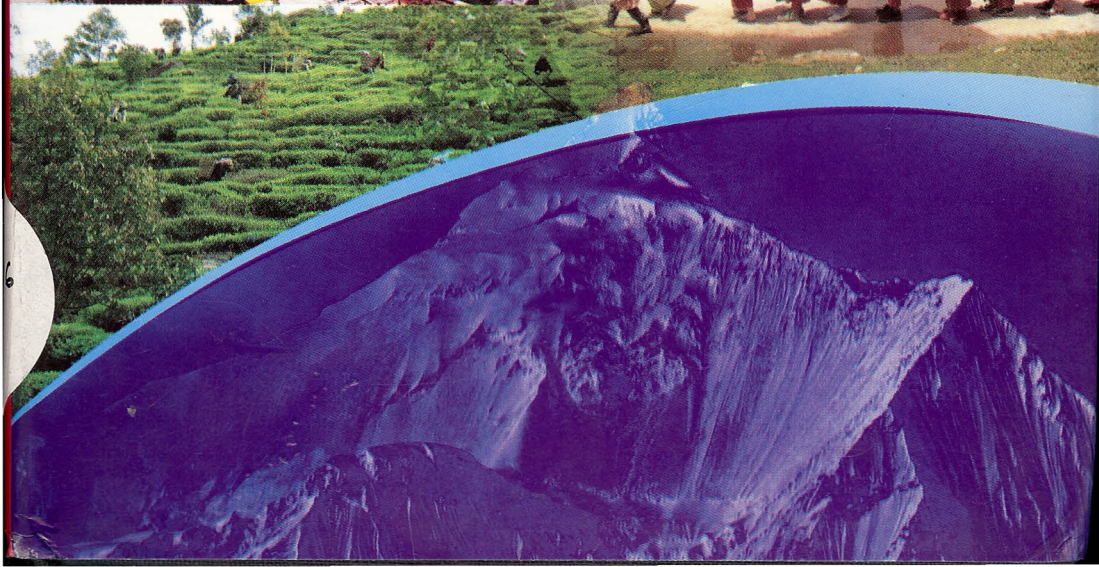
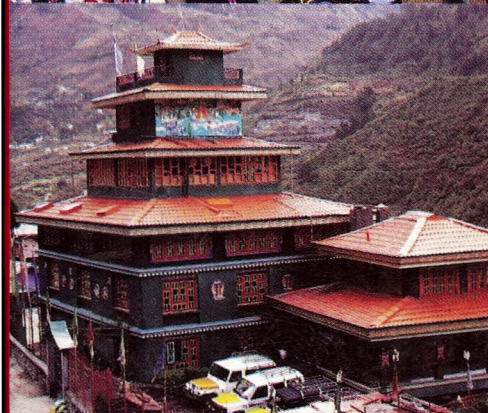
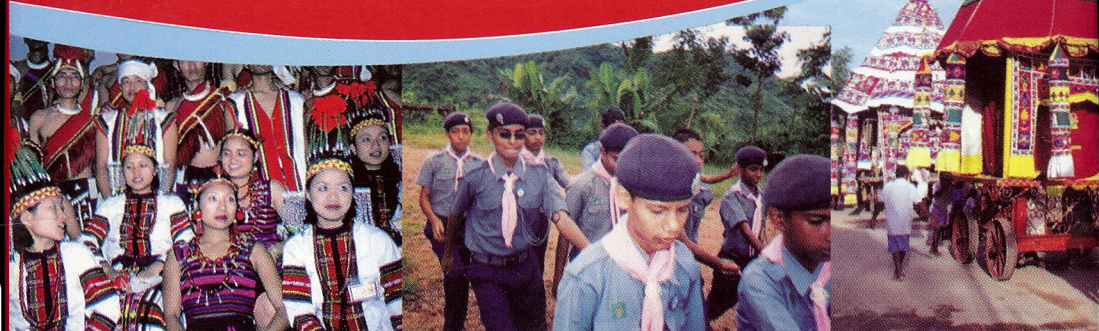


# Genesis of Human Development in North East India

Keya Sengupta



GENESIS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN  
NORTH-EAST INDIA

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**Keya Sengupta** is presently a Professor at Indian Institute of Management, Shillong, formerly, she was with the Department of Economics and Dean, School of Social Sciences of the Assam Central University, Silchar. Prof. Sengupta is engaged in the teaching of Economics for the last thirty years. She has published numerous research papers in journals of repute including *Artha Vijnana*, *Man and Development*, *Finance India* etc. Also, she has presented a good number of papers in national and international seminars and delivered lectures in many universities. Prof Sengupta has also completed major Research Projects of UGC and ICSSR. Currently, she is engaged in a major Project on Human Development funded by UNDP. Recently, she was invited by Foundation Maison des Sciences de l' Hommes Paris, France and visited Paris under the Indo-French Social Scientist Exchange Programme.

**GENESIS OF  
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN  
NORTH-EAST INDIA**

**A Diagnostic Analysis**

**KEYA SENGUPTA**

Professor

Indian Institute of Management

Shillong

**AUTHOR COPY**

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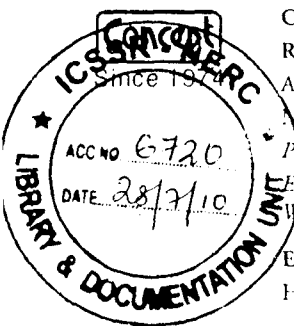
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## Preface

The present work is an analytical study of the indicators of Human Development of the states of North-Eastern Region. The region has long been a victim of not only retarded economic development, but poor performance in terms of the indicators of quality of life as well. Such issues have for long been ignored both by policy-makers as well as by researchers and academicians. It is now a well accepted fact that, economic development without adequate attention to the social sector is not only meaningless and sterile, but economic growth itself is unsustainable without a strong social sector. In fact, if the benefits of growth do not percolate down to the common man, it is not only that the gulf between the rich and the poor is widened, but such inequality has the dangerous potentiality of serious ethnic conflict and separatist movements. Such has been the unfortunate experience of the states of north-eastern region of India.

