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Chapter 2 Technologies of Rule and the War on Poverty

2.1 Introduction

In his now famous account of the making and unmaking of the Third World, Arturo Escobar argues not only that an era of developmentalism was inaugurated by President Truman in his Point Four speech of January 29th 1949, but also that the aid programmes which followed were justified by "the discovery of mass poverty" in the less economically accomplished countries (Escobar 1995: 21). In making these claims Escobar directs us to the production of poverty as part of a wider (geo)political discourse, and this is a central theme of this chapter. The production of poverty as a failing, or as an incomplete set of capabilities, is linked to the production of persons who can be labelled as poor, and who can either be reproached for being the bearers of certain pathologies - the illiterate man who has to be educated, the overly fecund woman whose body has to be disciplined – and/or acclaimed as people who deserve the help of others. Whether or not members of rural society are unaware of their poverty before they are labelled as such by outsiders, as Lakshman Yapa maintains was the case for him, growing up in Sri Lanka, is something we consider later.[1] But it is clearly the case that the production of poverty by various government and other agencies creates many of the spaces within which 'poorer people' are bound to see 'the state'. The designation of households in India as Below Poverty Line (BPL) positions them as beneficiaries of developmental programmes which require them to have contact with *sarkar*. The same might be said of households

[1] Yapa (1996); see also Shrestha (1995) 'on becoming a development category'.

belonging to the Scheduled Castes, although in this case various agencies of the state are committed to the disappearance of an entire category of persons. Members of the Scheduled Castes are to be lifted out of poverty, and spirited away from their negative social identity as erstwhile Untouchables.

Escobar's work on the production of development and poverty is a useful corrective to accounts that seek to naturalise these social constructions. In this chapter we shall also find it useful to follow Escobar's characterization of the 'age of development' in at least one further respect. We accept, that is to say, that an ideology of developmentalism is distinguished by its optimism regarding the malleability of internal and external nature (roughly, 'human nature' and the 'physical environment'). The productions of development and of poverty alleviation that take shape under the Pax Americana are made possible, in part, by an insistence on the potential equality of all human beings, regardless of their geographical location or genetic backgrounds. This is very different from the years between 1860 and 1940, when most Western accounts of 'progress' and 'backwardness' were produced within discourses which emphasized the permanent and disabling effects of 'race' (social Darwinism, with strong links to the White Man's Burden, eugenics and even genocide) and geography ('tropicality', or environmental determinism).[2] The idea of development is predicated on the view that

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[2] This is not to say that elements of these discourses do not survive, albeit in mutated form. Andrew Kamarck's book, *The Tropics and Economic Development: A Provocative Enquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, was published by the World Bank in 1976, but would not have looked out of place sixty years earlier. Work by Jeffrey Sachs and colleagues (2000, 2001), however, on 'tropicality', or even by William Easterly (2001) on 'tropical misadventures', poses 'geography' as a problem, but presents the economy and technology as its redeemers. Sachs's work is flawed in important respects, but his outlook on environment and development issues is more Promethean than determinist. See also, and more widely, Drayton (2000) and Stepan (2001).

men and women can be created afresh, as modern subjects able to take their place in a world defined in relation to the hyper-modernity of the West, and the United States especially.[3] Education and industrialization are obviously central to this endeavour.

Escobar and his fellow post-developmentalists are less reliable, however, as guides to the complexities of social thought and action that are to be found within what he calls "the discourse of development" (Escobar 1995: 4). In this book we reject the idea that it is helpful to reduce more than fifty years of governmental interventions in the South to a single technology of rule. Nor do we think it sensible to declare that development has produced only a nightmarish combination of debts, impoverishment and malnutrition (ibid.), or to imply that such anti-poverty schemes as have been tried since 1950 have always been failures, or have been radically at odds with the accounts that poorer people have given of their own difficulties. Poverty is always a social production, but it is nonetheless real in important respects, and is generally described in negative terms by the people trapped in its clutches. We instead take a position that is more in tune with the Foucauldian stance that Escobar wished to adopt. David Lehmann has suggested that Escobar's work was a "missed opportunity" in terms of applying Foucault's ideas to the study of development.[4] By this he meant that Escobar fails to recognise that development is not a singularity that can reasonably be described with a capital D. It is more instructive to think of 'developmentalism' as a set of discourses

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[3] On the nineteenth-century origins of some developmental thinking, see Cowen and Shenton's account of the *Doctrines of Development* (1996). This book offers an incisive critique of post-developmentalism. Its major weakness is that it does not take seriously enough the challenge posed by modernization theories to biologised accounts of social development. See also Cooper and Packard (1998).

[4] Lehmann (1997).

which *can* combine various accounts of progress and social transformation with elements of evolutionism and teleology, but which don't have to make this commitment. To put it another way, it is important to think about developmentalism as a set of discourses that are united in some respects, but which are contending in others: for example, around questions of sustainability, or the proper role of the state in managing industrial development, or the best way to define and measure human well-being.

These discourses are not simply the bearers of particular class, sectional or geopolitical interests, although these are important; they are also put into play in relation to discourses about human rights, inter-generational equity, the functioning of markets, the virtues of participating in civil society, and so on. Over time, some of these discourses will gain the upper hand, and will take on the appearance of stability or even inevitability. We saw this during the 1980s when the counter-revolution in development theory and policy gained in strength amidst a more general revival of ideas about free markets and sound money.[5] But we also need to bear in mind that an appearance of stability or coherence can be deceptive, and that ideas emerge and contend on a more *ad hoc* basis. Nikolas Rose has made this point very well in relation to the policies of Britain's Conservative governments in the 1980s and 1990s. Although Thatcherism has become known as a form of politics which mixes neoliberalism with social conservatism, it is important to insist that some of the programmes for which it is best known were not "realizations of any philosophy, [so much as] contingent lash-ups of thought and action"

[5] Toye (1987). See also Lal (1983) and Stewart (1985).

(Rose 1999: 27).[6] Rose's point, following Foucault, is that it is more useful to talk about "technologies of government [which are] imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of producing certain desired effects and averting certain undesired events". Human technologies of government can then be understood "as an assemblage of forms of practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabulary, types of authority, forms of judgement, architectural forms, human capacities, non-human objects and devices, inscription techniques and so forth, traversed and transected by aspirations to achieve certain outcomes in terms of the conduct of the governed (*which also requires certain forms of conduct on the part of those who would govern*)" (ibid.: 52, emphasis added).

Rose illustrates this argument with reference to Ian Hunter's work on the emergence of popular schools in European states like Prussia. Hunter is well aware that the government school was promoted "as a means of the mass moral training of the population with a view to enhancing the strength and prosperity of the state, and thereby the welfare of the people" (Hunter 1996: 148-9; quoted in Rose 1999: 53). But the fact that states may have wished to promote the strength of their populations does not "mean that they can simply whistle the means of moral training into existence" (Hunter 1996: 149). The ways in which different systems of schooling were produced in Europe had more to do with a complex "series of exchanges and trade-offs between the administrative apparatuses of states that were beginning to governmentalize themselves

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[6] Rose is right in respect of privatization, but it would be a mistake to discount the role of ideas [philosophy], in this case of public choice theory (Buchanan, 1967, 1987), in the production of the community charge/Poll Tax. On Thatcher, see also Hugo Young (1990); on Thatcherism's edgy combination of ideas about 'free economies and strong states', see Andrew Gamble (1988).

and religious institutions, practices, knowledges and techniques for the spiritual disciplining of souls" (Rose 1999: 54). (In England and Wales, there were also exchanges with the Trade Union movement and with ideas emanating from the statistical movement of the late nineteenth century). In other words, the technology of schooling was "not invented *ab initio*, nor was it implanted through the monotonous implementation of a hegemonic 'will to govern': the technology of schooling – like that of social insurance, child welfare, criminal justice and much more – is hybrid, heterogeneous [and] traversed by a variety of programmatic aspirations and professional obligations" (ibid.).

The same might be said of the technologies that have emerged to govern development or the alleviation of poverty. These technologies are not simply the result of a class-based or imperial will to govern, which seems to be the suggestion of some Marxists and many post-developmentalists.[7] We need to understand not just why, but also *how* various agencies of the state in India have produced different groups of the population as 'poor', or 'Backward', or 'disadvantaged', or 'Scheduled', and how and why they have proposed to deal with these 'conditions'. Later in this chapter we will focus on the explosion of anti-poverty schemes that emerged in India in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Far from continuing a common logic of rule, these schemes have embodied very different assumptions about the capacities of state agencies, the voluntary sector, and poorer individuals, groups and communities. To begin with, however, we focus on the contending and sometimes cohering technologies of rule that have combined to

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[7] Which is not to say that power is not linked to interests: we will come back to this in Part III.

produce different accounts of poverty alleviation in post-Independence India. These technologies have made use of the Census, the National Sample Survey, and forms of calculation designed to produce headcounts of those in 'absolute poverty'. They have also comprised various discourses about the obligations of a post-colonial state to its 'ethnic minorities', as well as those referring to the imperatives of democratisation, economic improvement and population biology. Needless to add, these technologies have structured the encounters and sightings that have followed between different poorer persons and their counterparts in 'the state'.

2.2 From Charity to Capabilities

The British were certainly aware of the existence of mass poverty in their South Asian colonies, just as they were at home. The authorities in England had been exercised by the question of the relief of the poor since at least the seventeenth century. Malthus wrote memorably on the topic in 1798, and in the nineteenth century his views about the self-cancelling effects of poor relief were confronted by an agenda for social reform that would not have looked out of place in the writings of his principal antagonists, Mister Godwin and Monsieur Condorcet.[8] The interventions of Edwin Chadwick, and later Charles Booth and Robert Mayhew, were not based in accounts of 'the perfectability of man', but they did focus attention on the threat which the poor posed not only to

[8] Malthus (1970 [1798]). Godwin and Condorcet were celebrants of the French Revolution.

themselves but to members of the higher social orders.[9] The cholera epidemics in London and Liverpool in the 1840s helped to focus the attention of the authorities on the need for better sanitation provision for the labouring poor. In much the same vein, the threat of crime and physical violence, and later of social and political unrest, prompted photographic essays on the slums of Glasgow and expeditions into 'Unknown England', as areas including the East End of London were sometimes known.[10] It also spurred the beginnings of the social liberalism by means of which reformers like Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Maynard Keynes and William Beveridge hoped to save capitalism from itself.[11]

At least some of these proposals spilled over to India, where the Webbs were influential in designing a town plan for Tatanagar, and where Keynes was concerned with the currency. The British were also made aware of the condition of the poor by their own instruments of rule and revenue: by the Reports of the Famine Commissioners, for example, or by the references to irregularities in the recruitment of free labour to Assam that were written into some reports on Inland Emigration (see Chapter 1.2). The need to hospitalize victims of the plague in the Bombay Presidency in the last years of the nineteenth century also caused the British to reflect on the connections between disease and destitution and apparent threats to the social order.[12]

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[9] See Porter (1999) for a lively review. Susan Chaplin (1999) has written an interesting account of the strategies used by middle-class Indians (use of antibiotics, bottled water, etc) to insulate themselves from similar threats of contagion in the contemporary era.

[10] Keating (1976).

[11] See Dahrendorf (1995) and Skidelsky (1992).

