

The NEHU Journal

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EDITORIAL

Several readers of *The North-Eastern Hill University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* may remember the hard work put in by its editors and the quality of articles published in its issues. Unfortunately, the journal failed to maintain its regularity and seriality due to many reasons one of which was the appointment of the Director of the Publication Cell as the Editor of the journal. As a result, the work of giving the journal a chance to grow and mature was sometimes taken as a routine work, just as headship and deanship, which usually lasts for a period of three years. This arrangement has changed now, with the segregation of directorship of the Cell and the editorship of the journal. One other serious handicap was the vacancy of the post of the Publication Officer for a very long period,

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was holding other charges simultaneously. Now we not only have a full-time Publication Officer, Dr. T. B. Subba, the Associate Editor, but also an efficient Copy Editor in Ms Nabonita Ganguly. With their presence, the journal gets its backbone and its life. Now even if the Editor has to go the journal will not.

With some such happy developments under the guidance of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mrinal Misi, we also thought it prudent to open the journal to all branches of knowledge and to name it *The NEHU Journal*. Thus we start the journal with a new name and serial number and pledge to give it a much longer life than its earlier sister. We hope to receive your cooperation in subscribing, contributing (as authors and/or referees), and helping it grow as the most important journal of Northeast India. We wish to make the journal not just a mirror but also the most important forum for discussing the issues that living in this region brings us close to. We desire to make it the very idiom of the region.

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Evolution of Adult Education : A Historical Perspective

E. JYRWA

Adult Education has existed in India since time immemorial. The objective of education was to teach a man to be member of his community. In earlier days, literacy had little importance as the real education.¹ Ancient Indian tradition regarded education as the most important for self-realisation. Thus, knowledge or learning was the cornerstone of the ancient Indian educational system, and was sought as the means to the highest end of life, viz. emancipation.² Even today, there are numerous religious mendicants who cannot read or write, but who can expound some of the deepest philosophies of the Hindu religion, while others can compose beautiful hymns and sing them. In fine art too, people who can carve on marble or wood make artistic objects without having learned the rudiments of drawing or geometry. Further, illiterate peasants show wonderful knowledge of their religion, folklore and epics. Thus, the people at large learned not only the history of their own villages, but also that of the great heroes, rulers and public men of their country.³

Besides, instruction of religious, civic and social branches was given by professional men called "Kathakas". These 'Kathakas' recited from memory, and sometimes read from books. These Kathakas also rendered discourses on questions pertaining to civic, social and other matters. Since most people would be working during the day, these recitals were done at night and the whole village turned out to listen to them.

The folklore, legends, ballads, epics, ethical texts and devotional hymns were handed down orally from father to son, from mother to daughter, etc. to the millions of illiterates. The weekly or bi-weekly market was yet another ancient institution in India. The markets were not only centres where people came to sell their products and buy their requirements but they were also centres for meeting friends from other villages and for providing recreational facilities.⁴

British Period

The establishment of British rule in India was the main factor responsible for directing India's course of future development. During this period the British intended to completely disregard the indigenous education system and to impart to the people the knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of English language. The English rulers had very little concern for the education of adults. The emergence of night schools in England in the wake of Industrial Revolution had an impact in India. Financial provisions were made for giving grant to night schools in every British Indian province. In view of this development, a commission was appointed in 1882 known as the Indian Education Commission. When the Commission examined thoroughly the functioning of these schools in British Indian provinces it was found that in Bombay there were 134 night schools attended by 3,919 persons in addition to 223 night classes attended by 4,962 pupils in the Southern Division of the presidency. Further, the Commission found that there were over 1,000 night schools in Bengal and 291 night schools in Madras. The Commission (1882-83), in its report submitted to the British government pointed out that such schools had chances of success where the adults needed further education for economic betterment. The Commission as such strongly recommended the extension of the night schools programmes in all the provinces.⁵

With the dawn of the nineteenth century a few countries in the world were able to raise their living standard. India was left far

behind in this march of progress. This resulted in unemployment and degeneration of social and cultural life. All these events generated among the Indian middle classes a strong sense of awareness of the situation and the need for social and political change. This awareness gradually developed into two forceful movements, one for social reforms and the other for political revolution.