It is due to all these significant and crucial issues that it was thought pertinent to undertake the present study in which we have attempted to get an insight into the quality of life prevalent in the different states of the region. The work, therefore, not only makes an analysis of the various indicators of human development but also focuses attention to the determinants of the behavioural pattern of such indicators. The study has been conducted, for the 16 districts of the various states of the region. Investigation has been conducted for different socio-economic linguistic and ethnic groups, so that the policy-makers in particular realise the fact that there is a wide range of diversity among the various states of the region, just as there is diversity among various groups of people living in the region. The region as such cannot be treated as a homogeneous unit, for the purpose of policy formulation, for human development.

The work has also focused attention to the crucial issue of governance, the role of which though often overlooked by economists, is pivotal for manoeuvring the path of human development. The role of public awareness for improving their own quality of life has also been stressed upon.

It is hoped, that the findings of the work, will be beneficial for policy-makers and researchers working in the field of social sector in north-east India.

**Keya Sengupta**

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Lastly, and most importantly, I thank my parents for all their help, cooperation and patience in putting up with all my ordeals, during the course of the last several years, when I was conducting the work.

**Keya Sengupta**

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# Human Development: The New Approach to Development Strategy

## Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a marginally growing interest by politicians and policy-makers in the economy of the North-Eastern Region of India. Experimentation with policy formulation over the years, to raise the well-being of different ethnic groups of the region has raised serious doubts about the effectiveness of these policies for the north-eastern region. The failure to grasp the political economy and the economic history of the region has often baffled the policy-makers at the centre. Their inability to come to terms with the reality of the socio-economic background of the various tribes and ethnic groups of the region has resulted in thrusting the central model of growth on the entire region. This has been done without taking into account its own indigenous natural resources and other special features of the region. As a result of pursuing these policies devoid of reality a few sporadic pockets of affluence has emerged in certain areas which take advantage of most of the central policies. Majority on the other hand, are characterized by massive poverty and extremely poor quality of life. This has not only resulted in widening the gap in income and quality of life of the people of the region, but has also created a lot of misgivings. This feeling is particularly dangerous for the overall development of the region, since the tribals who constitute a major section of the population are an extremely sensitive lot.

In less developing nations/regions, economics must be seen in a much broader perspective in comparison to traditional economics. Such problems have to be analysed within the context of the overall social

system of the area concerned. Social system implies the interdependent relationship between economic and non-economic factors. Among non-economic factors we have attitude towards life, work, legal and administrative structures, patterns of kinship and religion, cultural traditions, system of land tenure, the authority and integrity of government agencies and the degree of people's participation in development decisions and activities and the flexibility or rigidity of economic and social classes. Due to wide variation of these issues from one country to another, and inter as well as intra regional variations and also differences from one social and cultural setting to another, such studies relating to the problems of one region cannot be imposed on another. Tackling these issues in an attempt at initiating economic development sometimes poses a greater problem. Raising production level, living standards and the other macro economic indicators of growth are all functions of local history, expectations, values, incentives, attitudes, beliefs and institutional and power structure. Added to these are also important factors like savings, investment, product factor prices, foreign exchange rate etc. Economists sometimes dismiss these important non-economic variables as "non-quantifiable", without realizing that they play a very important role in the success or failure of the development effort (Todaro, 2003).

### **Development Strategy for North-East India**

All these disturbing features have harmed the long-term development of the region, and failed to initiate the process of sustained development. Pure economic theory of rationality which may justify extreme inequality of income on grounds of efficiency and marginal productivity theory of distribution, may be a dangerous proposition for this region. What may be rational behaviour from the macro-economic point of view, may not be an ideal condition from the micro-economic point of view.

A humanistic approach to development model based on wage goods paradigm may be a possible alternative. The main focus of attention of these models should be based on the paradigm of human development, in its various dimensions. Various aspects of human well-being such as food, nutrition, shelter, education, health and various other amenities, which constitute a good quality life, should occupy the centre stage of all development efforts of North-East India. Such objectives carefully researched, studied and analyzed, if integrated into growth models, need

not be at the cost of rational economic behaviour and anti-growth. In fact, such growth models can ensure sustainable development. The basic forces of market economy ensuring optimum allocation of resources, can no doubt be satisfied, but the human crisis of pure neo-classical model of growth cannot be overlooked either. The problem of development in modern world is not only multi-dimensional, but unique as well. Traditional economic approach may not always be helpful in clarifying such problems and unconventional approaches may often have to be adopted to solve what may superficially appear to be conventional economic problems. Though traditional economic approach can play a useful role in improving our understanding of development problems, but they should not act as obstacles to the realities of local conditions in less developed countries. Hence the necessity of ensuring state intervention for synthesizing economic rationality of market forces and welfare of the common man.

The essence of all these issues such as education, health and various other factors which determine the conditions of living of the common man are captured in the newly emerged concept of Human Development. The acceptance of this new idea has significantly broadened the narrow conventional development paradigm. The response of the new development economics to the changing realities of life in the developing countries and the new theoretical advances made in mainstream economics has been both positive and negative, which is evident in the greater emphasis on Human Development. This is also evident from the regular publication of the *Human Development Report* by UNDP, since 1990. The basic reason for this Report, is an attempt to reduce the unacceptable levels of economic inequalities, poverty commonly experienced in the less developing countries and even certain neglected regions of a large and developed country. Adequate attention needs to be paid to these aspects related to development experience in the less developing nations, because as Myrdal (1984) highlights that "what is needed to raise the miserable living levels of the poor masses is instead radical institutional reforms. These would serve the double purpose of greater equality and economic growth". Tinbergen also emphasizes the importance of substantial income transfer to correct the present income differences between the rich and the poor. Study of human development, therefore, emphasizes the need to achieve social justice and enhance human happiness for which we need to create institutions that transmute the longing for a better world into a set of policies, which begin by raising the welfare of the deprived sections.

