

The NEHU Journal

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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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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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Forest Education and Research in British India : The Beginnings

A. C. SINHA

Dietrich Brandis (1824-1907), the founder of the forest administration and architect of forest education in India, has rightly been termed as the 'Father of Indian Forestry'. He held number one office in the forest administration and the last being the Inspector General of Forests in India from 1856 to 1883, when he retired. However, his expertise was much sought after even after his retirement, when a number of universities awarded him with their degrees. As brother-in-law of General Henry Havelock, he had access to the highest British functionaries in India, which stood a steady support in his favour. To begin with, the 'Forest' was included as a concern of the Public Works Department (PWD) in the British India on the plea that the most important users of forest product — timber — was the PWD. But their basic concern using timber as one of the construction materials ran counter to the interests of the forestry. Then it was placed within the Revenue Department, as one of the branches contributing to the state exchequer. But there again the basic concern remained maximization of revenue even at the cost of forest destruction. Ultimately, the forest was linked with agriculture and a separate department was created for it known as Department of Agriculture and Forests.

One of the serious problems the forest department faced in the beginning was paucity of trained personnel to man even the key administrative and technical positions located invariably on geographically difficult locations in the harsh climatic conditions.

In July 1865 in England Brandis sought an interview with the Secretary of the State of India and requested to depute one or two competent government officers to Germany or France for training in forestry before they took charge of a Forest Division in India. His request being declined, he addressed to the Government of India on the matter, which was readily approved.¹

Subsequently, the Secretary of State authorised Brandis to select two gentlemen trained in forest management from Germany and France on Rs.500 per mensem and a forester from Scotland on a monthly salary of Rs. 200.² However, Brandis informed the authorities that he could not obtain the required men for the above sum.

He was far-sighted enough to realize the need for an annual recruitment of trained men in order to provide scientifically trained officers to the newly created department. Furthermore, he discussed forest education with men of eminence at the time such as Dr. Joseph D. Hooker, the celebrated author of the *Himalayan Journal*, an authority on the Himalayan flora, and the Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. He proposed to the Government to provide (i) facilities for studying forestry in Europe for the officers in the Forest Department of India, (ii) to permit immediate selection of five young men in Europe as Forest Probationers and (iii) to send trained men from Europe to improve the administration of the Forest Department in India. The proposal was accepted by both the Government of India and the Secretary of State. Accordingly, Brandis made arrangements with Monsieur Laydeker in France and with the German authorities as to the nature of instruction and locale of the study.

Walter Henman (17), Alfred Pengelly (23), Edward Mc Arther Moir (18), Penamji Rustomji Desai (20) and Louis Gavin, the five young men selected for the first batch, were directed to report themselves to M. Leydecker, Director General De Forests, at Paris on 1.3.1967.³ "I shall take measures for selecting eight young men to commence their training in March next, and, until

some different arrangements are made, four in every subsequent year, half of this number will, if suitable candidates can be found, be sent to Germany, and half to France. These young men will be trained according to the arrangements made by Mr Brandis, and on the same terms, with two exceptions: That when their studies are completed, they should, if possible, spend a short time with an approved wood manager in Scotland before they go to India, and that their stipend to be paid to such as shall be reported deserving of it during their training, shall be 100/- instead of 60/- a year".⁴ Then he reported to his superiors in London; "I have to inform you that I have nominated 8 English young men to be sent to France and Germany for training for the forest service in India."⁵

The very next year he selected five candidates for France and six candidates for Germany were nominated and a request was made that the training period be raised, from 2½ years to 3 years.⁶

After five months, he expressed himself on the adequacy of the forest training and the background of the candidates: "It is not expedient to require of candidates the longer period of training suggested by Dr. Burthardt. I have thought it best to fix the maximum age for this year at 23the subject can be reconsidered in subsequent years. While I look with you to an ultimate employment of natives of India in the higher grades of the forest department, I am not of opinion that object is likely to be attained in any considerable degree until after we have succeeded in establishing a Forest School of training in India. And there does not appear any readier means of establishing such a school than that of preserving in the system of training which ...we were able to begin in March, 1867 in Germany and France".

"There have been several cases in which the medical examination has not excluded men whose fitness for the forest service may appear doubtful ... If the state of health has prevented satisfactory progress at the forest school in an excellent climate, what can we reasonably expect of his work in the malarious forests of India (Elliot-short sighted and difficulty in hearing: Sillerinsance;

Pengelly could not stand the climate of Sindh) ...Several of other men sent out are not constitutionally as well-suited for the work in the forests as might be desired.

“The zeal and industry evinced during their studies by the men who have just completed their course has in my opinion not been as satisfactory as might be desired ...With the exception of four (M/S Hill, Fisher, Popert and Dunbar) that eagerness to learn and that desire to give satisfaction to their instructors which may be expected of the young men of age and education studying their profession, to a great extent at the government expenses.

“It appears to me ...there is not that spirit of eagerness to improve and of attachment to their instructors. Indeed it would almost appear to me that their instructors might have had good grounds to refuse the final certification to some of the men, who just completed their course of instruction”⁷ Filed the indomitable German from his European vacation.