[12] As discussed by Klein (1973, 1988); Harrison (1990); and Arnold (1993).

But the recognition of mass poverty did not lead inexorably to the promotion of human technologies of government that would seek its abolition, and in this respect Escobar is right to point to a watershed in 'official' thinking about poverty since the late-1940s. In her important account of the politics of the urban poor in early twentieth century India, Nandini Gooptu suggests that a minor key in British anti-poverty discourses was focused on the ways in which poor surroundings and a lack of space produced behavioural traits that were said to be indicative of 'depravity'. At its best, the social liberalism of the Webbs, or of the town planner Patrick Geddes, resisted the biologised accounts of urban poverty that were common among imperial officers (and some Indian academics too, it has to be said).[13] But while Geddes' proposals for a garden city movement in urban India were consistent with his "grand vision of civilisational transition and civic nationalism" (Gooptu, 2001: 83), the reluctance of the British to spend money on proposals that could be represented as "radical, a trifle dangerous and impractical" (ibid.) ensured that Geddes returned to England a disappointed man. The authorities preferred to think of urban reform in terms of models of confinement and zoning that enjoyed considerable support, as well, among the Indian middle classes. The poor were to be kept in their place, and subjected to regular police actions.

Away from the city, the British relied more on a model of poverty that placed blame on the 'ignorance' of the poor themselves, especially the 'untouchables', and the 'backward' customs of some members of India's 'feudal elites' (and, more rarely,

[13] At its worst the politics of the Webbs was also strongly informed by eugenics.

European landowners). Given that India was produced at the end of economic arrangements that limited the pace of industrialization, it is unsurprising that the British preferred to focus on poverty in the sub-continent as an effect of Indianness itself. Even Max Weber referred to the Hindu's apparent "dread of the magical evil of innovation".[14] The alleviation of poverty was thus confined mainly to famine relief, or to urban-based interventions that mixed a fear of the undisciplined body of the native with a growing emphasis on the virtues of private and/or religious philanthropy. In some cases, too, the apathetic Hindu was urged to reform him or herself by embracing the more worldly traditions of Christianity, especially in its Protestant incarnations.

It was largely in opposition to these approaches that the nationalist movement began to advance its own agendas for dealing with poverty. The drain of wealth theory that Dadabhai Naoroji put forward in the late nineteenth century was a staple part of an account of the impoverishment of the masses that refused to locate the most fundamental causes of poverty within India itself, or at least within an India that could be made to rule itself.[15] And later on, of course, in the inter-war period, the need to win votes in municipal elections encouraged many nationalist politicians to make an appeal to 'the poor' that ostensibly refused the blandishments of the imperial power. Jawaharlal Nehru clearly had an eye on the broader politics of the nationalist struggle when he told a reporter for *The Hindustan Times* in October 1920 how much he objected to:

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[14] See Inden (1995)

[15] Naoroji (1901); see also Dutt (1904).

> "The lady who visits the slums occasionally to relieve her conscience by the performance of good and charitable deeds. The less we have of this patronizing and condescending approach to the problem the better. … there are large numbers of earnest men and women who devote themselves to the service of their fellow creatures. … They do good work … Yet, it seems to me, that all this good work is largely wasted, because it deals with the surface of the problem only. Social evils have a history and background, roots in our past, and intimate connections with the economic structure under which we live" (Nehru, quoted in Agrawal and Aggarwal 1989: 206).

The fault-line that appears here between surface appearances and their structural determinants is instructive for another reason, too. Nehru imbibed the distinction from the leftist texts he was then reading, but his appeal to root causes was to become a staple of development thinking more broadly. Post-colonial countries of all stripes – capitalist, socialist and 'mixed' – were enjoined to throw off the shackles of tradition; whole economies had to be structurally transformed, entire peoples subjected to modernization.[16] But how, exactly? This was the question that faced India most acutely at the time of the Constituent Assembly Debates (1946-49), and the answers that were mapped out there run counter to much conventional wisdom about the discovery of mass poverty in the 1940s and 1950s. They did so, not least, because they described an agenda

[16] The second article to be published in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, the first journal of development studies, made this point very clearly. Its author, Morris Watnick, also insisted that the West would have to work hard to displace the appeal of communist strategies for modernization in the Third World. Much like Escobar, he was acutely aware of the geopolitical significance of "Truman's plea for a 'bold new program' of technical aid to backward areas" (1952: 22).

for improving the capabilities of poorer men and women that has more in common with Amartya Sen's approach to 'development as freedom' than with less expansive notions about the raising of per capita incomes.[17] They also developed an agenda that recognized precisely those community-based rights that are not fully addressed in Sen's work. Special provisions for the Scheduled Communities helped to ensure that the production of 'poverty' and 'the poor' in independent India would be marked by cross-cutting, if sometimes reinforcing, human technologies of government.

2.3 Provider, Protector and Promoter

Jawaharlal Nehru gave a glimpse of his version of the new agenda for poverty alleviation when he closed the debate on the 'Resolution of Aims and Objects' of the Constituent Assembly. He declared that: "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" (Constituent Assembly Debates: 22 January 1947).

This is often dismissed as so much cant, on a par perhaps with Truman's rhetoric two years later, and just as lacking in 'real' political content. Ambedkar, after all, who shared with Nehru many of the responsibilities for constructing a new India, would later tell the Assembly that: "On 26th January 1950 we are going to enter a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will

[17] Sen (2000).

have inequality. … In our social and economic life we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man, one value" (quoted in Khilnani 1997: 35). But we should tread warily before dismissing either Nehru's intervention, or various Constitutional provisions, as mere rhetoric. There were certainly inconsistencies in Nehru's accounts of socialism in India, and all manner of problems in the translation of his ideas into policies for the redistribution of land to the tiller, say, or for the promotion of universal literacy. We must remain alert to the gaps that opened up in Plan promise and performance, or between the rulebooks of the state and the actions of state officials. At the same time, however, we need to take rhetoric seriously, the more so where it is linked in some degree to the promotion of named technologies of rule. The fact that agrarian reforms in India were sabotaged in the 1950s by richer farmers does not gainsay the fact that land reform is a continuing objective of the central government, as stated in successive Five Year Plans, and that the efficiency and equity arguments for agrarian reform remain part of a broader political vocabulary (not least in Bihar). Important laws remain on the book, just as they do in regard to encroachments on common property resources.

If we return to the Constituent Assembly we see that the state was positioned there as a provider, protector and promoter for groups of people who were still referred to as 'the masses' or 'the millions'. This perspective was restated by the Planning Commission, which declared that the central objective of development in India was, "to create conditions in which living standards are reasonably high and all citizens, men and women, have full and equal opportunity for growth and service" (Planning Commission

1951: 29). The references here to citizenship, equality and service to the nation were by no means accidental, nor were they without consequence. Nehru had declared at Independence that, "The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity" (quoted in Agrawal and Aggarwal 1989: 241). And now the Planning Commission proposed to add its weight to those provisions which had been written into the Constitution with the stated aim of securing an adequate means of livelihood for all citizens, as well as of the minimisation of inequalities of income, status and opportunities, free and compulsory education for all children, improvement of public health, and social justice for the Backward classes. The Commission declared that India's problems were a legacy of "a traditional society and static economy in the past, petrified to some extent by colonial rule" (Planning Commission 1961: 1). It was, "The evolution of the social structure during centuries of feudalism, in regions which were not then developed by communication, [that had] led to the existence of large communities which suffered handicaps and disabilities imposed by other economically and culturally dominant groups" (ibid., 1951: 634).

Poverty was thus defined as a broad-based set of absences, or missing capabilities, that were produced not by 'the poor' themselves, but by oppressive social forces (Empire, feudalism, casteism, perhaps even religion) that could *quickly* be removed. Particularly in the years 1946 to 1956, the war on poverty in India was conceived in terms that proposed a close link between the remaking of India and the making of modern citizens. The promotion of economic growth and of household incomes was one part of this

agenda, but it was by no means the major element. To some degree this reflected the weakness of the state's financial position, and the fact that industrial growth would take some time to promote. But it also spoke to a real concern for social justice and the rights both of individual citizens and of corporate social units. This concern was expressed not simply in legislation to secure the abolition of *zamindars*, supposedly the main depressors of agricultural productivity in the countryside, but also in a raft of measures designed to address the problems of India's 'weaker sections'.[18]

These initiatives varied significantly between the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and the Scheduled Castes (SCs). The debates of the Constituent Assembly also revealed a division in attitudes to India's *adivasi* populations that still continues. The extreme paternalism that has produced the poverty of these people as a product of their location (remoteness), mode of subsistence (forest-dependence) and general 'primitiveness' (India's *junglees*), has coincided with a penchant for exoticism which has celebrated the 'genius of the tribal people' (a favourite phrase of Nehru's) and their right to be different.[19] The Oxford-educated tribal leader from Jharkhand, Jaipal Singh, also claimed that the "republican and egalitarian traditions of adibasi society" could be adopted with profit by caste Hindus.[20] These contending discourses have helped shape the particular technologies of rule under which many tribal people meet the state. In addition to the labour and immigration officials who have long rubbed up against

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[18] Thorner (1956); see also Harriss (1992).

[19] Singh (1989); see also Corbridge (1988, 2002a).

[20] See Volume IX of the Constituent Assembly Debates: 653-4.

populations that were anything but sedentary, the state has presented itself to many *adivasis* through the slow accumulation of Block Development Officers and District Development Commissioners who staff the Scheduled Areas, and who join the police and forestry services in providing comparatively executive forms of rule. Perhaps most importantly, a significant number of STs have been brought into the state as recipients of reserved seats and jobs.

A version of the republican ideals that Singh claimed for tribal India was also deployed on behalf of the Scheduled Castes. Nandini Gooptu writes that “a pre-Aryan identity of the untouchables as the original inhabitants – Adi Hindu – of India” (Gooptu 2001: 144) was constructed in the towns and cities of the United Provinces in the early twentieth century. Elements of this ideology later informed the politics of the Republican Party of India (set up in 1957 after Ambedkar’s death), and the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra. For the most part, however, this construction was rejected by other caste groupings and by the colonial power. The poverty of the ‘Untouchables’ was explained by the British as being a result of their oppression by caste Hindus (hence the Depressed Classes), and by Brahmanic scriptures as a form of punishment. They did not live in particular regions, as seemed to be the case with most tribals and they generally did not own land. In addition, they were discriminated against in terms of access to places of worship, schooling and even water.

It followed that the battle against Untouchability had to be waged in more diverse arenas than would be the case with the ‘tribal problem’. Access to reserved seats and

jobs would be common to both enterprises, and would ensure continuing struggles around the designation of different groups as SCs or STs, and the acquisition of pieces of paper to certify group membership. (These struggles would be expanded in the 1990s in the wake of the Mandalisation of politics). Members of the Scheduled Castes, however, would also need to call upon agents of the state – including schoolteachers, health workers, the police and officers of the court – to ensure their access to the public sphere, and to enforce claims on government resources. Whereas members of the Scheduled Tribes were thought to be open to abuse because of *their* 'innocence' (which was a value worth preserving), the poverty of the Scheduled Castes was defined by patterns of social exclusion enforced *by others*. The one sure way to remove their poverty was to remove the caste system itself: a conclusion, or an ideal, that appealed to Ambedkar as well as to Nehru, albeit in slightly different ways.