In 1920, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi the struggle for freedom was intensified and took the form of 'mass movement'. After the suspension of the movement in 1922, Gandhiji directed this energy towards organisation of night schools and literacy classes. Thus, there were literacy classes for illiterate adults in cities, towns and villages. National schools and colleges which owed their existence to the mass movement, took active part in the literacy work.

With the introduction of diarchy, popular interest in franchise and mass education took place. The co-operative movement which was gaining strength, also provided an invaluable base for starting adult literacy classes. During this period, the most significant development took place in Punjab where in 1925-26 there were 3,206 adult literacy classes with 8,371 pupils.⁶

After the installation of the Congress ministries in provinces in 1937 the constructive programme including literacy campaigns had taken the form of mass movement. The first mass literacy drive was launched in Bihar by setting up a Mass Literacy Committee, consisting of official and non-official members with education minister as chairman. Similar programmes and activities were organised in other provinces as well. For the first time, adult education was accepted as a responsibility of the government and adult literacy as a movement.

In the beginning, the adult education programme meant adult literacy and was limited to 3R's, i.e., teaching people to read, write and to learn the elements of simple arithmetic. Nowhere was there

any provision for the maintenance of libraries to help neo-literate adults retain their newly acquired literacy skills and make use of them.⁷

The Central Advisory Board of Education in its fourth meeting held in December 1938 appointed a special committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Syed Mahmud, an education minister from Bihar, to consider the question of adult education.⁸ Dr. Mahmud in his address to the committee identified adult literacy as the chief plank of the adult education movement and declared:

“No Government can make any appreciable headway with its scheme for the promotion of socio-economic welfare of the people unless the people are prepared to meet the government halfway and offer it responsive co-operation. This responsive co-operation is only feasible when the people possess some amount of education”⁹.

But after the outbreak of the World War II, when Congress ministries had to resign, the enthusiasm for adult education and literacy campaigns disappeared. Adult education lost its mass character but gained in status. A number of institutions and agencies continued to work even after the enthusiasm for adult education had subsided. An All India Adult Education Association was formed during this period and made valuable contributions by promoting the cause of adult education.

Independence Period

With the dawn of independence, the concept of adult education has changed. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, the first education minister, emphasized that adult education should not be limited to 3R's. Maulana wanted that adult education should prepare every citizen to play his part effectively in a democratic social order. Thus, the concept used was 'civic literacy' which was based on life-oriented approach and focussed on social education.¹⁰

Post-Independence Period

The post-independence period in adult education is characterised by the emergence of the concept of social education. The Central Advisory Board of Education, in its meeting held in January 1948, expressed the view that adult education in India had become imperative. To this effect, a committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Shri Mohan Lal Saxena to discuss the matter. The committee in its report submitted to the Government of India, recommended that greater emphasis should be laid on general education to enable every Indian to participate effectively in the new social order. However, the Central Advisory Board of Education in its 15th meeting held at Allahabad in 1949 accepted the Saxena Committee report and recommended social education as the goal for the education of adults.¹¹

When the Constitution of India was adopted in 1950, elementary education received much attention. Article 45 of the Constitution of India declared that the State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they attain the age of fourteen years. Soon thereafter, in 1951, India initiated the process of planned development to raise the living standard of its people and open up new opportunities for a richer and varied life. Growth with social justice, modernisation and self-reliance are the key elements of the strategy of development for the purpose. Thus, considering the role of adult education as an instrument of social change and development, social education was launched in the first five year plan.¹²

In 1952 the concept of civic literacy was modified and was integrated with Community Development Programme. The programme was implemented all over India during the first two five year plans. It was estimated that nearly 35 lakh illiterates would be literates during the First Five Year Plan and about 40 lakhs during the Second Plan.

Throughout the 1960's various government committees drew attention to the urgent need to tackle the problem of adult literacy. The most comprehensive committee was the report of the Education Commission (1964-66). The appointment of the Education Commission in 1964 under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari was one of the most significant events in the history of adult education. The Commission in its report submitted to the Government of India in 1966 recommended a nation-wide campaign to end illiteracy within twenty years. Further, the Commission recommended the setting up of a National Board of Adult Education. On the basis of the Kothari Commission Report, a Parliamentary Committee chaired by the former chairman of Education, Dr. Triguna Sen, drafted a statement on National Policy on Education. After the Parliament discussed the statement, the Indian Government issued a resolution on National Policy on Education incorporating the recommendation of the Kothari Commission.¹³