Economic growth and well-being of the common man as measured by Human Development are, therefore, not contradictory, as some economists wrongly tend to opine. In fact, they are complementary and no economic growth can be initiated and sustained at low level of human development just as high-level of human development can only be sustained, with resources obtained through high rate of economic growth. Growth does not automatically transform itself into human development. All depends on the nature and extent to which policies and programmes of an economy are geared to harmonize economic growth with human development. Achieving these two goals simultaneously should form part of every development goal and effort. It is here that the role of the state assumes importance and the study of human development assumes significance from the point of view of policy perspective. The widespread criticism of Trickle Down Theory which has proved ineffective in the Indian context, and least of all for the north-eastern region, can be made a meaningful exercise through changing the entire perspective of policy formulation. As Haq (1996) opines that under the circumstances the focus of attention of most policies would be the people rather than production only. Policies according to him should contain certain elements missing from most of the policies today. For instance, policies should begin with a detailed profile of its people in terms of education, health, poverty, cultural and political aspirations and all other factors that go to constitute a good quality of life. This exercise should be undertaken both for rural and urban divide, and also for various social, religious and most importantly across spatial dimension. Lack of knowledge about the people, for whom policies are to be formulated, cannot be expected to provide satisfactory results. Hence our present study assumes crucial significance from this point of view.

Haq further opines that policy-makers must first decide upon the ends and device the means accordingly. They should decide the basic human needs of the society in terms of nutrition, health, education housing, transport etc. and only then the targets of physical production can be made. This necessitates integration of production policies of equitable distribution. Equal emphasis even if not greater emphasis should be put on policies which ensures equitable distribution of the national product. Policies focusing human development should also make people equal partners in development. Encouragement should, therefore, be provided to people to participate in development process. Assessment of the progress of an economy should be made from the point of view of not only the macro-economic indicators, but also the

social indicators as well. It is only then that development efforts can be made more meaningful. The study of human development in the North-Eastern Region from this point of view is extremely important.

At the same time, it is also crucial to focus attention to the fact that too much emphasis on either economic growth or only human development may result in unbalanced growth of the economy, which may once again jeopardize the very process of long-term sustainable development. (Sengupta, 2002). Sustaining the process of development is the pivotal issue of Human Development paradigm. If the states of north-east have to survive on aid from the centre on a permanent basis, sustainability of developmental efforts in the region will be seriously impaired. Making the growth process sustainable by emphasizing on human development implies that enough of the resources created at present should be invested in education and health of today's generation. These people in turn may sustain the process of economic development of the future generations also, so that the future generation need not pay the debts of today's generation. Therefore sustaining human life is more important. Sustenance of the physical environment such as the ecological environment or the economy are only means to sustain human life.

The main tenets of the paradigm of human development are, therefore, the people. Every aspect of economic development is assessed from the point of view of the people. The objective of growth is the betterment of people's lives and not merely expansion of production processes. This paradigm further necessitates that people should not only build capabilities, by building their health, education and skills, but must also be provided with all the opportunities to use up these capabilities through adequate employment opportunities. Full expansion of the GDP and the macro-economic variables which are considered as means of economic development are as important as the end, which are the people. Apart from the pure economic factors, non-economic factors such as the political, cultural and social factors also play an equally important role in determining human development.

In the 1950s and 1960s many nations had experienced economic development, yet the living conditions of the masses remained extremely deplorable. It was only in the seventies that realisation dawned upon the planners that something must have gone wrong somewhere. The fact that development was purely an economic phenomenon in which the GNP growth would trickle down to the masses, for the wider distribution of economic and social benefits of

growth, did not seem to work. This resulted in discarding GNP as a true indicator of growth. Direct attack on poverty, low level of living, inequitable income distribution and rising unemployment, were the pivotal issues which were incorporated in the new concept of human development, and were gradually forming part of development policies. Similar was the view of the World Bank, which during the eighties championed economic growth as the goal of development and had taken a much broader view of development. This is evident from 1991 World Development Report, in which it maintained that “the challenge of development is to improve the quality of life. Especially in the world’s poor countries, a better quality of life generally calls for higher incomes—but it involves much more. It encompasses as ends in themselves better education, higher standards of health and nutrition less poverty, a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom and a richer cultural life”.

Multi-dimensional aspect of the process of development is, therefore, accepted by most planners and policy-makers. This modern dimension of development, involves major changes in social structure, attitudes, national institutions, eradication of poverty, raising the levels of living, along with acceleration of economic growth. “Development, in its essence, must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system turned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups, within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better” (Todaro, Smith, 2003)

The fact that it has still not been possible to solve the problems of hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition and poverty of the states of the north-eastern region where the condition of quality of life in most places is much lower than the all India level, only reveals the choice of wrong strategy of development for the north-east. The assumption of the Trickle Down Theory has totally failed in the region like the rest of India. Western paradigms are, therefore, no longer accepted blindly with the same degree of fervour. Voices of disagreement have characterized the nations of the Third World countries, who in turn slowly and gradually started adopting their own development paradigm. Development experience of China, can be cited as a wonderful example. The developmentalists of the western paradigm are now considered “as false prophets whose faulty paradigm led to massive misdirection of effort” (Dube, 1988).