Gandhi, of course, did not endorse this conclusion. He preferred to look for the erosion of 'Untouchability' within India's villages, perhaps as a result of social welfare efforts that would cut across caste and community boundaries. A thin version of his faith in 'community welfare' was later made flesh in the Community Development Programme that was launched in 1952. The First Five Year Plan declared that, "In view of the large unutilised and under-utilised resources in the system, schemes for mobilizing local effort for local development have to receive high priority" (Planning Commission 1952: 45). Appealing, again, to the idea that poverty in the Indian countryside would be curtailed as soon as various burdens were removed (including rack-renting, caste competition, and colonial taxes), the Planning Commission further declared that, "It is

schemes of this type spread all over the country, more than development projects, which are likely to activate these resources" (ibid.). Such a view, however, with its touching faith in the "cumulative psychological effects" of inter-caste cooperation (ibid.), was set to recede when planners received word that "the benefits [of CDP] did not reach the less privileged sections of the village community in adequate measure" (Planning Commission 1961: 291), and as soon as funds were in place for a more resolutely 'industrial' assault upon the 'traditional' structures of rural life.

2.4 Economy, Demography, Poverty

It is important at this point to note that recession does not mean disappearance. The technologies of government that were put in place to deal with poverty in the 1940s and 1950s have largely survived to the present. The Scheduled Communities have continued to be defined by State legislative bodies, albeit with occasional changes in their numbers, and they have continued to receive 'special treatment' under Part XVI of the Constitution of India. The extension in 1969 of the system of reserved jobs to include employment in public sector enterprises marked a significance expansion of the technologies of compensatory discrimination first enacted in 1943 for the SCs, and in 1950 for the STs. These (largely national) technologies of rule have mandated the continued collection of statistics on the populations of the Scheduled Communities, most notably in India's decadal Censuses.[21] The government of India is also required to

[21] Instructively, demographic statistics on castes other than the Scheduled Castes were not collected in the Censuses from 1951 to 2001. In the wake of V.P.Singh's decision to act upon some of the recommendations of the 'Mandal Commission' Report (see Chapter 2.6), this might soon change; certainly there are pressures in that direction.

receive periodic reports from a Special Officer for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Under Article 338, the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Tribes is required to review the standing of the constitutional provisions put in place to 'safeguard' the scheduled communities, and to reports his findings, via the President, to each House of Parliament. The Commissioner is also able to push central government to release grants from the Consolidated Fund of India for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Communities of particular States. These grants would be expected to augment the more general Plan spending on education and health-care which has also threaded its way through the state's anti-poverty programmes from the 1950s to the present.

Notwithstanding these continuities, however, there was an observable shift in the way that different agencies within the Government of India began to think about poverty during the period of the Second and Third Five Year Plans (1956-1966). In some degree, this involved a narrowing of the definition of poverty. In the First Plan period, especially (1951-1956), and to a lesser degree under the Second Five Year Plan, the Planning Commission had proposed that, "A comprehensive concept of living standards [should certainly] include the satisfaction of basic needs like food, clothing and shelter", but linked this "as well [to the] normal satisfactions of family life, enjoyment of physical and mental health, opportunities for the expression of skills and recreational abilities, and active and pleasurable social participation" (Planning Commission 1952: 613). By the time of the Third Plan, however, the government was insistent that poverty was mainly the result of low productivity and a lack of continuous work. Consistent with its new focus on 'the economy' – a form of practical knowledge which must itself be seen as a

human technology of government – the Planning Commission urged that there should be additional opportunities for work to "enable the lowest income groups to earn enough through productive employment to meet their minimum needs" (ibid. 1961: 11).

The significance of this discursive shift is apparent as soon as we recall the ways in which 'the economy' functioned in the rhetoric of the nationalist movements. For most Gandhians, the commitment to industrial modernity that was announced by the Nehru-Mahalanobis model of structural transformation was threatening in itself. Gandhi saw in large-scale industrialization the foundations of the 'loss of self' to which true anti-poverty programmes would be opposed. For other wings of the movement, however, whether under Patel, Nehru, Ambedkar, Bose or Savarkar, the weaknesses of India as a nation, and of the individual bodies within it, were straightforwardly the results of the country's *lack* of industrial prowess. The 'economy' here functioned as an absence, or as a signifier of the fetters which were imposed on the country by systems of imperial preference and agrarian involution. The fact that food production struggled to keep pace with population growth in the years 1900-1940 was one vital, and impoverishing, outcome of this system of misrule; another, famously, was the ruination of India's handicraft industries, and the deliberately stymied growth of its manufacturing industry until at least the 1920s.[22]

This constitution of the economy as an absence also allowed it to function as an extraordinary site of potential enrichment, and this is how it came to be written in the

[22] For a considered review of the issues, include the onset of some measure of industrial protection in the 1920s, see Tomlinson (1988). See also Blyn (1966).

mid-1950s. The economic case for land to the tiller land reforms was now boosted by work which claimed to show an inverse relationship between farm size and productivity.[23] Agrarian reform made sense for efficiency reasons, as well as for reasons of social justice. More significantly, perhaps, at least in terms of practical impacts, there was a potent coming together of a number of the ideas that sustained a first generation of development studies: the importance of planning and savings, for example, and of import-substitution industrialization. Indeed, the new orthodoxy came to maintain that, "a precipitate transformation of the ownership of productive assets was … detrimental to the maximization of production and savings" (Chakravarty 1987: 10). The economy itself, suitably protected from foreign competition in the short-run, would do the job. Unemployment would decline once labouring people were put to work in the consumption-goods industries that would spring up in the wake of the capital-goods based revolution. Poverty in turn would ebb away in the 1960s, save perhaps in some parts of the countryside. It would affect those people unable or unwilling to find work in the cities, or in the modern sector of the economy.[24]

This production of the 'poverty problem' had significant implications for how poorer people would be defined and presented to different agencies of the state. In geographical terms, there was a palpable shift in public expenditure patterns in favour of the city. There was also a new emphasis on the labour exchange as a site for the collection of statistics about the working and non-working poor, and of encounters

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[23] The best reviews remain those of Thorner (1956) and Harriss (1992).

[24] A similar view was expressed by W.A.Lewis in his two-sector model of economic growth: Lewis (1955).

between poorer people and *sarkar*.[25] Less obviously, perhaps, there was renewed attention to what the First Five Year Plan had called "the pressure of population in India" (Government of India 1953: 23).

In the run-up to Independence most nationalists had been at pains to deny the importance of 'overpopulation' as the principal determinant of India's 'mass poverty'. Palme Dutt noted in *India Today* that "nine out of ten Western readers, who have not had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the facts" were only too happy to jump to Malthusian conclusions about excessive population growth in India (Palme Dutt 1989: 48, quoted in Krishnaji 1998: 385) – even though 'the facts' suggested that a much larger population could be fed once all cultivable lands were brought under the plough, and once the *zamindari* system was abolished. Many nationalists did contend, however, that the rate of economic growth could not be maximized in India amid high rates of population growth. Under the Chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru, the National Planning Committee (NPC) of the Indian National Congress concluded in 1935 that, "the size of the Indian population is a basic issue in national economic planning, in so far as its unrestricted increase in proportion to means of subsistence adversely affects the standards of living, and tends to defeat many social and ameliorative measures" (quoted in Krishnaji 1998: 386). Nevertheless, the NPC went on to suggest that: "While measures for the improvement of the quality of population and limiting excessive population pressure are necessary, the basic solution lies in the economic progress of the country on a comprehensive and planned basis (ibid.). Growth, in other words, would provide a

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[25] For recent work that touches on this subject, see Parry (1999) and Breman (2004).

contraceptive effect of its own, although the state would be required to promote birth control on a voluntary basis.

This conclusion neatly anticipated the demographic transition model of the 1940s. In the 1950s, however, the causal relationships assumed to obtain between economic growth and population growth were significantly reversed, in India as in much of the developing world. One of the authors of the demographic transition model, Kingsley Davis, now began to suggest that rapid and excessive population growth in India would produce social conditions favouring the rise of authoritarianism.[26] As Simon Sretzer has shown, this fear expressed a deeper unease in the United States about the 'massing hordes' in south and east Asia, a fear that would later be exploited by population biologists like Paul Ehrlich in their frankly racist accounts of the 'population bomb'.[27] But causality was also reversed for economic reasons. The new growth models placed a particular emphasis on physical capital formation, and in this framework it was easy to conclude that rapid population growth must represent a loss of savings to the more productive parts of an economy. This would be especially acute in a country suffering

[26] Davis (1951). Sretzer makes the important point that the work of the Office of Population Research in Princeton was closely associated with the State Department, and may have come under pressure from that Department to strike a more interventionist note regarding the desirability of 'speeding up' the demographic transition in Asia. "In the course of late 1948 and 1949 those in the United States still dreaming of a globe emerging from colonial servitude into a regime of liberal democratic free trade were awakening to a nightmare, experiencing a strong sense of loss of control in a dangerous and alien world" (Sretzer 1993: 676). No less than 'development studies', or the mathematisation of economics (which Mirowski links to funding from the RAND Corporation and the military in the early-1950s: Mirowski 2002), 'population science' was constituted in part as a Cold War technology of government.

[27] Sretzer (1993). Ehrlich's account of *The Population Bomb* provides a garish account of "one stinking hot night in Delhi" when his taxi ride through the dust, noise, heat, and above all people, left him "frightened". Since that night, he continued, "I've known the feel of overpopulation" (Ehrlich 1968: 15). His failure to note that he might have met with still larger crowds in (then) largely white London or lower Manhattan was neatly taken to task by Mahmood Mamdani in his cutting and often funny account of *The Myth of Population Control* (1972).

from a scarcity of capital in general, or where poorer people had to propel themselves out of a low-level equilibrium trap.[28] Spending on dependent populations could then be presented as a luxury that countries and families should do without, at least until the benefits of rapid economic growth had been secured.

This presentation of the 'population problem' was tempered in India by a strong commitment to voluntarism when it came to family sexual matters, aided no doubt by a measure of prudery.[29] It was only during the years of the Emergency (1975-77) that this commitment was suspended in favour of the savage and humiliating assaults on male and female bodies that were sanctioned by Sanjay Gandhi and his henchmen. But the importance of demographic issues as a site of state-poor encounters should not be discounted. In many rural areas of India, as in many urban slums, poorer women are brought into regular contact with health-care workers who profess concern for their bodies, and above all their reproductive health. In some cases these interventions will be welcomed, as when women have been coerced into having large numbers of children by their husbands. It would also be a mistake to suppose that health care professionals are unconcerned with a woman's health, or are simply using this issue for the purpose of population control. At the same time, however, it would be naïve to assume that anti-natalist policies are never seen as a threat. Many Muslims families feel under pressure from the *Sangh parivar*, which has repeatedly drawn attention to their supposed

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[28] The model is discussed in Nelson (1958) and Enke (1971). See also Elvin (1973) for an application to 'the Chinese past'.

