences among them, Muslims in India have remained a relatively "backward" and marginal community. The level of education and quality of employment has been poorer among them than the other communities and they have been very poorly represented in the positions of power and influence, from bureaucracy to legislative bodies. Though their population has been more than 10 percent of the total Indian population, the proportion of Muslims members in the Lok Sabha has, on an average, been around 6 percent only (Ansari 2002:142).

Muslims have also experienced communal mobilizations against them, much more than any other minority community. While there have been cases, where members of other minority communities, particularly the Sikhs and the Christians, too have been involved, they have not been targets of sustained prejudice and hate as has been the case with Muslims. Cases involving rioting between sections of the local Hindu majorities, often organized by right-wing political formations, and the Muslims have been a recurring phenomenon. The available evidence clearly suggests that whenever a communal riot breaks out, Muslims end-up being the victims (Hussain 2002:129).

Who are India's majorities? While it is perhaps relatively easy to talk about minorities, identifying India's majority is quite a difficult task. As Weiner rightly points out, to be a part of a majority community in the Indian context is perhaps more a matter of self-identification than a simple objective fact. According to him, two overlapping identities that have been competing for majority status in independent India have been those of religion (Hinduism) and speakers of various regional languages (Weiner 1985).

Though in terms of simple demographics, the Hindus do constitute an overwhelming majority in India, the ground reality would however be very different if one was to look at the question of minority-majority from a sociological perspective, viz. in terms of power relations. For example, with the exception of those belonging to Sikh and Buddhist communities, the Scheduled Castes are also listed as Hindus. Similarly, a large majority of Scheduled Tribes and the backward castes, who are invariably marginal and deprived groups in their local contexts, are also included among the Hindus. Put together, these relatively deprived categories may turn out to be a demographic majority within those who are listed as Hindus in the Indian Census.

Linguistically also majority-minority question is not so simple. The anti-Hindi movement of the 1960s in the Southern states of India seemed to have died out and along with English it has increasingly come to be accepted as a link language across regions. While Hindi is indeed the language with much larger number of speakers (around 40 percent), the speaker of Hindi do not constitute a single community in any sociologically meaningful sense. Apart from Hindi there were as many as 17 other recognized (Scheduled) languages and 21 non-scheduled languages for which Census was conducted in 1991. Different regional languages have their own territorial communities and have had occasion to develop and prosper. Further, English continues to be the primary language for most categories of Indian elite.

IX

State Power and Social Movements:

Looking at the sociology of India's political elite, we notice some interesting trends. The social origin and ideology of the new elite that emerged during the colonial period, and eventually provided leadership to the nationalist movement, was very different from the earlier landed aristocracy. Though they mostly came from the erstwhile dominant communities/castes/classes, their socialization and orientation was mostly urban, emanating from their professional training in the Western institutions of learning, English medium local schools or the British universities. These lawyers, doctors, teachers, and journalists (mostly from Brahmin, Bania and other upper castes) eventually emerged as leaders of the Indian nationalist movement. Though the landed gentry were not completely marginalized, its monopoly over institutions of power was certainly broken. The old ideas of hierarchy and feudal power began to give way to new ideas of 'equality, liberty and freedom'. These new elites, as Srinivas argued, were 'two-faced, one face turned towards their own society, while the other was turned towards the West. They were spokesmen for the West as far as their own people were concerned, and spokesmen for their people, as far as the rulers were concerned' (Srinivas 1966: 80).

Apart from those from professional backgrounds, the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, as also the industrial working classes, had their own sphere of influence within the emerging power structure (Singh 1973; Desai 1947). India also witnessed a variety of mobilizations by different sections of the peasantry, both before and after independence. While the communist parties mobilized peasantry with a radical agenda of a social revolution, Gandhi and the Indian National Congress tried to bring peasants into the freedom struggle by raising the land questions as a part of the nationalist movement.