The resolution on the National Policy on Education adopted in 1968 further declared that the radical reconstruction of education was proposed so that it involved: (i) a transformation of the system to relate it more closely to the life of the people, (ii) a continuous effort to expand educational opportunity, (iii) a sustained effort to raise the quality of education at all stages, (iv) an emphasis on the development of science and technology, and (v) cultivation of moral and social values.¹⁴

The setting up of the National Board of Adult Education in 1969 and the 1968 National Policy on Education indicates some seriousness on the part of the authorities about adult education programme. Some new programmes like the Farmers' Functional Literacy Project (FFLP) and Shramik Vidyapiths also received enhanced funding. By 1970s, the concept of development literacy based on Social Change approach came to be evolved. Literacy was described not just as the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic but as a contribution to the

liberation of man and to his full development.¹⁵

After the Lok Sabha elections held in 1977, soon after the new government taking over the administration declared that universalisation of adult education would be given the highest priority. A draft policy statement on adult education was issued and operationalised in the form of the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP). The NAEP was launched on October 2, 1978 with the aim of making an estimated 100 million non-literate persons in the age group of 15-35 years literate over a six year period (1978-84). Of these, sixty five million persons were to be covered in the sixth plan period (1978-83) and the remaining 35 million persons in the first year of the next plan. The programme is a joint and collaborative effort of the central government, state governments, union territory administrations, voluntary agencies, universities, colleges and youth centres. The NAEP is a package which envisages (i) imparting literacy skills to the target illiterate population, (ii) their functional development, and (iii) creation of awareness among them regarding laws and policies of the government for implementation of redistributive justice. Special emphasis is placed on the education of women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other weaker sections of society, comprising the bulk of illiterate population in India.¹⁶

Unfortunately, the promise of the NAEP was not fulfilled. However, political developments intervened. With the fall of the government in late 1979, the Sixth Plan allocated only Rs. 2,000 million against an estimated requirement of Rs. 6,860 million for making 65 million persons literate between 1978 and 1983. In the new government's Sixth Plan (1980 to 1985), plan outlay for adult education was allocated only Rs. 1,280 million as against 2,000 million in the 1978-83 plan. However, a Review Committee appointed in October 1979 found that while the size of adult education programme was 6,75,000 in 1977-78 before the NAEP was launched, it arose only modestly in relation to the targets over the next two years. Although the 1979 Review Committee

recommended that the programme be strengthened and expanded so that the NAEP should grow into a kind of action programme for development through education and from education through development, but these were not followed up. However, much the same programme was launched afresh in 1982 under the title of 'Adult Education Programme' (AEP) and subsequently given a prominent place in the Programme of Action (1986) based on the Rajiv Gandhi Government's National Policy on Education. It was now rechristened as the National Programme of Adult Education (NPAE). The main aim of the new NPAE is to provide education including literacy to the population in 15-35 age group which numbers about 100 million illiterate.¹⁷

The Government of India's policy towards adult education has undergone significant changes over the years. In 1985 with the change of government at the centre, an official decision was taken to formulate a new education policy for "reshaping the education system to enable it to meet the challenges of the future".¹⁸ The New Education Policy (NEP) which was finalised in 1986 after a series of consultations and debates at various levels gave a new orientation to adult education in India. Recognising the importance of adult education as a tool for reducing economic, social and gender disparities, the NEP stressed that the "whole nation must pledge itself to the eradication of illiteracy particularly in the 15-35 age group".¹⁹ A New Programme of Action (POA) 1986 was prepared in line with the new education policy, the POA announced a new NPAE which was to be phased, time bound programme covering approximately 40 million by 1990 and another 60 million by 1995. For the first time in the history of Indian adult education, the liquidation of illiteracy was considered as a societal and technology mission.²⁰

Two programmes of adult education, the Rural Functional Literacy Programme (RFLP) launched by the Central Government and the Gram Shikshan Mohim (Village Literacy Movement)

initiated in the State of Maharashtra contributed significantly to the formulation of the NAEP. Further, a third programme of major dimensions was the Non-Formal Education Scheme launched in 1975-76 for the 15-35 age group. This was to cater especially to young people from the 'weaker sections' who had been denied formal schoolings.²¹

The Rural Functional Literacy Programme (RFLP) is a sub-programme of the Adult Education Programme fully funded by the Central Government and implemented by the States and Union Territories. The broad objectives of the programme are: (i) to develop abilities in the learners about their rights and duties and the benefits they can draw from various schemes of socio-economic development being implemented by the government. The RFLP was launched in May 1986 by involving the NSS and other student volunteers in colleges and universities on the principle of "Each one Teach one". The programme has been designed keeping in view the needs and languages of the learners.