[29] Such prudery, along no doubt with caste and religious concerns, continues to inform the attitudes of leading members of the NDA government to HIV-AIDS issues in India – see Dube (2000); see also Farmer (2003) for an account of what he calls 'the new war on the poor'. For an innovative and witty account of sexual panics in the west, see Lacqueur (2003).

proclivity for large numbers of children (and which constitutes the rapid growth of 'Muslim India' as a threat to the body of the [Hindu] nation).[30] Still others will see anti-natalist policies as being against their best interests, and will sometimes express a sense of puzzlement when faced with campaigns to distribute condoms, for example, or IUDs.

Regardless of how such programmes are judged, the state's expressed concern with the body corporeal always leads to a heightened concern for the production of numbers: numbers of women aged between 15 and 45, say, or of men and women who have been sterilized. These figures have to be collected, and they bring the state into further and repeated contact with its target populations. Certain members of the rural or urban poor might also be made the beneficiaries of anti-natalist interventions which link material incentives for the poor to performance quotas for named bureaucrats. As Emma Tarlo has shown, the attempt to link different agencies of the state to the disciplining of individual bodies reached a peak during the Emergency, when thousands of victims of slum clearance in Delhi were promised resettlement plots if male householders 'volunteered' for sterilization. In just one colony in East Delhi, Tarlo and her co-worker, Rajinder Singh Negi, found 3,459 personal files from 1976, 975 of which contained a DDA Family Planning (FP) Centre Allotment Order. By this order, the Delhi Development Authority sought to collect information on the applicant's: Name and Age, Father's Name, Plot, Number of Family Members, Date of Voluntary Sterilization and

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[30] See Jeffery and Jeffery (1997), chapter 6. The Sangh Parivar is that body of organizations, including the BJP, the Vishnu Hindu Parishad and the RSS, which is committed to the 'Hinduisation' of all politics in India – see McKean (1996).

Nature of Assistance Claimed. A resettlement Order might then be made by the Officer in Charge (Tarlo 2001: 79).[31]

This bringing together of economic and population-based accounts of poverty also led to the production of poverty lines and poverty headcounts. Very much in line with its view that poverty resulted from low levels of productivity and a lack of continuous work, the Third Plan document urged that additional opportunities for work would "enable the lowest income groups to earn enough through productive employment to meet their minimum needs" (Planning Commission 1961: 11). This pushed the government to define what it meant by minimum needs, and to specify the means by which information could be collected (the National Sample Survey, for example), and the proper units of analysis (villages, households, individuals, etc.).

Consistent with what was by then a more narrowly economic conception of poverty, the Perspective Planning Division (PPD) introduced the notion of a minimum level of living in 1962. This set the national monthly minimum level of consumption in rural areas of India at Rs. 20 per capita. Individuals falling below this line were said to be 'poor', or suffering from 'absolute poverty'. While other advisory bodies suggested a different Rupee figure – the Nutrition Advisory Committee declared that it would cost Rs.35 at 1960-61 prices to provide for a balanced diet and modest consumption of non-food items – the government's preference for a definition of poverty on the basis of 'basic minimum needs' was now established. Throughout the 1970s the major effort of

[31] See also Selbourne (1977). For more on the authoritarianism that has often been latent in India's family planning programmes (outside the Emergency), see Vicziany (1982-3).

government was directed to further refinements in the measurement of a poverty line defined in terms of calorific norms, rather than to a more comprehensive assessment of living standards. The PPD's Task Force on Projections of Minimum Needs and Effective Consumption Demand decided in 1979 that in rural areas a person would need to have sufficient income per month (Rs.49.09 at 1973-74 prices, using the NSS Round of that year, Rs.56.64 in urban areas) to command a daily calorie norm of 2,435 in rural areas and 2,095 in urban areas. And in the 1980s and 1990s these assessments were updated on the basis of progressively more robust price deflators, at the State as well as at national levels, as the debate on India's 'absolute poverty' scaled new technical heights.

2.5 Garibi Hatao

As it turned out, the production of statistics about the state of absolute poverty in India could not have come at a worse time than the late-1960s. The non-foodgrains sector of the rural economy performed quite well in the 1950s, but the rate of growth of cereals and pulses between 1952-3 and 1964-5 only just kept ahead of the rate of growth of the country's population. When the rains failed in India in 1965 and 1966, the country had to be bailed out with grain transfers from the United States. The situation in the countryside was a long way from the picture that had been promised in the Plan documents of 1956 and 1961. Rice riots broke out in Kerala in 1966, and in one of her first acts as Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi "announced that she would not eat rice until there were adequate supplies of rice available in [that State]" (Frank 2002: 295).

The theatricality of Indira's attempts to take the part of the poor would become more blatant still in the 1970s, when she demanded an end to poverty (*garibi hatao*). In the late-1960s, however, she was faced by the more immediate problem of famine in Bihar, and the threat posed to Congress rule in Uttar Pradesh by the decision of the Jat farmers' leader, Charan Singh, to leave the party in 1967.[32] The suspension of planning between 1966 and 1969 further symbolized the seriousness of the issues confronting a weakened polity. It came as little surprise that Dandekar and Rath's famous article on poverty in India, published in *Economic and Political Weekly* in 1971, confirmed not only that many millions more Indians were in 'absolute poverty' in 1970-1 as compared to 1960-1, but also that the incidence of absolute poverty had increased to 54.8% from 45.4% in the countryside, while staying close to 45% in the towns. India seemed to be going backwards, and was increasingly being seen on the international stage not as an emergent great power, but as something of a 'basket case' (to use the unpleasant language of the time).

Mrs Gandhi responded to the electoral setbacks of 1967 and 1969 by splitting the Congress Party and by seeking to reclaim the socialist credentials of her father. Morarji Desai and the Congress-(O) replied by joining forces with the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra and Samyutka parties to fight the general election that Indira called on 27 December 1970; they did so, moreover, under the slogan '*Indira Hatao*' (get rid of Indira). Mrs Gandhi hit back with the "simplistic but effective battle cry of '*Garibi*

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[32] Amartya Sen has famously argued that famines cannot happen in democracies, but the famine in parts of Bihar in 1967 would seem to indicate otherwise (Singh 1970). There was also a continuous state of famine and 'near-famine' in parts of Orissa in the 1990s (Sainath 1996)

Hatao' (Remove Poverty)". According to the most recent of her biographers, "'*Garibi Hatao*' was a call for the eradication of India's worst evil. And as a vote-winner it worked. *Garibi Hatao* 'was a thunderbolt … a revelation … a revolution'. Its impact was 'instant and electric'. The poor, who were the vast majority of India's electorate, now saw Indira as their saviour" (Frank 2002: 325, quoting in turn from Narasimha Rao 1998: 621-2 and Malhotra 1989: 128)

Even allowing for the exaggeration of a biographer, there are some interesting things going on here. Those scholars who compare Mrs Gandhi unfavourably with Nehru sometimes fail to acknowledge that the daughter had to operate in a political landscape that was quite different to that facing her father in the 1950s.[33] Indira had to revamp the Congress machine in the context of what Lloyd and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph have called 'demand politics'.[34] Charan Singh, of course, symbolized the switch from command politics to demand politics very well. His campaigns on behalf of the richer peasantries of north India were indicative of a new political landscape in which 'interest groups' could force the hand of government agencies which previously had sought to dictate to groups in civil and political society. The abandonment of India's obsession with capital-goods based industrialization was one sign of this, and was more or less announced at the time of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974). But that Plan also confirmed that the government had embraced the Green Revolution, and was now paying attention to the poverty of the countryside. The setting up of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in

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[33] This would be true of Paul Brass (1994), notwithstanding his generally excellent analyses of India's politics post-Independence.

[34] Rudolph and Rudolph (1987); see also Byres (1988).

1966 was indicative of this shift, and the PDS, of course, as Jan Mooij has shown, from then onwards would be a major site for poor people's encounters with 'the state' in urban and rural India.[35] With it came yet another set of cards that defined the poor and their entitlements. Mrs Gandhi's genius, if such it was, was to ride the first waves of the new demand politics. She recognized that the Congress-(R) would need to develop new campaigning styles and vocabularies if it was to put together a political coalition that would reach beyond its traditional support bases in the Forward and Scheduled Castes.

Interestingly, *Garibi Hatao* emerged as a slogan before Mrs Gandhi acquired real popularity as the 'liberator of Bangladesh'.[36] To the extent that it did have an 'electric and instant' impact, and positioned her as 'the saviour of the poor', this is surely also because 'the poor' had been invented as a political constituency in the 1960s. And this in turn reflected two major developments: the diffusion of democratic ideas and the slow erosion of vertical voting blocs, to be sure, but also the production of new technologies of government which defined a Below Poverty Line (BPL) population even as that population was set to grow in size and to announce its voices. There was a dialectical relationship between the production of the poor and the capacity of Mrs Gandhi and

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[35] Mooij (1999).

[36] Nandini Gooptu notes that appeals to the '*garib janata*' (poor common people) "emerged at the heart of political discourse" in the late-1930s, which is precisely when Indira Gandhi was learning the 'grammars' of modern politics. In the 1930s, the *garib janata* "referred to the morally superior, deserving simple folk, who were excluded from power and denied their due" (Gooptu 2001: 425). As Gooptu explains, this language of 'poor but deserving' (and also 'poor and cheated'), drew on a tradition of *nautanki* theatre that was deployed by proponents of Adi-Hinduism as part of a wider repertoire of *nirguna bhakti*, "a heterodox devotional alternative …to brahmanical Hinduism … [that espoused] an egalitarian religious message" (ibid.: 148). It is doubtful that Mrs Gandhi paid much heed to what might today be called 'first nation' sentiments when she appealed directly to the *garib janata*. In addition, while it is true that nationalist politicians of various stripes made rhetorical appeals to the *garib janata* in the 1930s and 1940s, it is not inconsistent to say that 'the poor' emerged as a political force in their own right – as a group or set of groups with political voice - only after another 20 or 30 years.

others to take their part. This being the case, we must treat very carefully the rhetoric of *Garibi Hatao* and other slogans that seem to want the eradication of poverty. Whether or not the poor must always be with us, as many conservatives like to suppose, there are strong reasons for insisting that some politicians would look with alarm on their diminution or disappearance. Concepts of inequality, deprivation, or relative poverty, function in part to make this impossible.

We shall come back to this observation soon enough. For the moment we should note that the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Five Year Plans, all of which took shape under Mrs Gandhi's leadership, were also distinguished by their continued dialogues with the concerns of development economists and the major aid agencies. The Fourth Plan was ahead of the game in suggesting that "neither agricultural or industrial growth would be sufficient to generate productive employment enough to do any more than contain the problems of unemployment and underemployment", and in proposing "special programmes … to provide for what amounted to 'redistribution with growth' (later the slogan of the approach to poverty alleviation favoured by the World Bank" [Corbridge and Harriss 2000: 85]). The Fifth Plan continued this theme, and insisted that India's national planning should "not only raise the per capita income but also … ensure that the benefits are evenly distributed, that disparities in income and living are not widened but in fact narrowed" (Planning Commission 1974: 8). And the Sixth Plan announced that, "There is … convincing evidence which points to the limited effectiveness of 'trickle down' effect. … Thus specific programmes meant for selected target groups of

population are essential components of a strategy designed to assist in the removal of unemployment and poverty" (Planning Commission 1981: 17).