It was in this fluid structure of interests that the State after India's independence could enjoy a certain degree of autonomy and implement land reforms, though with a limited success. Abolition of intermediaries enlarged social basis of land ownership in the Indian countryside. When the electoral system began to take roots in the Indian soil, these middle level caste communities, who would generally be classified as Shudras in the traditional varna hierarchy of the Indian caste system emerged as the regionally powerfully groups (Frankel and Rao 1990).

By the early 1970s, the profile of the Indian political elite had undergone many important changes. The new political elite of democratic India began to articulate values and aspirations of rural dominant castes and regional interest-groups. 'The diffuse ideological orientation of pre-Independence days was found to be increasingly absent in the consciousness of the emerging new political elites' (Singh Y. 1973:139). This process of shift from the 'politics of ideology' to the 'politics of representation' continued during the decades of 1980s and 1990s as well (Yadav 1999; Palshikar 2004).

Apart from a wider consolidation of democratic political process at social and cultural levels, the decades of 1980s also saw some interesting new trends. The decade witnessed rise of several 'new' social movements. These new mobilizations questioned the wisdom of the developmental agenda being pursued with much enthusiasm by the post-colonial state. The following decade saw the beginning of liberalization policies and a gradual withdrawal of the state from the sphere of economy. This was an important ideological shift, a decline of the Nehruvian framework of development and social transformation (see Das 1994; Jodhka 2001).

Coupled with the changes in the geopolitics of the world following the collapse of Soviet Union, the end of Cold War, the unleashing of new technologies of telecommunications, this period also saw the beginning of a new phase in the reach of the global capital. This process of 'globalization', as it has come to be known, was not confined to the economy alone. It has also influenced culture and politics everywhere and has opened up new possibilities for social action and networking.

It was around this time that "new" political questions like environment, gender, human rights came-up almost simultaneously in different parts of the world. Networking across national boundaries gave them a different kind of legitimacy and strength. For example, the movement against the construction of dam across Narmada River invested considerable amount of energies in mobilizing internal public opinion and the global funding agencies against the project with some degree of success. Similarly the question of human rights violations are watched and commented upon by global agencies. The question of gender rights is articulated, more or less, similarly at the global level and women's organizations working in India actively network with their counterparts in other parts of the world. Even the Dalit movement, which rediscovered itself during the 1980s and 1990s, has tried to take the question of caste to international platforms by linking it to the question of race (see Thorat and Umakant 2004).

Another important trend that took off during this period was the growing involvement of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) with development. The advocates of the NGO movement argued that voluntary action could be a viable alternative to state sponsored programmes like IRDP, which were unable to help the rural poor. The NGOs, they argued, could become a 'potent instrument for bringing about social transformation and building an egalitarian and humane society. It may be only a protest forum in the short run, but over time, it had considerable potential for effective social change' (Dantawala et. al. 1998: 9).

Though it was Mahatma Gandhi who had advocated voluntarism long ago and some Gandhians had been practicing it all through, the NGO movement took off in India only with the growing interest of international funding agencies with issues of the rural poor. The paradigm shift from state oriented development to market driven economy also helped in giving legitimacy to the NGO movement. With NGOs came a new language of development: empowerment, participation, participatory research appraisal (PRA), social capital etc. One of the most popular and effective programme initiated by NGOs has been the promotion of thrift societies (Dantawala et. al. 1998; Rajasekhar 1998; Khan et. al. 1989; Srivastava 1999).

What have been the implications of these new trends for democracy, particularly at the social, economic and cultural levels?

Though these have been hotly debated issues in the Indian society over the last decade or so, one can not say anything very conclusively. Economists commenting on the process globalization and economic reforms have been divided into two camps. Those who support the regime point to significantly higher rates of economic growth that India has been witnessing ever since it initiated reforms. Even in terms of its economic benefits, they argue, rich and middle classes are not the only ones who have benefited. With expansion of economic activity and growing opportunities, the poor and marginalized have also benefited. This, according to them, is evident from the available data on poverty. According to official sources, and the data collected by some independent agencies, poverty levels in India have come down considerably

over the last twenty years or so. As per the Government of India's Economic Survey 2000-01 from nearly 55 percent in 1973, the proportion of India's population living below poverty line came down to around 26 percent in 1999. Some others, put this figure even lower. Surjit Bhalla, for example, argues quite passionately in defense of reforms. According to him:

No matter what the data source, survey or national accounts, growth is shown to lead to poverty decline, almost one for one. No growth, no poverty reduction is the only conclusion. ...economic reforms initiated in 1991 have led to a radical transformation in the well being of the bottom half of the population. From an approximate level of 38 percent in 1987, poverty level in India in 1998 was close to 12 percent (Bhalla 2004).