The result of all the futile efforts over the years, at developing the economy, particularly that of the North-East reveal that we have once again to rediscover the basic truth of all development strategy—that people should occupy the centre-stage of all development. Even in India itself, different states have developed at different rates, inspite of similar physical investment. States with rich natural resources or heavy capital investment, have not displayed any satisfactory record in terms of economic development. In contrast, some states with insufficient resources, both natural as well as financial, have performed much better, where the people of those states have greater capability and are, therefore, much more hard working and efficient. The name of Kerala emerges as the most important example. The north-eastern region, in India, is one of the richest in the endowment of unique type of natural resources, yet the extent of economic development is the lowest in the whole country. The crucial factor that can be identified here are the people, and their skills, ability and capability which make the major difference to development. Therefore, it will be futile to think of developing a nation/region without developing the people themselves. This has been the fallacy of development of the entire country, over the past decades. Though the rest of the country has realized this error and talking more in terms of placing the people at the centre stage of development, similar realization has yet to dawn on the planners and policy-makers of the north-eastern region. People are yet to be placed at the centre stage of development. The task is indeed a formidable one, since the region is characterized by diverse ethnic, religious and linguistic groups, and the record of economic development so far has also not been very encouraging.

### **New Development Paradigm**

Mahbul-ul-Haq who is considered the father of the concept of human development opines that the new paradigm of development should be the *Human Development Paradigm*. The basic objective of development is to create an environment for people to enable them to enjoy a long and healthy life. Increase in GNP saving, investment, trade, business and other macro-economic indicators of growths are important to the extent that they contribute and act as means of raising the quality of life of the people. Once these people acquire the required capability they can contribute further for raising the macro-economic

indicators of the country/region. It is, therefore, crucial for policy makers to understand the circular relationship between human development and economic development. This strategy of development is extremely important from the point of view of this region, as people seem to be alienating themselves more and more from the process of development.

Haq also opines that basic purpose of all development is to enlarge people's choices, which relates to accessibility to knowledge, nutrition and health services, security of life and property, political, cultural and religious freedom. All these may not be revealed statistics of a region, but are extremely vital for the people, who will in the long-run ultimately contribute to increase the growth statistics of the region (Mahbul-ul-Haq, 1996). Therefore, every aspect of economic development contributes in enlarging human development.

The publication of the *Human Development Report* by UNDP and the pioneering work of Sen, Mahbul-ul-Haq and others have brought about a change in the development paradigm. The new development economics, brings about a positive paradigm shift from neo-classical economics. It challenges the latter's faith in Pareto optimality and competitive market which are unable to explain the distributional aspect of economic growth. Developing economies, including India, can find solutions to the problems of abject poverty, if they base their policies on development of economics. This is because the core idea of development economics is reconciliation of economic growth with improving the distribution of income and eradication of the worst form of poverty. Reduction of inequality and poverty necessitates a sustained rate of growth of per capita income, which can in turn enable channelization of resources from the rich to the poor. At the same time, reduction of poverty and inequality can also expediate the growth process. Income distribution following a regressive pattern under extreme poverty and inequality depresses consumption demand, making the accelerator-multiplier work in the reverse direction, which in turn depresses the growth rate.

Development economics can, therefore, be clearly distinguished from distributionally insensitive neo-classical economics. Its direct concern with policy related issues also make it distinct from neo-classical school, the main focus of which has very little connection with real life problems of economics. Growth with sustainable human development is thus the shift in paradigm, rather than only growth.

The present paradigm of growth is, therefore, much broader. It emphasizes the basic issue that efforts of development administration to alleviate poverty through economic growth and redistribution of income and wealth would be meaningless without an expansion of basic capabilities of the people of the region or the country.

In a country as vast as that of India various forms of basic deprivation and their interregional variations is extremely important for issues of economic and social policies and the type of governance. It is in this context that we shall focus attention, to the inter-state variations in human development among the states of North-East India, since the region has received scanty attention as far as researches on these vital aspects of development are concerned.

The Trickle Down Theory perceived by the planners of the Indian economy to ensure distributional justice of economic growth has failed to be successful in India and more so in the north-eastern region. As has already been highlighted earlier, the theory proved totally ineffective in tackling problems of mass poverty, illiteracy, ill-health and malnutrition. It was clearly evident that something must have gone wrong somewhere. It was clear that if development strategy from top to bottom did not work, surely the strategy of emphasizing the reverse direction needs to be given greater attention. This will help in identification of the inadequacies of the basic living conditions of the common man. The horizon of economic development as a result of this changed perception, expanded according to this paradigm, and consisted of the development of social infrastructure like education, health, nutrition, access to sanitation and drinking water. Economic growth is essential only to the extent that it is able to sustain these social objectives in the long run. Policy makers and planners now assess the success of their plans from the point of view of not only economic growth, but also from the point of view of achievement of these social indicators.

Though eradication of poverty and attainment of economic equality and social justice have been the objectives of the successive Five Year Plans in India, yet it was only the Eighth Plan which identified human development as its primary objective. The plan emphasized the creation of jobs, eradication of illiteracy, universalisation of elementary education, provision of safe drinking water and primary health care facilities to all. The Ninth Five Year Plan, too, reiterated its emphasis on human development and focused the importance of all public action towards that

objective. Keeping the objectives of the Five Year Plans in view and also governed by the publication of the successive Reports on Human Development, various state governments have undertaken the publication of Human Development Reports of the respective states. The NCAER too published Human Development Report of India for the nineties. The Planning Commission also prepared its National Human Development Report in 2001. The realization has, therefore, dawned upon the planners and policy-makers that human development should be the prime focus of all developmental policies.