The NPAE was essentially a continuing of the then ongoing schemes of the RFLP, State Adult Education Programmes (SAEP) and the programme of assistance to voluntary agencies. To these was added the Mass Programme of Functional Literacy (MPFL) which envisaged students, educational institutions, trade unions, local bodies and other individual organisations taking up literacy work voluntarily on 'Each one teach one' basis, with provisions of reimbursement for actual field expenses incurred by them.²²

Subsequently in 1987, when the Government of India identified eradication of illiteracy as one of the five national missions, the whole machinery of the state became alert and action oriented to the cause of adult education. In accordance with the directives of the National Policy on Education and the implementation strategies envisaged in the POA, the government of India formulated a comprehensive programme and constituted National Literacy Mission (NLM) with a view to achieving literacy goals through setting into motion TLC all over the country in a

phase manner. The NLM was launched by Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India on May 5, 1988. The NLM has a time bound objective of imparting functional literacy to 80 million illiterate persons in the age group 15-35 years by 1995. It aims covering 30 million illiterates by 1990 and an additional 50 million illiterates by 1995.²³

The NLM concept of functional literacy implies: (a) achieving self-reliance in literacy and numeracy, (b) becoming aware of the causes of one's deprivation and moving towards an amelioration of one's condition, through organisation and participation in the process of development, (c) acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general well-being, (d) imbibing values of national integration, conservation of the environment, women's equality, observance of small family norm, etc.²⁴

The NLM aims at involving the youth and voluntary agencies in the programme. In addition, Shramik Vidyapeeths and 16 State Resource Centres are functioning in different States to cater to the workers' education and to provide technical resource support to the programme.²⁵ The mission also speaks of efforts to secure people's participation, improve ongoing programmes like the RFLP and the SAEP, expand the mass programme of functional literacy and institutionalize post-literacy and continuing education.

The national level management structure for the NLM called the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) provided for an autonomous body vested with financial and executive powers. The NLMA has a two-tier structure. The Council is headed by the Union Minister for Human Resource Development. The Executive Committee (EC) of the NLMA is headed by the Union Education Secretary. The EC of the NLMA serves as the operational leadership of the mission within the broad parameters of policy enunciated by the council.²⁶

Subsequently, few months after launching the NLM, two new developments took place which transformed totally the

character and future course of development of the NLM, and of the literacy scenario and outlook in the country. These dramatic developments are the "people's science movement" proposed and implemented by the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat (KSSP) and the other by the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi. The KSSP came into being formally in the early 1960's, but grew into a mass movement in 1970s and 1980s. By the mid 1980s science organisation had emerged in different parts of the country. Altogether, 26 such organisations came together in 1987.²⁷

With the financial assistance and catalytic support from the National Council of Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) of the Union Government's Department of Science and Technology, these organisations organised the Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ) as a massive communication to promote scientific awareness and temper. The three slogans popularised by the BJVJ were 'Science for the Nation', 'Science for the People' and 'Science for Discovery'. The BJVJ evoked a very positive response all over the country and expand people's science organisations. This also led to the constituent units which together organised the BJVJ coming together in a national network known as the All India People's Science Network (AIPSN).²⁸

In February 1988, the Government of India as provided in the NLM document decided to establish Jana Shikshan Nilayams (JSNs) all over the country in a phase manner. The intention behind establishing the JSNS was to institutionalise post-literacy and continuing education.²⁹

A JSN set up for a cluster of 4-5 villages to cover a population of about 5000 served as the window for securing information on various developmental programmes. The JSN includes programmes being organised as part of farmer's training programmes, rural radio forum and Charcha Mandals, youth clubs, Mahila Mandals, Mobile and Village Library System, Rural Reading Rooms, etc. A *prerak* being in-charge of a JSN one expected that 60,000 JSN would be opened by 1990 and another 60,000 JSNs by 1995. Each JSN is

expected to provide a library and a reading room, short duration training programmes relating to health, family welfare, agriculture and to organise sports, adventure activities, recreational and cultural facilities and evening classes for upgradation of literacy and numeracy skills. Determined efforts are made towards extending it to weaker sections of the society.³⁰