However, there are many economists who loudly contest such claims and argue that actual drop in poverty has been much lesser than what most of the estimates being projected by the Planning Commission of Government of India or International agencies. Abhijit Sen and Himanshu argue that poverty estimates were very sensitive to both survey design and post-survey analysis. The poverty ratio, according to them fell at most by 3 percentage points between 1993-94 and 1999-2000, and it is likely that the absolute number of poor actually increased over this period (Sen and Himanshu 2004)

Some scholars have also been critical of economic reforms and the resultant process of globalization for what they see as its larger political implications. Globalization, they argue, is a "neo-colonial" process that weakens the ability of sovereign States like India to intervene in their economies for social change and development. The growing power of transnational organizations and global institutions manipulate policy making processes in a manner that would suit Western capital and multinational corporations, eventually leading to a process of unfreedom (for example see Patnaik 2003).

Some others have argued that this kind of capitalist globalization could also be harmful for India's food security. With globalization taking roots in Indian soil, the priorities of Indian farmers would be dictated by external factors instead of the requirements of local populace. In the new regime of market driven production, farmers may move to production of those commercial crops that have greater demand in the global market, resulting in a shortage of food grains in the country. According to them, this is precisely what happened when the British colonial rulers forced the Indian peasants to produce cotton over food grains in order to meet the demands of raw material of new Industries after the industrial revolution in Britain during the nineteenth century (see, for example, Patnaik 1998).

However, it may still be too early to make any conclusive statement on social and cultural aspects of globalization. Much of the available literature has looked at it in terms of policy. We still need to formulate relevant questions that could help us make sense of the changes being experienced in the Indian society with globalization. Moreover, in some ways, globalization is not a matter of policy choice alone. It is also a process of epochal change, a name given to the changes being experienced in the post-Cold War world.

X

Emerging Trends:

India has reasons to feel proud of its ability to work with democratic institutions. Not only have democratic institutions worked, more or less undisturbed, over the last more than five decades, democracy has also played a role in shaping socio-economic and cultural life of the Indian people. Democracy is valuable not merely as a political system. It also plays a crucial role in shaping economic structures and social institutions.

In 1947 when the native elites took the reins of power from the British colonial rulers, India was not only a country torn with communal strife that followed partition, but it was also a poor country. India's choice to pursue democratic system of governance was seen by the global community with skepticism and doubt. Democracies had generally been a feature of developed nations. The political elite of India were acutely aware of this fact. It was for this reason that democracy in India, at least during the early decades after

independence, was always seen to be dependent on its ability to economically develop fast and improve the well-being of its citizens. Developing infrastructure for rapid industrialization, expanding sphere of economic opportunities, providing basic services - education, health, food security - all became part and parcel of India's agenda for development.

At the time of its independence from the colonial rule India was primarily an agrarian society, with more than 80 percent of its population living in its over half a million villages. Agrarian economy was largely stagnant and caste ties still played a crucial role in the everyday social and economic life.

The above discussion clearly shows that village life, both in terms of class as well as caste, has undergone many important changes. However, given the enormous diversities and vastness of the Indian nation-state, the nature and extent of change varies. Notwithstanding the diversity of this experience of change, one can also say rather confidently that there would be hardly any pocket of India today that has been left untouched by the process of development and democratization. With the changes being experienced in the economic, social/political relations, the idea of village has also been changing quite significantly.

Though Indian village was never an isolated and unchanging entity, the changes experienced over the last five decades or so have initiated a process where its older structures, either conceptualized in terms of jajmani type of patron-client ties or semi-feudal relations of production, have begun to disintegrate in a very fundamental and irreversible manner. This indeed opens up possibilities for the working of democratic institutions more easily.