The new development paradigm, therefore, attempts to capture all these vital issues relating to human development, and is popularly known as new development economics. It is not a deviation from main stream economics, but it surely deals with the multi-dimensional complexity of the process of economic development, and not just economic growth. It deals mainly with the accumulation of physical and human capital, progress of skills, march of ideas, growth of population, the manner in which the produced and non-produced factors of production are combined and managed to initiate and sustain growth, offering sensible remedies to resolve this complexity to every one's advantage. (Naqvi, 2002). This branch of study is concerned mainly with the process that tend to raise per capita income over time and distribute it more equitably by an overall transformation of the structure of demand, trade, production and employment (Chenery, 1981).

The new paradigm further focuses on the "ought questions" rather than the "is questions". The latter issue excludes all matters which does not deal with self-interest maximization since it is irrational, because it is ethical. However, ethical considerations highlight the crucial development and global concerns such as poverty, distributional inequities and unemployment which is absent in the "is question" of positive economics. The "ought question" of the new development paradigm leading to a more just social order in which the needs of the least privileged sections are looked after in the best possible manner, need not be mixed up with Marxist economics. Economic growth is an instrument of equitable distribution of the fruits of progress so that people have an opportunity to lead a minimum acceptable life.

Study of human development in the context of this new development economics is, therefore rapidly evolving in its own right

as a distinctive analytical tool of study. The economics of contemporary poor nations with varying ideological orientations, cultural backgrounds and very complex, yet similar economic problems that demand new ideas. Such exercises assume a high degree of relevance for regional analysis of the Indian economy, particularly the North-East region with its diverse socio-cultural traits remaining perennially at the peripheral level of all development concerns. Development economics, using the tool of human development is more concerned with the economic, cultural and political requirements, so that the fruits of economic development can be distributed to the major segment of the society. Role of government assumes importance and some extent of coordinated economic decision-making for transforming the economy is an essential component of this new paradigm.

Developed economies do not deal with perfect markets of advanced capitalist economies, where least cost allocation of scarce productive resources, with the optimal growth of these resources to produce an ever expanding range of goods and services, assumes the main focuses of our study. Marginal analysis and private profit maximization and utility analysis are the main tools of analysis of the traditional school. New development economics in contrast, combines relevant concepts and theories from traditional economic analysis along with new models and broader multi-disciplinary approaches derived from studying the historical and contemporary development experience of developing countries. Development economics, therefore, assumes greater role in economically backward nations/regions. Problems are analyzed within the context of the overall social system of a country. Social system implies interdependent relationships between economic and non-economic factors. Non-economic factors include attitudes toward life, work, legal and administrative structure, pattern of kinship and religion, cultural traditions, systems of land tenures, participation in development decision and activities, and the flexibility and rigidity of economic classes. The factors vary widely from one society to another and from one culture to another. Raising economic indicators of growth are all functions of local history, expectations, values, incentives, attitudes and belief. North-East region is characterized by wide diversity with respect to socio-cultural traits, with many ethnic groups, tribes and sub-tribes, with ways and attitude towards life, production, cultivation, which are in total dichotomy with mainstream life. Though a section of the social scientists dismiss these non-economic variables as

“non-quantifiable” and, therefore, unimportant from the point of view of the study of economics, but the new development economics assigns an important role to the non-economic factors in determining and shaping the course of economic events. In fact, most of the developmental problems of low level of human development, inequality and poverty in different parts of the world as well as in north-eastern region of India, have arisen mainly due to negligence of these important issues for years.

It is due to these reasons that the general economic models have very little relevance to the real life problems of developing countries. Since economics, study human relationship in the social context, economic models are subject to great variations in different societies, cultures and at different times. Value concepts, unlike the views of the traditional school, becomes the pivotal focus of new development economics. Incorporation of social equality, eradication of poverty, raising the levels of living are issues which relate to value judgement and thereby tackling these issues differ from place to place and from one culture and society to another. Study of economics, therefore, cannot be totally value neutral, as assumed by the traditional school of economics. Once the policy makers come to a consensus relating to these socio-economic goals, the corresponding public policies like taxing the higher income group of people, based on “objective” theoretical and quantitative analysis can be adopted (Tadaro, 2003).

It is, therefore, evident that economic problems of less developed regions/nations cannot be viewed from the same perspective of pure economic models applicable easily to developed ones. In less developing regions, interdependent relationships between economic and non-economic factors assume great significance. Non-economic factors include, many important issues, like degree of popular participation in development decisions and assumes flexibility as well as rigidity of the social classes. All these factors vary from one region to another from one culture to another and from one social setting to another, increasing the significance of new development economics as against the traditional economics.

It was due to all these reasons that from 1970s onwards economic development was viewed from a new perspective. The focus was in elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Redistribution from growth became a common slogan. Dudley Seers, therefore, while examining the issue of development maintains that “The question to

ask about a country's development are, therefore: what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to inequality? If all of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all have, it would be strange to call the result "development", even if per capita income doubled.

This approach to economics was necessitated by the rising per capita income on one hand, but worsening level of poverty and unemployment on the other witnessed during the sixties and seventies of the last century. The early seventies, therefore, witnessed the need for a change in approach of pure economics. Development experience particularly of those of the less developed nations have revealed that economic development has to have a multi-dimensional approach, the essence of which must represent the whole gamut of change, by which an entire social system, attuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system needs to move away from a condition of life, characterized by misery to better conditions of life.

No work on the new development paradigm can be complete without mentioning the views of the leading thinker on this line, namely Amartya Sen. Sen postulates that "Economic growth cannot be sensibly treated as an end in itself. Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the quality of life we lead and the freedoms we enjoy". Utility approach of traditional economics does not make much sense for human well-being according to Sen. It is the functioning, that is what a person does with the commodities of given characteristics that they come to possess or control. Freedom of choice, so that one can have control over one's own life is the essence of Sen's approach to human well-being. Income or consumption are highly subjective and, therefore, cannot define well-being in any adequate sense. Real appraisal of well-being leads to a consideration of health and education as well as income.