In 1989 an extremely significant development took place. It was on January 26, 1989 that the total literacy campaign (TLC) in the Ernakulam district of Kerala was launched. The objective was to make 2,00,000 persons in the district literate within one year through a voluntary based programme. The campaign which was implemented by the KSSP was a collaborative effort of the District Administration and non-governmental organisations. More than 1.5 lakh persons were made literate by 20,000 volunteer instructors. Out of 1.85 lakh, 1.35 lakh learners reached the NLM levels of literacy and numeracy, thus raising the rate of literacy from 77 to 98 per cent. On February 4, 1990 Ernakulam was declared as the first fully literate district in the country.³¹

In the wake of the success of the Ernakulam literacy campaign, similar mass campaign was launched in 1989-90 in the Union Territory of Pondicherry and several districts of West Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh as well as in all the remaining districts of Kerala. By April 1991, the 'Akshara Kerelam' project had been successfully completed making Kerala the first fully literate state in the country.

The TLC model or what we prefer to call, the Mass Literacy Campaign (MLC) model has proved its viability on the ground.

The MLC as the primary strategy to achieve the NLM targets later has become an official policy instrument for eliminating adult illiteracy. The POA 1992 states:

"After experimenting with successive alternative models of literacy programmes, we have settled down to one which is area-specific, time-bound, voluntary

based, cost effective and outcome oriented. This has given us a lot of hope and faith that illiteracy is not a fatality and can be overcome in a time-bound manner with planned, corrected and co-ordinated efforts ..."³²

Identifying universalisation of elementary education, eradication of illiteracy in the age group 15-35 years and strengthening of vocational education as thrust areas, the plan document 1992 further noted 'The changed approach, improved methodology of teaching, increased participation of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and student volunteers have infused a new vitality into the literacy programme and have given it a fresh momentum'.³³

Finally, the 1992 document lays down the policy and priorities in adult literacy thus:

Literacy programmes will be launched in districts/regions which are educationally backward or which have a high concentration of scheduled caste, scheduled tribes population or have low female literacy. By the close of the 8th Plan, 345 districts including about two-thirds of all districts in the educationally backward states would be covered by TLC, while the centre-based approach would be gradually phased out and confined to hilly tribal and sparsely populated regions.³⁴

Conclusions

The development of adult education in India has to be studied in the light of social forces that have been moulding it during the last one and a half century. During the first three decades after independence India had been able to develop a number of institutions for carrying out educational facilities for its working adults. Since, these have been scattered and uncoordinated, the desired results could not be achieved. The primary problem in eradication of illiteracy is creating motivation and environment

for learning and education. Despite effort at social and economic development since attainment of independence majority of people continue to remain deprived of education, which is one of the basic needs for human development. The adult education programmes have been unsuccessful in the past mainly because the efforts are made to begin with adult literacy. Secondly, the adult literacy is not placed within a wider social context and thirdly, the problem has been viewed more in the context of teaching methods and of learning to read and write. The TLC or what we would prefer to call the MLC has thus proved its viability on the ground.

Over and above, adult education programme is being implemented largely through the centrally sponsored scheme. For attaining of total literacy, government alone cannot solve the vast problem of illiteracy. The efforts of the government will therefore have to be supplemented and strengthened by voluntary organisations and individuals who have a positive perception and commitment.

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Thus education, especially female education, is crucial for improving the physical and socio-economic well being of population. It is also vital for national planning in developing countries. It is expected that the increase in literacy rate of a population, or a state, would reduce the fertility and child mortality

Book Review

Sustainable Regeneration of Degraded Lands edited by Jyoti K. Parikh and B.Sudhakara Reddy, Tata Mcgraw-hill Pub. Co. Ltd., New Delhi, 1997 (IGIDR, CAP21), pp.295 + x, price not quoted on cover.