However, the future of India, and its democratic institutions can not be understood by looking at its villages alone. Though in simple demographic terms more than 70 percent of the Indian population continues to live in rural India, the centre of activity has increasingly moved towards the city. The contribution of agriculture to the gross national income of India has come down to below a quarter of the total. As is shown in Table 5 below the number of those employed in agriculture has also been declining, and in some states it has come down quite significantly. In the agriculturally developed state of Punjab, for example, less than 40 percent of the total number of main workers worked on land for earning their livelihood. For the country as a whole also more than 40 percent of the main workers now work in non-agricultural occupations.

Though the Indian economy over the last two decades has been growing at a much faster rate than in the first forty years after independence, the momentum of growth in the agrarian economy has slowed down. With growing mechanization, the capacity of Indian agriculture to absorb additional population has also been declining. The urban industry and service sectors have indeed been growing but nature of their growth may not be what one would desire for the working of healthy democracy. The Indian middle class has expanded in every sense of the term, particularly after the introduction of economic reforms during the early 1990s.

Table 5: Distribution of workers by category of workers and other workers 2001

India/State	Agricultural Household industry			
	Cultivators	labourers	workers	Other worker
	%	%	%	%
All India	31.7	26.5	4.2	37.6
Jammu & Kashmir	42.4	6.6	6.2	44.8
Himachal Pradesh	65.3	3.1	1.8	29.8
Punjab	22.6	16.3	3.7	57.4
Uttaranchal	50.1	8.3	2.3	39.3
Haryana	36.0	15.3	2.6	46.1
Rajasthan	55.3	10.6	2.9	31.2
Uttar Pradesh	41.1	24.8	5.6	28.5
Bihar	29.3	48.0	3.9	18.8
Sikkim	49.9	6.5	1.6	42.0
Arunachal Pradesh	57.8	3.9	1.3	37.0
Nagaland	64.7	3.6	2.6	29.0
Manipur [@]	40.2	12.0	10.3	37.6
Mizoram	54.9	5.7	1.5	37.9
Tripura	27.0	23.8	3.0	46.1

Meghalaya	48.1	17.7	2.2	32.0
Assam	39.1	13.2	3.6	44.0
West Bengal	19.2	25.0	7.4	48.5
Jharkhand	38.5	28.2	4.3	29.1
Orissa	29.8	35.0	4.9	30.3
Chhattisgarh	44.5	31.9	2.1	21.5
Madhya Pradesh	42.8	28.7	4.0	24.5
Gujarat	27.3	24.3	2.0	46.4
Maharashtra	28.7	26.3	2.6	42.4
Andhra Pradesh	22.5	39.6	4.7	33.1
Karnataka	29.2	26.5	4.1	40.2
Goa	9.6	6.8	2.8	80.7
Kerala	7.0	15.8	3.6	73.6
Tamil Nadu	18.4	31.0	5.4	45.3

Source: Primary Census Abstract Census of India 2001. Developed from <http://www.censusindia.net> (the official website of Census of India)

While the rate of economic growth has been quite satisfactory and some sections of the Indian society, particularly the middle classes and the rich, have experienced upward mobility, globalization and liberalization have not been good for every one. The effect of stagnant agriculture and its inability to provide additional employment has produced tremendous amount of distress for those dependent directly on agriculture. The sudden spurt in cases of suicides by small and marginal farmers in different parts of India over the last couple of years has created a sense of unprecedented crisis in Indian agriculture. The fact that this has happened simultaneously in different regions of India - from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh to Maharashtra and Punjab - has understandably made social scientists, activists, and policy makers wonder about its causes and the connection that such a phenomenon could have with the wider processes of change operating at the national/ global levels.

Growing obsession with the so-called "new economy", information technology, media and the urban consumers led to a complete marginalization of the "rural" and agrarian sector. This neglect of agriculture and rural economy has affected not only the farming communities but also the landless labourers, who because of the crisis of agriculture are finding it much more difficult to find employment on viable wage (Ghosh 2004).