All these arguments reinforced by Sen's approach to human welfare, has resulted in the publication of the annual Human Development Report, using the important tool of human development index, with education, health and income as the indicators to measure the well-being of the people of a nation.

### **UNDP's Human Development Index**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its annual series of Human Development Report has made a pioneering and ambitious effort to incorporate the various indicators of a good quality of life, into a single index, known as the Human Development Index (HDI) since 1990. The index analyses the comparative status of socio-economic development in both developed and developing nations systematically and comprehensively. Since 1990, every year refinement of the index is undertaken. The construction of the index, accepts three indicators like health, education, and per capita income which it considers as the three goals or end products of development. Indicator of health is measured by life-expectancy at birth, education or knowledge is measured by a weighted average of adult literacy (two-third) and standard of living as measured by real per capita income.

An important contribution of HDI, is that it focusses attention to the fact that a nation may have a high level of income, but may fare badly in terms of human development. In contrast, a nation may perform poorly in terms of economic development but may do much better in human development. A clear example is that of the state of Kerala whose economic performance is rather insignificant against its impressive performance in terms of human development. One of the most significant contribution of HDI is that it highlights the important fact that development does not mean only rise in income but it implies broad human development. It reveals that though there is a tendency for the convergence in health and education for most nations, yet great disparity in income is a characteristic feature of most nations. Another important contribution of HDR report is that, detailed analysis of health and education reveals that they are not merely components of human capital and production inputs as has been maintained earlier. These factors are fundamental development goals in their own right.

The Human Development Index has successfully revealed through its detailed study that a nation of high income individuals who are not literate and have low health status may have lower life expectancy and thereby lead a short life. In contrast, a nation with low income individuals may achieve a higher level of development which has individuals who are literate and have good health status. A better indicator of development disparity and rankings might be found

by including health and education variables in a weighted welfare measure rather than by looking only at income levels. UNDP, therefore, ranks nations of the world from low to high human development along with their respective real GDP per capita rank and the HDI rank. A positive number reveals by how much a country's relative ranking rises when HDI is used, instead of GDP per capita, and a negative number shows the opposite. If the ranking of the country do not vary much when HDI is used instead of GDP per capita, the later would serve as a reliable proxy for socio-economic development. The report further reveals that when the aggregate HDI for various nations is adjusted for income distribution in recent years, the relative rankings of such nations also changed significantly.

The use of HDI can also show at a disaggregative level the HDI between men and women, different social classes reflecting different income distribution and different regions and ethnic groups.

In keeping with the basic ideas of new development economics the UNDP's Human Development Report has made valuable contributions in focusing to the core idea of development, and the nations which are improving in this respect. It also highlights how different socio-economic groups and regions within countries perform in this respect. As per the basic principles of new development economics, by combining social and economic data, HDI allows nations to take a broader measure of their development performance. Such issues may, therefore, enable reorientation of their economic and social policies more directly on those areas which require special developmental efforts. A proper synchronisation of HDI with traditional economic measures of development, enables us to understand which countries are achieving development in the real sense of the term. By analysing the various components of HDI in general and for different sub-groups of the society we are able to understand to what extent a country is developing and to what extent each group are benefitting as well as participating in that process of development.

### **Human Development and Economic Development**

However, a word of caution also needs to be mentioned here. Development strategy may be growth led, by creating an initial favourable condition for people's participation as was the case in China. It may be growth led with unfavourable initial condition, and

corrective public policies at a later stage as has happened in Malaysia. The other strategy may be strong emphasis on public policy to provide social services but with low growth. Such a strategy however is unsustainable over the long period. Such a strategy was adopted in Jamaica and Sri Lanka and Kerala in India. The Kerala model, with high level of human development but a stagnant economy has become a matter of great controversy in the development context. In developed economics where growth models are launched with an already satisfactory achievement in social indicator, further spending on these items enables the economy to reach the take-off stage. Consequently, when people reach a high level of human development, they are able to look after and spend for their own socio-economic needs. This enables the government to concentrate on economic growth, leaving the people to spend for themselves. Consequently expenditure on social sector declines after a certain point. However, in a less developed economy with a low level of per capita income, people tend to have a dependency syndrome, and they expect the government to continuously spend for them. This is one of the factors responsible for the paradox of the Kerala model.

A school of thought has, therefore, developed which erroneously opines that spending scarce resources for raising human development would only be at the cost of economic development, particularly for a less developed nation. However, it needs to be realised by economists as well as social workers that economic development and human development are not contradictory, in fact they are both complementary. It is, therefore, extremely essential to understand the meaning of this concept. Human Development does not confine itself merely in pushing up the statistical figures on health, education and other socio-economic indicators. Such a narrow view of human development would make all efforts at raising human development totally meaningless, with an extremely short-run connotation. The concept of human development is much wider. Human Development is a process of enlarging people's choices (HDR, 1995). Enlarging people's choices, therefore, is not confined to any specific period, but spills over several generations. The main purpose of human development is to prepare the people, to have access to resources needed to lead a decent standard of living. This preparation takes the form of acquiring knowledge and good health. They should also have political, economic, social and cultural freedom. The HDR of 1995, therefore maintains that Human Development has two sides. Hence much of the misunderstanding

between economic and human development has arisen in the past. The concept of Human Development is much broader than the traditional theories of economic development. Even the welfare theories of economic development fail to capture the essence of Human Development. Welfare approaches of economic theories consider people as the beneficiaries of economic development. It attempts to provide material goods and services to deprived population, rather than in enlarging human choices in all fields.