As always, there are important areas of continuity in these proposals. Inequality had long been a stated concern of the government of India, and the importance of employment provision, as we have seen, had been a central component of India's poverty discourses since the 1960s. But this is to be expected. Old technologies of government rarely make way for new ones in a one to one fashion. Far more often the process is gradual, and it involves a measure of additionality as well as a replacement effect. Nevertheless, the changes of the 1970s and also the 1980s were real and substantial, and they were produced in part by changes in the discourses of development studies, and indeed of intellectual life more generally. Marxism was a growing force in the 1970s, and the rise of a feminist movement, and of feminist development studies, would slowly push the Government of India to at least some recognition of the needs and experiences of 'women', and even of different groups of women. The setting up of a sub-scheme of the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), in 1982-83, to deal with the Development of Women and Children and Rural Areas (DWCRA), was one sign that women were not to be approached by state agencies only in terms of their fecundity. The IRDP, moreover, which was set up on a pilot basis during the Emergency (in 1976), and which was extended to all parts of the country from 1980, was not only India's most important anti-poverty programme in the 1980s, but was also considered by many to be a model for rural development programmes across the 'Third World'. As with *Redistribution with Growth*, India's prosecution of 'integrated rural development' was at

least as influential within the World Bank (which proposed a sectoral approach to rural poverty alleviation in 1975) as were the ideas that began to flow in the opposite direction.[37]

The extraordinary diversity of the anti-poverty schemes which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s has to be seen in this broader context. The schemes that were set up in the late-1960s or early-1970s to deal with the problems of small farmers (the Small Farmers Development Agency: SFDA), marginal farmers and agricultural labourers (Marginal Farmer and Agricultural Labour Programme: MFAL), or tribals (the Tribal Development Agency: TDA), undoubtedly spoke to some very real problems that were facing these groups. The same would hold true of the *special area programmes* that took shape at the same time. These were focused on particular geographical regions that were considered to be marked out for 'backwardness' by dint of their location – tribal areas, once more, but also drought-prone areas, desert areas, hill areas, and border areas. (The argument can be extended to include important and influential State-directed schemes for poverty alleviation, including the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra, which was made State-wide in 1972/3 in response to the extended drought conditions of 1971/2).

It is also proper to insist that these programmes be judged according to the conventions both of project analysis and political science. We benefit from being told that different projects have had a low or high take-up rate, or that the leakage of funds to

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[37] Drawing on Corbridge and Harriss, 2000: 85. *Redistribution with Growth* was published in 1974 by Hollis Chenery and colleagues.

non-intended beneficiaries is ten, twenty or thirty percent. (See Part II of this book). There is even merit in those critiques of the reluctance of successive regimes to deal with the 'real' or 'underlying' causes of India's poverty, whether this is understood in terms of a failure to support the institutions of a developmental state or of a less regulated market.[38]

At the same time, however, an appeal to the real causes of poverty, while it calls to mind Nehru's advice to do-gooders in the 1920s, misses something important about the importance of appearances.[39] Perhaps most of all, it misses the importance of words and images, and of the need to take these seriously, not least in the realm of government. When Nehru later asked the Constituent Assembly to "clothe the naked masses", he was invoking an imagery of poverty as disgrace that has continued to be powerful. The disgrace, of course, attached not only to the naked themselves – and consider how differently Nehru and Gandhi saw the absence of clothes as signifiers of value – but to those who looked upon them.[40] The naked masses had to be clothed, uplifted and disappeared. Much the same view coloured the Planning Commission's account of urban

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[38] See Bardhan (1984) and Bhagwati (1993) for opposing perspectives.

[39] We take our cue, in part, from Nikolas Rose: "Against interpretation, then, I advocate superficiality, an empiricism of the surface, of identifying the differences in what is said, how it is said, and what allows it to be said and to have an effectivity" (Rose 1999: 57).

[40] Gandhi tended to equate poverty (but not exploitation), with simplicity and authenticity, and thus an absence of clothes with a kind of purity or child-like innocence (see Alter 2000). For Nehru, in contrast, nakedness was more often seen as a symptom of extreme religious asceticism (the irrational), or, more usually, of a degree of deprivation that hindered human development. In urban areas, of course, nakedness could also be associated with lewdness, and with an inability on the part of poor labouring males to avoid the temptations of the brothel and the bottle (see Gooptu, 2001: 67-68). Here, perhaps, the instincts of Gandhi and the social-religious reformers (including members of the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha) coincided in some degree with those of Nehru and the proponents of modernization. On clothing and politics more generally, see also Cohn (1996) and Tarlo (1994).

poverty at the beginning of the First Five Year Plan. “Most of the towns of India [it suggested] … have a large proportion of sub-standard houses and slums containing insanitary mud-huts of flimsy constructions … The disgraceful sights presented by the *ahatas* of Kanpur and the *bustees* of Calcutta are conspicuous examples of this state of affairs” (Planning Commission 1952: 593-4).

During the Emergency, this dialectic of disgrace was shrunk so badly that a progressive discourse of human rights (the right not to be shamed in public) was again submerged beneath a contemptuous and frankly punitive account of the urban poor as polluters of good taste. To make New Delhi modern – visibly modern - the slums had to be bulldozed away. Matters improved in the 1980s, but a perception of the poor as a deficient social mass continued to dominate official discourses about poverty until at least the end of that decade. (It still continues, of course).[41] To the extent that real changes could be observed they were to be found in a transferral of the site of disgrace from the body corporeal to the asset base of poorer households. During the Sixth Plan Period, the Planning Commission promised that, “Programmes … will be drawn together so that they focus upon the level of the individual household, and raise at least 3000 of the poorest households above the poverty line in each block during the Plan” (Planning Commission 1981: xxi). The war on poverty now spoke of the ‘removal’ of poverty and of ‘direct attacks’ upon it. Poverty was once again conceived as being something like a physical

[41] Not least in New Delhi, where businesses and middle-class residents are once again invoking images of order, cleanliness and rationality in support of their campaigns to widen roads and displace poorer people from their (permanent or temporary) settlements: see Baviskar (2003) on the making of metropolitan Delhi. Chatterjee (2004: 61) also draws attention to the unpleasantly named Operation Sunshine in Calcutta in 1996.

object separated from social relations, and households were to be treated to schemes that would 'raise' them above 'the line'. It was only in the 1990s that poorer individuals or households, or even social groups, were allowed to function seriously as active agents of their own empowerment.

An emphasis upon roots rather than surfaces also conceals the importance of visuality in politics. Politicians have to know how to work a crowd. Long before politicians like Laloo Yadav dreamt of attending political rallies by helicopter, or even in a Tata Sumo, Mrs Gandhi liked to descend upon 'the masses' from the skies, like a goddess.[42] Television was her ally in projecting this image to a much wider audience. But Mrs Gandhi also knew the importance of reaching specific groups within 'the poor', and of appearing to be active on their behalf. The multiplication of schemes for named groups of the poor needs to be understood in this context as well. Schemes for Tribal Development added to existing programmes of compensatory discrimination. The Small Farmers' Development Agency, meanwhile, imposed new systems of registration and sighting, with only those farmers working one to three hectares of land supposedly being eligible for its dispensations of irrigation equipment, credit, supplies and (other) technology. Schemes like this and the Marginal Farmer and Agricultural Labour Programme (targeted on the landless and those with less than one hectare of farming land), had the effect of disaggregating the poor and of inventing more specific sites for 'state-poor' encounters. This trend was further continued in the 1980s when the BPL population was targeted *en masse*, through the IRDP, but also in terms of its component

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[42] See Rajagopal (2001) and compare Ranjan (1999).

groups: BPL rural youth (ages 18-35) through a scheme for the Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment; groups of BPL women through DWCRA; BPL rural artisans through a scheme for the Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), and so on.

The multiplication of these schemes spoke for sure to problems identified by development experts, non-governmental organizations, and even 'the poor' themselves. But they were also multiplied by politicians anxious to present themselves as gatekeepers of the welfare state, or of a patronage democracy. The naming of schemes thus came to matter precisely because of its superficiality. The more schemes, the more clearly was government *seen* to be working for the poor. James Ferguson made a similar point about the extension of bureaucratic power in Lesotho when he listed the extraordinary number of development agencies – seventy two - that were active in that small landlocked state in the years 1975-84.[43] He makes the point that these agencies constituted Lesotho as an empty space that needed to be filled by expert bodies, whether from abroad or from within the state. The nameplates advertising the arrival of these agencies then proclaim that new presence, and function as an apparent source of comfort and perhaps even of development. Appendix 2.1 provides a partial listing of the major programmes for poverty alleviation that were operational in India in 1999, at the time of our fieldwork. In addition to pointing up one of Indira Gandhi's legacies to the country she ruled for so long, it also helps to describe a new and expanded geography of state-poor encounters in contemporary South Asia.

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[43] Ferguson 1990: 6-7.

2.6 Democratizing Poverty

The proliferation of poverty-alleviation schemes under Mrs Gandhi was not complemented by significant budgetary transfers in support of the war on poverty. During the Fifth Plan period the Plan Outlays for Social Sector Spending as a percentage of Total Plan Outlays fell to 25.5%, having been above 30% during the first four Plan periods (Table 2.1). Spending on Social Services, which includes spending on education, health, housing, and special programmes for the Scheduled Communities and other

Table 2.1 Social Sector Plan Outlays as a Percentage of Total Plan Outlays: Centre, States and Union Territories, 1951-2002

	First Plan ('51-'56)	Second Plan ('56-'61)	Third Plan ('61-'66)	Fourth Plan ('69-'74)	Fifth Plan ('74-'79)	Sixth Plan ('80-'85)	Seventh Plan ('85-'90)	Eighth Plan ('92-'97)	Ninth Plan ('97-'02)
Social Services	16.6	19.7	17.5	16.2	12.1	14.4	17.5	18.2	20.7
Rural Devel-opment						5.5	4.9	7.9	8.6
Agriculture	17.4	11.8	12.7	14.7	12.3	5.8	5.8	5.2	4.2
Special Area Programmes				0.3	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.6	0.4
Total Social Sector	**34.0**	**31.5**	**30.2**	**31.2**	**25.5**	**29.2**	**29.6**	**32.9**	**33.9**

Source: Planning Commission data, quoted in Government of India: Ministry of Finance, 1998

'disadvantaged groups' (including women), fell to just 12.1% of the Total Plan outlay at this time, as against 19.7% during the Second Plan period. This is consistent, perhaps, with Mrs Gandhi's preference for spending on named schemes, such as those that took

shape from the time of the Fourth Plan under the Special Areas Programmes (albeit the resources that were committed to the SAPs were and remain relatively insubstantial). In addition, while it is true that spending on Agriculture remained high during the first five plan periods, there was a switch under this heading from spending on the Community Development Programme to more general support for farmers, including better off Green Revolution farmers. Insofar as Mrs Gandhi's governments did commit significant funds to its multiplying and highly visible schemes for poverty alleviation, it was during the Sixth Plan period under the heading Rural Development: this covered spending on special poverty alleviation and employment-generation programmes. The governments of Rajiv Gandhi and V.P.Singh ensured that spending under this heading, and that of social services, would account for more than 20% of Total Plan Outlays in the Seventh Plan period.