Land is the most tangible of all natural resources. It is upon land that man has left the imprints of all his cultures and civilisational remains, sufferings and happiness, achievements and failures. It is for land that many a battle has been fought, civilisations rose and perished. And yet, land remains the most contentious of all human affairs. When land as private property emerged with the development of the agrarian civilisation, some ten thousand years ago, considerable amount of land remained as a common resource for the community on which the community has *use* and occasionally, *occupancy* rights. This is often common to all the developing societies where various social groups and communities at different evolutionary phases of their social history, may co-exist. In such societies, rights on *Common Properly Land Resources* (CPLR) are generally accepted concepts of the *community* vis-a-vis the *state* and also, the individual holder of *ownership* rights. Even the developed nations do recognise the *use rights* of citizens over certain forms of environmental or infrastructural resources. This phenomenon is quite common among forest dwellers, quasi-nomads and village communities of India. However in recent times, the traditional use rights of various communities, under various circumstances, over common land resources, have come under severe stress both through the restrictions imposed by an all pervading, sovereign state and the greed of the individual encroachers over common land resources. This has resulted in severe erosion of the livelihood-system of many communities, who traditionally survived on their use rights on the common land resources.

In this light, the contributions of various scholars in a national seminar held at IGIDR, Mumbai in November, 1996 and encapsulated in the current volume is a refreshing departure from the main-stream economics— into an area much neglected but of immense significance to a large number of Scheduled Tribes, castes and village communities through-out the country. The book contains a total of thirteen papers arranged into three parts: Part I dealing with the concepts and status of CPLR, Part II dealing with specific methodologies and Part III dealing with various management practices and alternative institutional arrangements on specific case studies. Majority of contributions, of course, emanate from the CAP21 group of IGIDR.

The first paper by Vijay Laxmi and Jyoti Parikh deals with the concept of CPLR and its current status in India. The second by N.C.Gautam (of NRSA) stresses on the modern methodologies like remote sensing applications to identification of various categories of waste land and to the extent they could be utilised for land regeneration. Iyengar's paper on CPLR in Gujarat points to the modernisation forces that beset the traditional relationships like land encroachment and the possibility of state intervention in parceling the degraded *commons* to co-operatives for land regeneration, as income and employment generating activities. Nadkarni emphasises the revival of the traditional use rights system as an important component of the strategy of rural poverty alleviation in the country. Dixit narrates the travails of the Banni villagers (of Kachchh) where frequent droughts in recent years have degraded the quality of the grasslands, a common property resource and thus affecting their livelihood system.

Part II contains three papers by NTGCF and the IGIDR faculty and largely deals with the economics and methodological innovations in environmental accounting (of case studies from Gujarat and Karnataka) of National Tree Growers' Co-operative Federation Ltd. and demonstrates that many such co-operatives are not only economically viable but remunerative and thus, are

eminently viable enterprises and could be replicated in many such villages with degraded village commons for bettering their livelihood system—a major task that NTGCF has ventured upon.

Drawing extensively upon the Palamau experiments (on village co-operatives), Gopal Kadekodi emphasises the successes of such alternative institutions and management practices (primarily, land co-operatives) and their economic viability in enhancing the quality of life of the villagers. Reema Nanavathy (SEWA) takes an extreme feminist stand by forcefully arguing to hand-over the entire forestry sector to women and under women's management. Riya Sinha's paper, while commenting on various CPLR institutions (NGOs), is of the opinion that 'reward in proportion to effort and contribution' works the best. The study based on six Rajasthan villages by Kanchan Chopra and S.C.Gulati addresses the problems of linkages of CPLR system and stress migration.* The last paper by Reddy, Parikh and Parikh is based on a stakeholders' survey of Mallanhally village that analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the TGCS system adopted.

No doubt, India now is saddled with nearly one third of her land area degraded, either degraded forest land, wastelands or marginal lands, a major part of which falls under CPLR. It needs regeneration and the regeneration process can create millions of man-days of work and employment and economic regeneration of many marginalised communities. Many traditional CPLR management systems are available, many new experiments in the form of JFMCS, TGCS and the Palamau-type land co-operatives are also available. The government has no funds to regenerate all these land on its own (the ventures like the social forestry or NWDB etc.) and the successes of such efforts are limited only, and the

* Some of our own studies on Meghalaya indirectly vindicate the hypothesis that 'ecological degradation in the rural areas has led to distress migration from rural to urban areas'. It may be noted that Meghalaya, like many other North-Eastern states, has a very strong tradition of CPLR.

programmes are not quite cost-effective.

CPLR provides an alternative to such approaches, where the community is the investor and harvester of benefits. The institutional arrangements and management systems could be adopted in such a manner that the ventures truly become 'bankable', i.e., without surviving on doles from public funds. The role of government or NGOs to that extent should be that of a promoter and facilitator, allowing co-operatives to take a plunge in land regeneration as an *economic venture*.