The concept of Human Development is much broader since it brings together production and distribution of commodities along with the expansion and use of human capabilities. Therefore, all aspects of the economy, including economic growth, trade, employment, political freedom or cultural values are viewed from the perspective of the people. Economic growth and Human Development are, therefore, not contradictory and cannot be viewed in isolation. The achievement of one is impossible without the achievement of the other. Attainment of Human Development is impossible without economic growth, since resources required for raising Human Development can be acquired only through a high rate of economic growth. An impoverished nation, with insufficient resources, has to make extra efforts to acquire resources for raising Human Development. Though this is not to suggest, that economic development and Human Development are highly correlated.

It also needs to be highlighted that economic growth by itself is meaningless without Human Development. If the fruits of development are concentrated only in a few hands, economic development would be meaningless. Experience has revealed that nations who do not concentrate on Human Development have witnessed growing concentration of income in a few hands. Economic growth by itself cannot automatically transform itself into higher levels of Human Development. All depends on how the policies can be geared to achieve such objectives. Human Development and economic growth are thus not contradictory, rather they are more of a complementary nature. It is therefore, essential to overcome the misconception harboured by critics of Human Development, that stress on it, is at the cost of economic growth. At the same time, it is also crucial to focus attention to the fact that too much emphasis on either economic growth or Human Development alone might result in unbalanced growth of the economy, which may jeopardize the very process of long-term economic development.

## **Human Development and Social Capital**

It is pertinent to mention here the role of “social capital” in differences in achievement of Human Development across different regions and across different ethnic and social groups is assigned crucial importance. Different conceptualisation of social capital, which consists of level of mutual trust, extent of interpersonal commitment, density of social networks, number of tertiary associations and political participation at the community, village, regional and state level can all be used as independent variables to explain Human Development. Failure of development model to raise economic development or Human Development resulted in the concept of “social capital”. The role of social capital becomes particularly relevant for studying the dynamics of growth and its impact on the quality of life, especially for the North-Eastern region of India. The reason for this may be sought in the fact that enough resources have been pumped into the various states of the region. However, the results have not been commensurate with the resources pumped into the region. This clearly indicates the absence of certain vital conditions for resources to be channelized effectively into priority goals. Commitment of the government and efficiency of government machinery undoubtedly play an important role. However, awareness of the citizens about their own rights and responsibilities and role of the civil society assumes a crucial role in this context.

All these ideas have been captured in terms of Putman’s model (1993) which he developed in terms of Italian regional governments. His work reveals that social organizations which enhance trust and cooperation increase society’s well-being by making government institutions more democratic and more efficient in delivering public goods. The model becomes highly relevant in the context of analysing Human Development in this region, since it is marked by a great degree of fragmentation, along many linguistic, ethnic, tribal and religious groups. North East is divided between states which have been formed on the basis of linguistically homogeneous areas. The basic idea of Putnam’s model underlies the fact that people with similarity in language, ethnicity and culture manage to cooperate more successfully, perhaps due to common values and conventions and ease in communication for their own socio-economic betterment. Putnam’s model tried to explain the differential of government performance and economic growth across 20 regions in Italy. The

institutional performance of each region was measured by a composite index based on twelve elements. The degree of civic consciousness was identified by Putman to be an important factor explaining differences in institutional performance.

Putman's model has been applied to the Indian context by taking literacy rate as an additional variable. Social capital indicators have explained differences in socio-economic outcomes of different states measured in terms of Human Development Index discussed in the previous section. Studies have revealed that Kerala with high degree of social capital has been able to make the government deliver the public goods more effectively. Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have high social capital and perform better in terms of Human Development. The worst performing states in terms of Human Development and also low level of social capital are Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

In the Indian context, literacy has an important role to play in developing social capital, though literacy as a factor was absent in Putnam's model. Therefore study of Human Development and social capital occupies an important aspect especially in North-East with diverse cultural and social patterns.

### **Relevance of the Study for North-East India**

It is pertinent to mention here that very little effort has been made to examine the extent of Human Development in the north-eastern region. Though Assam is touched in the various reports and research works on Human Development as representative of the entire region, most of the other states have been left out of any serious discussion on these aspects. Consequently, the other six states of the region, such as Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura, hardly ever get a mention in any major work of this nature. Even the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission expresses his concern and the process, that underlie the various, outcomes. It has also to recognise the local constraints and aspirations of the people. These constraints and aspirations become much more relevant and significant in case of the states of the north-eastern region, where none of the states with its own special and unique characteristics can be included in the same category as another state. Even the Human Development Report of 2003 maintains that "India's performance varied enormously across states with inequality increasing between

several". These inter-State variations are, therefore, much more significant and diverse when we take the seven north-eastern States into account. Four of the six states are hill States, with a predominance of scheduled tribes in the total population. The way of life, culture and religion of the local groups are in total dichotomy from the rest of the country. Each state is characterized by numerous ethnic groups, with their own characteristics. The region, therefore, do not consist of a homogeneous group as is normally visualized by planners, policy-makers and researchers outside the region. In view of this an indepth study of inter-state and inter-district variation in the level of living and quality of life is called for. This is urgently necessary for various reasons. Deprivations extend not only to various aspects of living in the day to day life, the worst form of deprivation can also be psychological deprivation, which is the outcome of economic deprivation. A major section of the local people, suffer from a sense of deprivation, resulting in a sense of alination, which in turn adversely affects the growth pattern in the region. The issues have tremendous policy-implications not only for the region alone, but for the country as a whole.