Agriculture is not the only thing that has suffered this neglect during the post-reforms period. Some other important areas of social and cultural life have also come under severe crisis over this period. The most crucial of these are public health and education. In the field of health, the thrust during recent years has been 'towards more sophisticated care' (Sagar and Qadeer 2003:138). While the quality of health services available to the rich and the urban middle classes, mostly in expensive private hospitals, has significantly improved, for large masses of rural and urban poor very little has changed (Baru 1998). On the contrary the withdrawal of the influential middle classes from the public health system has made things worse as regards the functioning of these institutions in concerned.

More or less the same is happening to education, particularly school education. Though the proportions of literate population have gone up significantly over the last five decades, inter-regional and inter-gender differences continue to be quite glaring (see Table 6 below). Further, education in independent India has not developed the way it should for the working of a healthy democracy. Instead of promoting universal quality education at the primary level, schooling in India has been becoming quite uneven.

The most disturbing consequence of growing differentiation of schooling is the decline in the standard of instructions and functioning of the government run schools. The middle classes and rich send their children to expensive English-medium private schools, the government run schools end-up catering primarily to the poor. Such differentiation of schooling perpetuates a culture of inequalities, which in turn would have wider implications for the working of society, politics and economy.

The new perspectives on development that emphasize on participation, respect cultural diversities and measure progress in terms of human development could provide useful directions for the public policy for dealing with such emerging challenges. However, in order to be able to do so, India would require a State that is active and effective, and not merely regulative.

Table 6: Literacy rates across States of Indian Union (2001)

India/State/Ut	Persons	Males	Females
India	64.8	75.3	53.7
Jammu & Kashmir	55.5	66.6	43.0
Himachal Pradesh	76.5	85.3	67.4
Punjab	69.7	75.2	63.4
Uttaranchal	71.6	83.3	59.6
Haryana	67.9	78.5	55.7
Delhi	81.7	87.3	74.7
Rajasthan	60.4	75.7	43.9
Uttar Pradesh	56.3	68.8	42.2
Bihar	47.0	59.7	33.1
Sikkim	68.8	76.0	60.4
Arunachal Pradesh	54.3	63.8	43.5
Nagaland	66.6	71.2	61.5
Manipur [®]	70.5	80.3	60.5
Mizoram	88.8	90.7	86.7
Tripura	73.2	81.0	64.9
Meghalaya	62.6	65.4	59.6
Assam	63.3	71.3	54.6
West Bengal	68.6	77.0	59.6
Jharkhand	53.6	67.3	38.9
Orissa	63.1	75.3	50.5
Chhattisgarh	64.7	77.4	51.9
Madhya Pradesh	63.7	76.1	50.3
Gujarat	69.1	79.7	57.8
Maharashtra	76.9	86.0	67.0
Andhra Pradesh	60.5	70.3	50.4
Karnataka	66.6	76.1	56.9
Goa	82.0	88.4	75.4
Lakshadweep	86.7	92.5	80.5
Kerala	90.9	94.2	87.7
Tamil Nadu	73.5	82.4	64.4

Source: Primary Census Abstract Census of India 2001. Developed from <http://www.censusindia.net> (the official website of Census of India)

End Notes:

1. A good amount of literature is now available on the partition, ranging from historical and demographic aspects to its cultural and literary aspects (see Pandey 2001; Mahajan 2000; Nanda 2003; Prasad 1999; Bhalla 1999; Hassan 1994; Das 1991).
2. see Bagchi and Dasgupta 2003:2; Roy 1971:165-76)
3. as quoted in Harriss 1998:289.
4. from Chapter II of the Second Five Year Plan document reproduced in Wadhwa (1977:10-11). One could perhaps argue that insertion of the terms 'socialist' and 'secular' in the preamble of India's constitution in 1976 (the 42nd Amendment) was extension of the promise that Indian State had already made to its people.
5. See, for example, Charsley and Karanth 1998; Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998; Deliege 1999; Seth 2002; Beteille 1997; 2000; Gupta 2004.

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