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***Urbanization in India: Challenges and Opportunities* by R.P. Misra**, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 1998 (NERC-ICSSR, Shillong, Lecture Series), pp.106 +vii, Price: Rs. 175.00 (HB).

The book under review was the outcome of a series of three lectures delivered by Professor R. P. Misra on the same theme on the auspices of the North Eastern Regional Centre of the ICSSR in the annual lectures series in November, 1996 Shillong. The book is divided into six chapters, the first two chapters highlighting the general problematic of urbanisation, the third on evolution of urban system in India, the fourth on urban growth and associated problems in India in recent times, the fifth and sixth constituting a thesis on the future scenario and agenda of India's urbanisation in coming decades and its sustainability. The book is lucidly written, not too cluttered with figures and equations and contains visions to address the ground realities (of the urban dilemma) — food for thought to planners, administrators and students as well.

The UN report on world (1993) clearly states that the future impetus for further urbanisation has to come from the developing countries, since the developed world is an urban civilisation already

and by 2025 AD, of the projected 8 billion world population 5.2 billion will be urban of which the developed will contain only 1.2 billion and the rest (4 billion) coming from the developing ones. This could be a frightening prospect given the resource constraints in developing countries and the magnitude of investment required to provide even a semblance of urban services and infrastructure in these countries.

Public policy interventions in containing urbanisation have generally failed, except under extreme regimentation as was in China where rural to urban migration for long was not permitted without official sanctions. Otherwise, though governments and administrators would wish to intervene — these are futile. Cities are not made — they evolve. They grow because of migration and migrants create accentuated wealth for the cities, build their cultures and make the urban civilisation successful.

One has the lurking fear that Prof. Misra's agenda for the future urban (desirable) situation of India suffers from a prescriptive methodology. He however, acknowledges that the *wired society* of the future on its own volition would perhaps dampen somewhat the impetus on agglomeration economies that industries and services have enjoyed for the past two centuries of industrialism. But this is just a possibility. To what extent can the developing countries transit to *information age* and to what degree and when, remains the moot question. No body would question the wisdom in having cities of more manageable sizes, better managed, disaggregated, decentralised and well integrated with the rural economy of the country —but how to achieve all that? Greater direct public intervention perhaps is no answer.

(a) Contrary to the Gandhian idealism of a prosperous village economy, what we confront is a decadent, moribund village —the city no better. What is needed is not *re-architecturing* the settlement system of the country —an utterly futile exercise, rather a well conceived public policy of larger investments in the rural economy, a sectoral shift of rural economy from primary to secondary and

service activities (— that China did so successfully in the last two decades) and maintaining a steady share of the primary sector in national GDP at about 40 per cent. (It has fallen below 30 per cent in recent times). This means in general, higher productivity in the rural sector and a balanced *terms of trade* between the rural and the urban economies of the country.

(b) A system of incentives and disincentives through fiscal means can be helpful in discouraging industries and new economic ventures coming to larger urban agglomerations and metro-cities. Infrastructural investments in small towns and their physical linkages with the larger urban centres could create counter-forces to further agglomerations in the latter.

(c) A concerted national policy for removal of regional disparities is required so that all further developmental impetuses do not polarise in developed regions alone and developmental forces are well distributed throughout the country, allowing each region to capitalise on its comparative advantages. However, *competitive federalism* may not be a useful way that has been going on after initiation of liberalisation of the economy since 1991. The least developed regions (or states) are likely to lose out in the race and there are little public resources available to develop them through setting-up of public enterprise. That this method has failed is no news. Decentralisation and *de-agglomeration* of the urban system need to be ushered in by market forces calibrated through public policies.

(d) On the front of the cities themselves, it requires more organisation and management from the precarious situation in which the Urban Local Bodies (ULB) are placed, even after five years of enactment of Nagar Palika Act (74th. Constitutional Amendment, 1993). The ULBs require to be more professionally managed, participatory and proactive to market forces, generating resources through well-designed policies of taxation, incentives and disincentives. The market growth would augment their revenues that can be re-invested into further development of the

city. The vast land resources at the disposal of the ULB must be put to productive and revenue yielding ventures. Employment will increase, income of the average city-dweller will increase, so also the wealth of the city. A vibrant and growing rural population will not run to the city for a living. There would perhaps be some answer to the urban problematic in developing countries and hope of a light at the end of the tunnel.

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