It was not until the 1990s, however, that spending on the Social Sector as a whole climbed back above 30% of Total Plan Outlays. Several factors account for this upward trend, but first among them would be what commentators have called the Mandalisation of politics, and what Christophe Jaffrelot refers to as the triumph of quota politics over kisan politics in north India.[44] Geography matters here because the slow rise to power of the Backward Castes in India happened much earlier in the south than in the north. Non-Brahmanism has been an important force in Tamil Nadu since at least the 1920s, and this is reflected in the high percentage of government jobs that are now reserved in the State. In Karnataka, too, and in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, important Commissions were set

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[44] Jaffrelot (2003).

up in the late-1960s or early-1970s to determine who might belong to the Backward Classes and for what reasons (they varied significantly from State to State).[45] The major significance of V.P.Singh's decision in 1990 to act on at least some of the recommendations of the Second Backward Classes Commission (the Mandal Commission Report) was that it extended the scope of reservations at an all-India level. Singh's National Front government proposed that 49.5 percent of jobs in central government services or the public sector should be reserved for members of the Socially and Economically Backward Classes. Since 22.5% of such posts were already reserved for members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, this implied that a further 27 percent of posts would be reserved for members of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

Singh's own Janata Dal party gained votes disproportionately from the 3,743 castes, tribes or communities that Mandal had identified as Backward and which made up 52.4% of the population. Indeed, his party had its major sources of electoral strength in those rural, Shudra, north Indian, OBC communities that were also about to propel Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav to power in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The Yadavs, of course, were the best positioned of these communities, and were soon established as the major recipients of the new posts that each government created, whether by expansion or by transferring out members of the Forward or 'Intermediate' castes. In Uttar Pradesh, Jaffrelot reports, "Out of 900 teachers appointed [by Mulayam Singh Yadav's] second government, 720 were Yadavs" (Jaffrelot 2003: 380). In Bihar, meanwhile, Laloo Yadav moved to ensure that, "an IAS from the Scheduled Castes

[45] For discussion, see Galanter (1991).

replaced a Brahmin as Chief Secretary [in 1993] and an OBC took over the charge of Director General of Police from another Brahmin" (ibid.: 380). He also ensured that of the 1,427 lecturers recruited to Bihar's universities and constituent colleges in 1996, "most candidates [and appointees] were OBCs and, more precisely, Yadavs" (ibid.).

The number of jobs allocated in this way probably matters less than the broader effects that this second democratic upsurge has had on 'state-poor' encounters in India. One of Laloo Yadav's most insistent claims is that income poverty in Bihar is not of great concern; what matters, and what has driven his politics, is the fact that members of the Backward Classes have been engaged in a struggle for power and a search for honour (*izzat*). The major contribution of his governments has been to ensure that members of the Forward Castes cannot mistreat the Backward Classes in a sustained or systematic manner. Similar confrontations are in play across north India, and they are likely to get more heated as the size of the government cake refuses to keep pace with the numbers of people who can claim to be poor, backward or disadvantaged. This is where the logic of demand politics collides with the politics of scarcity. It is only central government that seems to have the resources to cope with the pressures of reservations while also funding an expansion of the Social Sector budget, both in absolute and relative terms. Interestingly, this expansion has coincided not just with pressures from below, or from the OBCs, but against a backdrop of economic reforms and liberalization. Despite the predictions of some commentators, the 1990s saw a significant increase in spending on India's social services and rural development programmes. It is possible that this extra spending has been made necessary by an increase in 'absolute poverty' brought on by the

reforms themselves. This would be the view of many on the Left and it is probably not at odds with what happened in the first two or three years of the reforms.[46] What is certain, however, is that the debate on 'what's been happening to poverty in India' has been recharged since 1990. It has also coincided with a more general assault on the 'quota and BPL' economy by certain groups within India's business and upper caste elites who feel threatened by the steady rise to power of the OBCs.

This fight-back has taken several forms, not all of which sit easily together, but at its core, significantly, there has been a concerted challenge to the ways in which poverty and deprivation in India are defined, measured and treated. This is evident in the decision of the Jats of Uttar Pradesh to give up their quest for Kshatriya status in favour of being included in the State's list of OBC communities. It is also evident in the support that some Forward Caste communities have offered for the idea of reservations for women, including high caste women, and indeed for some 'twice-born' communities.[47] It is further apparent in the fact that many members of India's economic elites are keen to shrink the state, and to declare success in the war on 'absolute poverty', even as some members of locally dominant farming castes will go to great lengths to get themselves listed as BPL.

It is at this level, we would contend, at the level of the production of identities and numbers, that the war on poverty is now increasingly being fought, and where the state is

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[46] The best review is probably that by Sen (1996).

[47] For example, recent campaigns on behalf of Rajputs in Rajasthan, and Brahmans nationally.

most often sighted.[48] In a very real sense we can say that the war is being fought over such matters as the production of the BPL schedule, as well as over the mechanics of its collection and later use (see Box 2.1). There are clearly forces at work that want to see the numbers of people in absolute poverty driven down, and who might want to put pressures on the lower-level state officials charged with identifying BPL households to act sparingly. These surveys are carried out every few years, and the administrator might be told to look out for a bicycle or other such item as proof of the non-existence of poverty or BPL status. At the same time, there will be forces working in the opposite direction. The administrator is likely to hand over the job to influential village members, many of whom might know that bikes should be hidden, and almost all of whom will know the advantages of getting friends and supporters listed as BPLs. The production of BPL statistics takes shape within the vortex of these social forces, and at once defines a major arena of state-poor encounters and sets the scene for further encounters for those who can get their names registered as BPL.

2.7 Empowering the Poor

The fact that some BPLs are active in the matter of their designation is also curiously, if perhaps not intentionally, bang up to date with the thinking which has informed the design of many poverty-alleviation programmes since about 1990. The 'Right' and the

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[48] This is also true in the United States. Thirty years after President Johnson's 'War on Poverty', significant and often unpleasant battles are being enjoined around affirmative action, workfare (see Chapter 1.2), and the responsibilities that poor people are said to have for availing themselves of opportunities in a market-access society.

Box 2.1 Seeing and Measuring the BPLs

When the state in India in 1992 wanted to see and measure the BPL population in various States it did so by looking inside household cash boxes. District Magistrates/Collectors were told to instruct their enumerators to collect information on household earnings from land, wages, remittances and other sources. Many DMs realized this was an impossible task. Some of them told their enumerators to use their eyes, and warned them “if I visit your village and find out that what is visually decisive has been left out in order to preserve the sanctity of the schedule, you will be in trouble”. Similar sentiments were doubtless expressed in 1997 when the Government called for a survey to be based on household expenditures, or the ‘cooking pot’. In 2002 the Government changed its approach for a third time in 10 years. An Expert Group recommended that BPLs should now be counted on the basis of a definition of relative deprivation which scored households from 0 (very poor) to 4 (not poor) on 13 dimensions. Five of them are listed below for illustrative purposes:

		Score				
Sl. no.	**Characteristic**	**O**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
3	Availability of normal clothing wear: per person in pieces.	Less than 2	Between 2 and 4	Between 4 and 6	Between 6 and 10	10 or above
5	Sanitation	Open defecation	Group latrine with irregular water supply	Group latrine with regular water supply	Clean group latrine with regular water supply and regular sweeper	Private latrine
6	Ownership of consumer durables	Nil	Any one	Two items only	Any three or all items	All or most items on a long list including computers, TVs, and tractors
8	Status of household labour force	Bonded labour	Female and child labour	Only adult females and no child labour	Adult males only	Others
11	Type of indebtedness	For daily consumption purposes from informal sources	For production purpose from informal source	Borrowing for other purposes from informal sources	Borrowing only from institutional agencies	No indebtedness; possess assets

We have not spoken to DMs in Bihar, Jharkhand or West Bengal about how this schedule is completed in the field, but we can guess that similar ‘short-cuts’ will be used and that richer households will again put pressures on enumerators to be listed as BPLs. In any case, the Government of India gave discretion to the States to decide the cut-off points that would convert this 52 point classification into a working definition of ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ at the District, Block and even *panchayat* scales. Having made this concession, however, which would seem to disable any attempt to think about ‘poverty’ on a consistent basis across a State, and far less across India, the Centre also instructed DMs to ensure that any number they came up with should not be more than 10% higher than the poverty estimate that had already been calculated by the Planning Commission for the year 1999-2000. The DM was also instructed to compare his/her figure with the relevant figure given in the NSSO survey of consumer expenditure for 1999-2000. Somewhere in between these competing pressures and definitions, it is fair to say, figures for BPL populations are produced and designations are made. Whether and to what extent those designations or certificates are then used for public policy decisions is, of course, another matter, as indeed is the question of whether a BPL household becomes aware of its status.

Source: based on interviews, and Letter No. Q-16205/4/2002-AI(RD), dated 13.9.02, issued by Dr P.V.Thomas, Economic Adviser to the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, to all Secretaries of Rural Development, State Governments, providing guidelines for the BPL survey for the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007).

‘Left’ are seemingly agreed that the state should not be in the business of dictating to ‘the poor’, or of providing resources for them in the top-down fashion that once prevailed. Poorer people are rather to be protected against the rent-seeking behaviour of state officials. They are also encouraged to voice their own accounts of what it is to be poor, and what they might need from agencies in the government and voluntary sectors. Participation, accountability, decentralization and democratization have become the new watchwords in a discourse which promises that poverty will be reduced by good governance, and by people doing it for themselves. As the World Bank puts it, “The poor are the main actors in the fight against poverty. And they must be brought center-stage in designing, implementing, and monitoring anti-poverty strategies” (World Bank 2001: 12).

The thinking behind this new technology of government has emerged from several quarters, and is still contending for power with more traditional accounts of the relationships that should hold between poorer people and representatives of the state. A cynical view of the neoliberal agenda might suggest that its insistence upon poorer people solving their own problems is consistent with its broader assaults upon public spending. But this would underestimate the ideological power of the counter-revolution in development theory and policy. The neoliberal agenda also mobilizes a concept of empowerment which puts particular emphasis upon the self-worth of the individual. It suggests that the maximization of a person’s potential is held back by oppressive or simply incompetent government as much as it is by a lack of education or health care (although these capabilities are acknowledged to be important). The key point is to put

oneself in the position of the customer rather than that of the service provider.[49] When monopoly powers accrue to government servants the stage is set for state-poor encounters that are abusive and inattentive to the real needs of the customer. What the customer needs most is alternative service providers, or sufficient voice that he or she can hold state agencies accountable for their actions. A democracy that functions properly at the local level is one way to ensure such accountability. This is one reason why the sponsors of economic reform in India have generally also been proponents of Panchayati Raj and the devolution of administrative powers and budgets to local authorities.

These arguments, which we shall expand in Part II, have also been deployed by those who are mistrustful of the reforms, albeit with considerable shifts of emphasis. Robert Chambers has been a pioneering figure in this regard. His work on participatory poverty assessments, and on the question of 'whose reality counts', has been cited regularly by those who wish to insist on the need to work with different groups of poorer people around their own agendas for empowerment.[50] But whereas the neoliberal agenda is interested in improving the capabilities of poorer people to work in and through markets, and in designing formal institutions for good governance, the emphasis of many on the post-Left is on capacity-building initiatives that aim to resist these seductions. The emphasis is on community, and on the possibility of poorer people taking charge of their lives within a well-defined locality.[51] More moderate accounts within this tradition call

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[49] A point made long ago, we seem to recall, by W.Arthur Lewis in an exchange with Thomas Balogh on the nature of 'socialism'. For a contemporary view from a very different perspective, see the essays in Krueger (2002).