It needs to be understood further that locationally the region is placed in a very precarious position. It is connected to the mainland only by a very narrow strip of North Bengal, and surrounded on all sides by international borders. The region is, therefore, extremely sensitive in every sense of the term. All the states of the region are extremely rich in natural resources, forest and water resources, flora and fauna, besides being one of the highest producer of tea and oil in the whole country. With its diverse cultural and geographical traits the region offers immense potential for tourism. Though the region has immense potential for growth, the actual growth of the region has not been commensurate with its potential, resulting in growing dissent among the locals. This sentiment is in the process of being exploited by interested groups across the border. This has resulted in growing sense of alination which is having adverse repercussions on the economic growth of the region. This in turn decelerates the overall growth rate of the nation, all of which combines to adversely affect the level of Human Development.

An important aspect of the study of Human Development is its *spatial dimension*. Development models attempt to ensure temporal optimisation in investment and production structure and spatial dimension of Human Development continues to be neglected. These

models, therefore, fail to capture the essence of the growing imbalance in space of the socio-economic development and its periphery. The negligence of this spatial dimension is accentuated in the case of the north-eastern region. Only the centre of development of the region, namely Assam with its capital and immediate surrounding areas have received some attention in all kinds of socio-economic studies. The peripheral areas of the state or of the region continue to be neglected. This has led to an inadequate understanding of the nature, distribution and growth of productive activities of the entire region. In those neglected areas, socio-economic development in the region, continues to be neglected, resulting in the negligence of the problems linked to their regional concentration. Geographical distance, however, is a crucial factor impeding economic growth, and the north-eastern region has been victim of this ever since the development plans were launched. Socio-economic integration has only very recently been recognised and thus incorporated into the growth models. However, though it was recognised as an important variable, yet it was allowed to play a silent role in the spatial context. The expectation was that growth benefits would trickle down from the centre to the periphery, the only mention of spatial dimension that was evident. Such a process has hardly materialized in the Indian economy, nor in the regional economies. Besides, Trickle Down Theory does not always seem to be the most sound policy because growth poles could enfeeble the periphery of their growth potential, both human as well as economic, if their own potentials are not explored separately. Consequently, the peripheries of the north-east need greater attention to explore their full potential.

Geographers, however, recognized the impact of space on development. Their studies reveal that as the distance from the core areas of development increases, the modernity and development related indicators show a systematic decline and those linked to social and economic backwardness tend to go up. Other empirical studies, from different parts of the world reveal that values of socio-economic indicators around a city or a town do not necessarily follow a smooth pattern. It is argued that regularity in the gradient of indicators around urban centres are not always smooth in case of India. State intervention has often been cited as an important factor, for such non-linear behavioural traits (Kundu, 2002).

### **Methodology of the Study**

For the purpose of the present study we have relied mostly on primary data. Data for the study have been collected from the six states of the North-Eastern Region. These states are Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. Data could not be collected from Manipur, due to the socio-economic turmoil of the state, which has made travelling to the State extremely difficult and collection of data was, therefore, seriously impaired. Data for the remaining states have been collected following the purposive multi-stage stratified sampling method. First tier consisted of the selection of twenty per cent of the districts, and the second consisted of the selection of twenty per cent blocks from the districts. From these blocks, we have taken another twenty villages/towns, both in the rural as well as urban areas. From each of these villages/towns we have chosen twenty households in a purposive manner, who were interviewed through questionnaire method and the requisite information derived. We have followed the method of weighted average taking the total number of respondents as the weight.

The information on various aspects of Human Development acquired has been classified and analysed and requisite conclusions derived from tabular analysis of data. Subsequently, we have tested a number of multiple regression models to identify the factors determining literacy rate and health status for various states of the region, as well as for various socio-economic, linguistic and religious groups. Finally we have estimated the HDI, for the same groups, following the UNDP methodology for estimation of HDI.

In view of the difficulty of adopting all indicators of a good quality of life the computation of HDI, according to UNDP method is based only on three indicators. These indicators are longevity as measured by life expectancy at birth; educational attainment, measured by a combination of adult literacy (two-third weights) and combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment ratios (one-third weight) and standard of living, as measured by real GDP per capita.

For each of these indicators a fixed minimum and maximum values have been accepted, which are as follows:

- (i) Life expectancy at birth: 25 years and 85 years.
- (ii) Adult literacy: 0 per cent and 100 per cent.

- (iii) Combined enrolment ratio: 0 per cent and 100 per cent.
- (iv) Real GDP per capita.

The general formula for the computation of individual indices for any component of HDI is as follows:

$$\text{Index} = \frac{\text{Actual } X_1 - \text{Minimum } X_1 \text{ value}}{\text{Maximum } X_1 \text{ value} - \text{Minimum } X_1 \text{ value}}$$

### Human Development Index

The simple average of the life expectancy index, educational attainment index and the adjusted real GDP per capita index is the Human Development Index HDI. This is derived by dividing the sum of these three indices by 3.

The estimation of HDI for the various north-eastern states of India has adopted above methodology, on the basis of which inter-state and inter- and intra-district analysis of the level of living has been attempted to be assessed. Analysis has also been made to examine the HDI across different socio-economic and religious groups residing in various States of the region. Due to limitations of various nature, though such an analysis may not fully represent the differences in the quality of life, nevertheless it may draw the broad contours for policy considerations and perhaps provide a new perspective to developmental efforts of states of north-eastern region.

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This book examines the various aspects of human development in North-East India. Covering sixteen districts across six states—Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, it makes an analytical study of the indicators of human development in the region, with special focus on different socio-economics, linguistic and ethnic groups.

Taking a close look at the present scenario of education and health status, it deals with the quality of life and the nature of the occupation of the people of the region. Finally, it examines the Human Development Index for the various socio-economic and religious groups of the people. The book will be of immense use for students, researchers, policy-makers and development workers.

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