[50] Chambers (1983, and 1988). See also Long and Long (1992).

[51] See, for example, Chakrabarty (2003), Friedmann (1996). Also Vyas and Bhargava (1995).

upon non-governmental organizations to play a central role in capacity-building initiatives as well as in running service delivery schemes. More radical accounts might express skepticism about the possibility of poorer people (especially women, and members of the Scheduled Communities) being able to voice their concerns effectively in *aam sabhas* or *gram sabhas*, or indeed in meetings with the *panchayat sewak* or the Block Development Officer. The emphasis here might be on spatial closure strategies that seek the empowerment of 'the oppressed' by removing them from contacts with 'the state' and 'the market' alike. Participation would then no longer be oriented to the agendas of Others.[52]

In practice, these more radical agendas soon run up against their internal contradictions (how can states, markets or hierarchies be avoided?), and cede ground to mainstream accounts of the merits of participation and accountability. This mainstream, however, which enjoys strong support now from the World Bank and most development agencies, is itself proposing a radically new account of the ways in which different groups of poorer people might come to see and meet the state in a country like India. As we have suggested several times already, newer technologies of rule are rubbing shoulders with, and are sometimes jostling, older forms of government. The picture does not remain the same.

Joint Forest Management is a case in point, although we shall have cause to refer to it only fleetingly in this book. JFM emerged in a government circular of 1990 as a

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[52] See Esteva and Prakash (1998); Rahnema and Bawtree (1997).

middle way between state control of the forest usufruct and full control by local user groups. The circular called upon State governments to implement JFM systems in order to regenerate protected forests and reduce rural poverty. The Guidelines asked State governments to devolve everyday forest protection, management and development responsibilities to local community institutions (cooperative or committee-based) at the village or *panchayat* levels. These institutions would include serving Forest Officers and would prescribe benefit-sharing arrangements following regeneration.[53] Unlike community forestry, which would take the state out of the picture entirely, JFM proposed that villager understandings of sylvicultural practices were extensive but not complete. Poorer people would still benefit from the professional advice that Forest Department officials could offer, and which would in time build up their own stocks of forest knowledge. The State Forest Department's Trading Wing could also provide villagers with information on the price of timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) at different locations.

This same emphasis on the state as a facilitator and partial stakeholder is also to be found in a number of recent initiatives in the fields of primary education provision and employment assurance, two areas that will feature strongly in Part II. Nehru and Ambedkar put particular emphasis on education as a core component of India's anti-poverty programmes. The Constitution of India directed in 1950 that "the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years … free and compulsory education for

[53] By the end of the first quarter of 2001, "there were 44,943 official JFM groups (village forest committees, or VFCs) protecting over 11.63 million hectares of government-owned forests, or 15.5% of the recorded forest area of the country, making it one of the largest such programmes in the world" (Corbridge and Kumar 2002: 767, drawing on Borgoyary 2001).

all children until they complete the age of 14 years". This goal was restated in the National Resolution on Education of 1968 and the National Policy on Education of 1986. India failed lamentably to meet its performance targets, however, and the gap between rhetoric and reality in the education sector was exposed with particular vigour in the 1990s, not least by those impressed with Amartya Sen's account of poverty as capability deprivation (see also Table 2.2).[54] The new public education agenda proposes to deal with this learning deficit, in part, by encouraging educational provision in the private or not-for-profit sectors, which should increase parental choice; but there are also provisions

Table 2.2: Literacy Rates (age 7+) in 17 major States of India, 1997

	Overall	Male	Female
Kerala	93	96	90
Himachal Pradesh	77	87	70
Assam	75	82	66
Maharashtra	74	84	63
West Bengal	**72**	**81**	**63**
Tamil Nadu	70	80	60
Gujarat	68	80	57
Punjab	67	72	62
Haryana	65	76	52
Jammu and Kashmir	59	71	48
Karnataka	58	66	50
Madhya Pradesh	56	70	41
Uttar Pradesh	56	69	41
Rajasthan	55	73	35
Andhra Pradesh	54	64	43
Orissa	51	64	38
Bihar	**49**	**62**	**34**
ALL-INDIA	62	73	50

Source: National Sample Survey Organisation, 53rd Round,

quoted in http://www.education.nic.in/htmlweb/iamrstat.htm

(Courtesy: Institute of Applied Manpower Research).

[54] Sen (1985); see also Drèze and Sen (2002: chapter 5).

for States to empower the parents of children in government schools through Village Education Committees (VECs) or their equivalent.[55] Given that many poorer villagers come to see the state most often and directly in the figure of the schoolteacher, the suggestion that they might have power over him or her through a VEC proposes a radical reworking of this optic. The directness of this relationship stands in sharp contrast to the statutory provision for inspections of schools and their employees by the Sub-Inspectors of Primary Schools employed by a State's Department of Education. When combined with mobilization campaigns (some of which are aimed at improving adult literacy, as for example in the Total Literacy Campaign), the devolution of powers to a VEC suggests that parents and children might at last be empowered to challenge the power of the teaching trade unions, and to get to grips with problems of poor quality school-teaching and even teacher absenteeism.

An insistent emphasis on participatory development is also to the fore in India's largest anti-poverty scheme of the post-reform period, the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS). The EAS began life in 1993 when it was deployed by the Ministry of Rural Development in New Delhi, "to provide gainful employment during the lean agricultural season in manual work to all able-bodied adults in rural areas who are in need and who are desirous of work, but who cannot find it" (Government of India 1993: 1). In important respects it drew on State-level schemes to provide employment in the off-season, including the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in Maharashtra.[56] The

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[55] For example, the School Attendance Committee in West Bengal.

[56] On the EGS, see Echeverri-Gent (1993), Herring and Edwards (1983), Joshi and Moore (2000).

EAS was distinctive, however, in its ambition to provide sufficient resources (80% from New Delhi; 20% matching funds from State governments) to provide up to 100 days of waged employment for a maximum of two adults per household in need, wherever these household members voiced a demand for work. The scheme would be triggered by demands from below, by men and women who could not otherwise find work banging on the door of their local government office and asking for assured employment.[57] Ideally, this work would be provided from existing plan and non-plan works in progress, but if these schemes did not allow EAS monies to be used so that at least 60% of funds were spent on 'unskilled labour', other schemes would have to be found. The selection of these schemes, moreover, would also bear the imprint of local people. The EAS Guidelines stipulated that village open meetings would have to be called to decide on the sorts of schemes that villagers might like to see commissioned (the results to be passed upwards to higher-level *panchayat* bodies and Block Development Office), and for the selection of the contractor charged with executing a scheme. They also required that the accounts of EAS schemes be presented to villagers each year through their open meetings (the *gram sansads* of West Bengal, for example).

In sum, EAS schemes would be triggered by local demands, given shape through public meetings, and made accountable in the same forums. In terms of state-poor encounters, they would constitute members of the labouring poor as prime movers in a large-scale anti-poverty initiative, the major outcomes of which would also be chosen,

[57] Sometimes literally, but more often through intermediaries and contractors: see Chapter 4.

very largely, by members of village society. Instead of being supplicants of the state, the poor were to be its customers and even its masters.

2.8 Conclusion

Very much in opposition to Escobar, we have argued in this Chapter that the production of poverty in India, and of various sites where the poor encounter the state, have not stayed still over the past fifty years. The anti-poverty agenda in India is made up of several technologies of government, some of which have gained in strength recently as others have receded, and most of which survive in sometimes uneasy proximity. It would be absurd to deny that poverty isn't mainly defined by the Government of India in income or calorific terms, or that absolute poverty isn't still seen as a disgrace by many of those charged with its alleviation. In any case, this definition speaks to an important understanding of poverty, and there are good reasons for welcoming the sharp declines in absolute [income] poverty that have recently been reported for both rural and urban areas. At the same time, however, it is clear that agencies within and without the Government of India have begun to rethink their anti-poverty agendas quite radically since the late-1980s. This is partly in recognition of what Yogendra Yadav has called the second democratic revolution in India, or the fact that the Backward Classes are now making much greater demands not just *of* the state but *within* the state.[58] The pervasiveness of 'quota politics' is one important sign of this; another is the severity of the political struggle that is being waged for control over the local state. In addition, the government's thinking on poverty, and the presentation of its anti-poverty agendas, has

[58] Yadav (1996).

been influenced by the voices that have been raised on behalf of civil society and the voluntary sector, and by those who have urged that the poor should be allowed to speak for themselves.

In theory, these voices of the poor have lent considerable weight to the promotion of the EAS, or JFM, or VECs as new vehicles for the self-empowerment of disadvantaged individuals, households or social groups. They have done so, not least, because they have mobilized some quite radical assumptions about the rights and capacities of poorer people, some of which were already present at the time that the Constitution of India was promulgated in 1950. One suggestion of this book is that these new technologies of government cannot be reduced to a singular discourse of development, nor can it be assumed that they are without effect. Jaffrelot claims that India is undergoing a silent revolution, and this is surely correct. The fact that India's revolution doesn't share the qualities of speed and extreme violence that we associate with revolutions elsewhere is less important than the fact that power is leaching steadily, and in some respects ineluctably, to the lower castes, and has been claimed by them in terms which often resist the presumptions of a benign and disinterested state.

A second suggestion of this book, however, is that we learn about the state not simply through an analysis of its published technologies of rule - its Guidelines for JFM or EAS, its recruitment and training practices, its systems of reward, sanction and promotion, its means of registration of men and women as SCs, STs or BPLs, its name-plating of visible schemes for the alleviation of poverty - but also through the ways that it

works in the trenches. The failure of land-to-the-tiller land reforms in the 1950s showed how named agents of the state come under pressure from competing forces in political society. (Some officers will also have been major landowners themselves). If we want to understand how the state works from the point of view of the rural poor, we need to focus in depth on certain initiatives like the EAS or the VECs which claim to bring poorer people into contact with the developmental state in the most enlightened fashion. These initiatives provide something of a test case for investigating state-society relations more broadly. We also need to do this in different locations, so that we can isolate more clearly the effects of particular political regimes and the technologies of government with which they are associated.

Before we turn to these tasks, however, we need to do something else: we need to consider to what extent the poor see and rely on the state at all, and for which reasons and in which circumstances. We need first, in other words, to say something about the livelihood strategies, capabilities and contact networks of different groups within the rural poor, including those networks that take shape away from the eyes of state agencies. This will be our task in Chapter 3.

Appendix 2.1

Major National Programmes and Policies Related to Poverty Alleviation, 1999.

I Special Employment and Poverty Alleviation Programmes

a) Rural Self-Employment Programmes

IRDP **Integrated Rural Development Programme**
50% centrally sponsored scheme with national coverage since 1980 (1976-1980 pilot scheme in selected blocks). Aims at providing self-employment through acquisition of productive assets and skills through provision of subsidy and bank credit. Targeted at rural BPL population, largely small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and rural artisans. Special safeguards for SC/STs, women, physically handicapped; priority to assignees of ceiling surplus land, Green Card Holders under Family Welfare Programme and freed bonded labourers. Performance during Eighth Plan: total allocation (Centre and State) = Rs. 5,048 crores; 108 lakh families covered.

TRYSEM **Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment**
50% centrally sponsored facilitating component of IRDP since 1979. Aims at providing basic technical and managerial skills through training. Targeted at rural BPL population between 18 and 35 years. Special safeguards for SC/STs and others, like IRDP. Performance during Eighth Plan: total allocation (Centre and State) = Rs. 370 crores; 15 lakh youth trained.

DWCRA **Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas**
Sub-scheme of IRDP started in 1982-83 on pilot basis, later extended to all Districts. Aims at improving living conditions of women and, thereby, of children by promoting women's income-generation activities through self-help groups and providing access to basic social services. Targeted at groups of 10 to 15 women among BPL families. 50% to SC/STs. Performance during Eighth Plan: total allocation (Centre and State) = Rs. 190 crores; 1.9 lakh groups formed; 30 lakh beneficiaries.

SITRA **Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans**
Sub-scheme of IRDP introduced in 1992, national coverage from 1995-96. Aims at enhancing incomes and product quality through 90%-subsidised provision of tool kits of Rs. 2000. Targeted at rural artisans (BPL), except weavers, tailors, needle workers and *bidi* [country cigarette] workers. Special safeguard for SC/STs, again like IRDP. Performance during Eighth Plan: total allocation (Centre) = Rs. 116 crores; 6.1 lakh toolkits distributed.

GKY **Ganga Kalyan Yojana**
80% centrally sponsored scheme started in 1997, covers all Districts. Aims at improving agricultural productivity through exploitation of groundwater (borewells and tubewells, which are not provided under MWS). Targeted at small and marginal farmers (BPL) (individuals and groups of 5-15) who have not been assisted by another government minor irrigation programme.

b) Rural Wage Employment Programmes

JRY **Jawahar Rozgar Yojana**
80% centrally sponsored scheme since 1989, after merger of NREP and RLEPG. Aims at generating additional gainful wage employment for unemployed and underemployed, men and women in rural areas. Secondary objectives include creation of assets for the community and for SC/STs, and positive influence on wage levels. Provides employment

opportunities at minimum wages. Targeted at rural BPL population with preference for SC/STs and freed bonded labour and with 30% reservation for women. Second Stream added in 1993-94 targeted at 120 identified backward Districts in 12 States; aims to provide 90-100 days of employment per person (merged into EAS). 'Third Stream' introduced in 1993-94 (later called JRY Special and Innovative Projects) for projects aiming at preventing migration, enhancing women's employment, etc. Performance during Eighth Plan: total allocation (Centre and State) = Rs. 17,473 crores; 40,362 lakh person-days of employment created. The Draft Ninth Plan made the EAS the major employment programme; JRY to be confined to the creation of rural infrastructure at the village panchayat level, in consonance with the felt needs of the community.

EAS **Employment Assurance Scheme**
80% centrally sponsored scheme introduced in 1993 as pilot scheme in 1775 backward Blocks, extended in 1997-98 to cover all rural Blocks in country. Aims at providing 100 days of assured casual manual employment at statutory minimum wage during lean agricultural season. Secondary objective is the creation of economic infrastructure and community assets for sustained employment and development. Linked to environmental programmes (watershed development, agro-horticulture, water and soil conservation, etc.) as per the felt needs of the District. Demand driven, targeted at all persons in the age group 18-60 who are in need of work. Performance during Eighth Plan: total expenditure (Centre and State) = Rs. 5,278 crores; 10,686 lakh person-days of employment created; 259 lakh persons registered.

MWS **Million Wells Scheme**
80% centrally sponsored scheme since 1996, started as sub-scheme of JRY/NREP in 1988-89. Aims to improve agricultural productivity through fully subsidised provision of open irrigation wells on private land. Targeted at small and marginal farmers below BPL, two thirds of which are SC/STs and free bonded labourers (before 1993-94 exclusively to SC/ST). Performance during Eighth Plan: total expenditure (Centre and State) = Rs. 3,727 crores; 7.4 lakh wells constructed.

IAY **Indira Awas Yojana**
80% centrally sponsored scheme since 1996 (before sub-component of JRY). Provides funds for house construction. Targeted at SC/STs.

NSAP **National Social Assistance Programme**
Programme launched in 1995 with three components: National Old Age Pension Scheme, National Family Benefit Scheme, National Maternity Benefit Scheme. Supplements efforts of States in order to ensure minimum national standards of well-being. Provides social assistance benefits in the case of old age (pension of Rs. 75 per month); death of the primary breadwinner (lump-sum of Rs. 5,000-10,000); and maternity (Rs. 300 per pregnancy up to the first two life births). Performance during 1996-97: total expenditure (Centre) = Rs. 384 crores; 58 lakh beneficiaries.

c) Urban Poverty Programmes

SJSRY **Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana**
75% centrally sponsored scheme launched in December 1997, replacing NRY (Nehru Rozgar Yojana) and other schemes. Seeks to provide gainful employment through support of self-employment ventures and provision of wage employment. Rests on foundations of community empowerment. Targeted at urban BPL population in all towns, particularly in identified pockets of urban poverty. Performance (of NRY) during Eighth Plan: total expenditure (Centre and State) = Rs. 498 crores. In 1993-94, 124 lakh person-days employment created; 1.5 lakh beneficiaries for setting up micro-enterprises.

USEP **Urban Self Employment Programme**
Main component of SJSRY. Seeks to upgrade informal-sector activities by encouraging the setting up of micro-enterprises with subsidised loans, skills training, and infrastructural and marketing support. Targeted at individual urban poor and, particularly, at neighbourhood groups of urban BPL women.

UWEP **Urban Wage Employment Programme**
Component of SJSRY. Aims at providing wage employment to unemployed and underemployed persons. Secondary objective is creation of socially and economically useful public assets (coordination with NSDP). Targeted at urban BPL population.

II Special Areas Programmes

DPAP **Drought Prone Areas Programme (Watershed Development)**
Started in 1973-74 as integrated area development programme; 50% centrally sponsored: revamped in 1995-96 into approach based on Watershed Development. Aims to promote economic development of village communities through optimum utilisation of natural resources that will mitigate effects of droughts and encourage ecological balance. Seeks to improve economic condition of resource poor and disadvantaged sections through creation and equitable distribution of stable resource base and increased employment opportunities. Covers 947 blocks in 155 districts in 13 States. Expenditure between 1995-96 and 1996-97: Rs. 2,035 crores; almost 5,500 Watershed Projects to be implemented in this four year period.

III Social Services

a) Basic Services Programmes

MNP **Minimum Needs Programme**
Launched in 1974-75. Seeks to establish network of facilities and social services in all areas up to national norms in order to raise living standards and reduce regional disparities. Provides investment in elementary and adult education; supplementary nutrition; rural health, water supply, roads, electrification, housing; and environmental urban slum improvement. Most important programme for delivery of basic services.

BMS **Basic Minimum Services**
Started in 1996. Seeks universal coverage by 2000 in regard to primary health care, primary education and safe drinking water.

b) Education

National Policy on Education
Universalisation of Elementary Education has been policy goal since independence. Focus on physical infrastructure and teacher training. Revised Policy since 1986. Includes 18 centrally sponsored schemes, including: Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Operation Blackboard; Non-Formal Education Programme; and Post Literacy and Continuing Education. In 1997-98, central plan allocation to elementary education was Rs. 2,265 crores.

TLC **Total Literacy Programme**
Principal instrument of National Literacy Mission launched in 1988. Aims to eradicate (child and adult) illiteracy by 2005 through campaigns in specific areas. Performance 1988-1997: covered 215 districts; 666 lakh new literates.

DPEP **District Primary Education Programme**
World Bank assisted project launched in 1994; Aims to achieve universal elementary education through specific planning and target setting at district level. Operates in 149 Districts of 14 States. In 1997-98, central plan outlay for elementary education was Rs. 561 crores (bulk of expenditure borne by States).

c) Health and Family Welfare

"Health for All" Policy
Policy announced in 1983. Continued expansion of health infrastructure, including Primary Health Centres, but with more attention to underprivileged and vulnerable section. Includes National Illness Assistance Fund that seeks to ensure financial assistance for specialised medical treatment from life-threatening diseases. Targeted at BPL patients. Includes various disease-eradication programmes. In 1997-98, central plan allocation to primary health care was Rs. 918 crores.

FWP — **Family Welfare Programme**
100% centrally sponsored scheme started in 1952. Seeks to promote small family norm and reproductive and child health through free and voluntary choice. Includes Reproduction and Child Health scheme, Pulse Polio Immunisation scheme, etc. In 1996-97, central plan outlay to family welfare amounted to Rs. 1,535 crores.

d) Housing and Sanitation

National Housing Policy
Revised in 1994. Recognises importance of housing for overall development of rural people and urban poor. Includes central assistance to national network of building centres; housing schemes for Economically Weaker Sections and Lower Income Groups; and IAY (see above).

ARWSP — **Rural Water Supply Programme**
Central assistance matching provision by State under MNP.

RSS — **Rural Sanitation Scheme**
Supplements MNP and other programmes. Targeted at SC/ST. During 1996-97, central expenditure was Rs. 60 crores; 2.3 lakh laterines built.

e) Welfare of Weaker Sections

SCP — **Special Component Plan**
Started in 1979. Central assistance to States to make special provisions to SCs under various schemes.

TSP — **Tribal Sub Plan**
Started in 1974. Central assistance to States to make special provisions to STs under various schemes.

f) Development of Women and Children

"Empowerment of Women" Policy
National policy announced in Ninth Plan. Main scheme: ICDS (see below). Various smaller schemes: STEP (Support to Training and Employment Programme); Employment and Income Generating Training Programme that trains women belonging to weaker sections in non-traditional occupations (co-funded by Norway); Rashtriya Mahila Kosh that extends credit to poor women of informal sector; Mahila Samridhi Yojana that promotes thrift among poor women, etc. Continuation of women's component in poverty-alleviation

programmes. Total central outlay for various schemes for women and children 1997-98: Rs. 1,026 crores.

ICDS **Integrated Child Development Services Scheme**
Started in 1975-76. Seeks to provide integrated package of services, including supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-up and referral services, pre-school non-formal education and health to children below six years. Covers 201 lakh children and 38 lakh mothers.

IV Agriculture

Various crop, livestock, fisheries schemes; schemes for irrigation, agricultural credit, supplies, technology, processing, marketing, etc. Some schemes targeted at marginal and small farmers. In 1997-98, central plan allocation to agriculture and allied sectors was Rs. 2,969 crores.

V Subsidies

PDS **Public Distribution System**
National food-security and general subsidy scheme until 1997. Aimed at providing national and individual food security through distribution of subsidised food and maintenance of buffer stocks (since 1966); promoting foodgrain production through ensured procurement and minimum support prices for farmers; checking inflationary pressure through subsidised food prices. Untargeted, but originally biased to urban areas.

TPDS **Targeted Public Distribution System**
Replaced untargeted PDS in June 1997. Aims at ensuring availability of essential commodities at affordable prices especially for the poor through provision subsidised rice and wheat (10 kg per month), sugar, kerosene, etc. Other objectives like older PDS. Targeted at rural and urban BPL families; reduced food subsidy for the non-poor. In 1997-98, total subsidy will be Rs. 6,167 crores (Rs. 3,718 crores for BPL families); 1,645 lakh families covered (587 lakh BPL families).