Table 1 : Training Schedule of the First Decade in 1860's and 1870's

Commencement of Studies	Classes of Studies	France	Germany
1st March 1867	1st Sept. 1869	5	2
1st March 1869	1st Sept. 1871	4	4
1st March 1870	1st Sept. 1872	7	5
1st March 1871	1st Sept. 1873	3	6
1st March 1872	1st Sept. 1874	2	2
	5 batches	21	19

“One of the 1867 batch was killed by an accident in the hill forests of North West Frontiers soon after joining and one of the men of 1869 became insane after completing his studies. The total outlay incurred on account of each candidate to the time of his

actually joining his appointment in India was £ 450.

“Nevertheless I consider that the difficulties of the present system are great and that there are more chances of failure than under a system of education at home and there together with other considerations ...that only two more examinations of candidates to be to attend on the continent shall be held in autumn of this and the next year and at these examinations an aggregate number of 10 candidates should be selected and the last of whom would leave for India in October, 1876. If this suggestion is accepted, the present system will then have been continued for a period of ten years, during which time 50 candidates will have been selected and prepared. Besides Chemistry, Physics and natural history are applied mathematics and the elements of jurisprudence viz general principles, forest legislation in Germany as regards protection of forests, the procedures in regulating or commuting prescriptive rights and the supervision of communal and private forests. Our students also take part in the practical exercises of plan drawing, surveying and levelling and the botanical and geological excursions, which form part of the regular studies. The lectures on forestry proper are directed under the following main leads:

- i. Culture of forests — natural reproduction, management of coppice, wood, nurseries, planting, thinning and pruning.
- ii) Working of Forest — properties of timbers, woods and other forest produce; felling, preparation and transport of timber and woods, making of roads and slides, regulation of streams for floating, requirements of timber and wood consuming trades, collection of bark, resin and other minor products.
- iii) Protection of Forest — against winds, snow, frost, fires, the ravines of insects and other animals, the establishments and maintenance of forest boundaries, the protection of forest theft and the growth of prescriptive rights.
- iv) General Management and Administration of Forests - Divisions into blocks and compartments, determination of

the quality of the growing stock and of the annual yield, preparation and periodical revision of the plan of operations, valuation of forest organization of the forest service, duties of the forest officers employed for the management and protection of the forest rendering and controlling forest accounts".⁸

Further he noted "We have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch No.27 Revenue (Forest) dated 31st October last on the subject of increasing the supply of fuel in the presidency and conveying instructions to that the Government for the establishment of fuel plantations in the vicinity of the Bombay, Baroda and Central Indian Railways". On the question of using coal by the Indian railways ... "lately the cost about Rs 34 per ton. And on the propriety of employing the natives of this country in the forest administration ... "the forest department presents peculiar facilities for the employment of natives and that is desirable and necessary to encourage their promotion to higher appointments in the Department. We have, therefore, directed that henceforth all appointments will be open equally to all, whether Europeans or native of India, who may possess the needful qualifications and who may have carried their promotions by faithful and efficient service, and the promotions of the officers as well as their first appointment in the Department, the same rules will apply to natives of the country as to Europeans. We have desired that practical effect should be at once given to these resolutions".⁹

The Viceroy and the Governor-General in Council noted :

"We have fixed the Salary of the present conservator on occasion of his appointment to be the Inspector of Forest Rs. 1,200 a month, future incumbent allowed a salary of Rs. 1,000 per mensem rising by biennial increments to Rs. 1,200/- per mensem."¹⁰ Further, it is noted "We take this opportunity of forwarding of a copy of resolution No.19-1246 to 1257, dated 17th October, 1872, which we have recently issued relative to the constitution of a separate branch of the Forest Department for the preparation of working

plans and conduct of forest surveys".¹¹

On the quality of candidates and their performance as reported by Brandis, the above correspondence recorded:

"We, therefore, beg strongly to deprecate Dr. Brandis' suggestion (through his report on discontinuation of training of the British Forest Officers in France and Germany) that the system of training our forest service in France and Germany should be brought to an end ... We should desire always to have the option of appointing to post in the Forest Department Officers in other branches of public service, who may show peculiar qualifications for the work. The gradual introduction of natives into the Forest service is also much to be desired. We believe that there do not exist in Great Britain the means for giving such education in forestry as is afforded in France and Germany".¹²

For the administration of the forests in the different provinces under the Government of India an effective staff of the following strength must be maintained :

Inspector General of Forests 1 + 7 Conservators	=	8
Deputy Conservators	=	56
Assistant Conservators	=	28
Sub Assistant Conservators	=	8
	<hr/>	
Total	=	100

It was intended that they should be recruited partly from among the trained assistants sent out from home (Great Britain) and partly by promotion who would again be recruited by the promotion of subordinates or by the appointments of outsiders. Meanwhile the casualties had reduced the existing staff of the Department to the following strength:

Inspector General 1 + 7 Conservators	=	8
Deputy Assistant Conservators	=	80

Sub-Assistant Conservators	=	16
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	<hr style="width: 100%;"/>	Total = 104
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The same source further showed the salient observations made by Brandis :

“A proportion of these are absent on leave. On the 1st April last the number of absentees was 10 and average of absentees during the last six years has been 8.5 per cent of the actual strength of the staff. It is obvious that in order to maintain the forest staff at its effective strength it will be necessary during the next three years to recruit it largely from other sources. And we propose at once to take the needful steps so as to be in a position to fill up the existing vacancies in the staff. The Department is too young

“...to admit of our recruiting the superior staff to any large extent from the subordinate ranks, and is not easy to find a sufficient number of suitable candidates among persons not belonging to the Department ... to request ... to arrange for the nomination of a large number”.¹³

On the desirability of colonial structure of forest administration in India, it was detailed :

“In the provinces under the Government of India the officers of the Forest Department are divided into superior and subordinate staff (a resolution of the GOI Revenue Department No. 30-1073-10-86, dated 13.10.76). The superior staff consists of Conservators, the Deputy Assistant and Sub-Assistant Conservators, while subordinate staff consist of Forest Rangers, Foresters and Forest Guards. Conservators will have the direction of forest administration in a province, while the Deputy and Senior Assistant Conservators will continue to control the management of the forest divisions assigned to them. Each forest division is divided into a number of executive charges, styled Forest Ranges, under the charge of Junior ACFs, sub-ACF'S and Forest Rangers, who held the first rank among the sub-ordinate establishments. The other

members of the sub-ordinate staff (Foresters and Guards) are chiefly employed for the protection of the forests. The subordinate staff consist as a rule entirely of natives of India and we have now under consideration certain proposals for establishment of a forest school in Dehradun.

“The number of officers now sanctioned for the superior staff is 100. It is believed that for many years to come the superior staff of the Department must chiefly be recruited by the appointment of gentlemen, who have received a professional education in the state forests of France and Germany. There is, however, no reason why native gentlemen should not visit Europe for the purpose of gaining admittance in the manner to the superior staff of the Department ... We shall give every encouragement to native gentlemen intending to visit Europe in order to qualify for the forest service in this country.

“For the establishment of a forest school three requisites are necessary: (i) Competent teachers with lengthened and varied experience; (ii) Hand books on forestry and auxiliary sciences written with special reference to forest administration, (iii) Forests of sufficient extent and sufficiently in varied nature. It seems to us that the greatest care should be taken to exclude all candidates who have not got a strong constitution and who have any weakness in the matter of eye sight and hearing”.¹⁴ By the middle of the 19th century the British had finished the forests, but they needed timber for their expanding industries. The urgent requirements of timber, specially for ship-building and railway sleepers, induced them to introduce scientific management in forestry under the German experts. It is apparent from the above that the pragmatic D. Brandis introduced the newly recruited forest officers to the German and French forestry training institutions. He was critical of the recruits, instruction and curriculae from the beginning and he saw to it that this expensive experiment comes to an end by opening such an institute in India.

It so happened that the outbreak of the Franco-Russian War

led to the transfer of the forest probationers from Nancy Forest School in France to Scotland in 1875. Difficulties arose in connection with the training of the probationers in Germany as well and the practice was to be discontinued in 1875 for good. However, for the next decade the British forest probationers continued to be trained in France. From 1885 the Forest probationers were sent to the Cooper Hills College in England along with Public Works and Telegraph Service officers. The Forestry section of this college was headed by Dr. W. Schlich, one of the founders of the Dehra Dun Forestry School and the Inspector-General of Forests for four years after Brandis.

As early as 1869 Brandis had felt that steps must be taken to provide some technical education in forestry for the lower grade staffers of Indian extraction. In course of time a practice was evolved in which suitable Divisional Forest Officers (DFO) were deputed to the Engineering College at Rurki or other such institutions for a year or so for their theoretical instruction. But this experiment did not prove very satisfactory and a proposal was made to add a course on forestry to the training at Rurki Engineering College itself. The first Forest School in the British Empire was inaugurated in 1878 at Dehra Dun on a plateau in the Siwalik Hills between rivers Ganges and Jumna. The school was headed by the Director, a senior Forest Officer, and it was to train the forest range officers for all the provinces within the British Indian Empire. In course of time, research and other essential wings of forestry were added to its activities turning it into an international centre of repute.

The British policy makers were toying with the idea of having their own apex institute in forestry for their entire colonial territories. Thus, the British Imperial Forestry Conferences of 1920 and 1923 had recommended to set up the (British) Imperial Forestry Institute (at Oxford) at the cost of £ 19,000. Out of which India was to contribute £ 3000 as her share, in which her consent was

not sought. Furthermore, India had the oldest and most important forest service in the British Empire. Her forestry was far more developed than that of Canada and Australia. The Forestry School raised to college level and the Forest Research Institute at Dehra Dun had already been recognized as a leading institution. As India had led the way in forestry in the British Empire and all other parts of the British colonies, they looked towards India for advice and instruction. However, the Conference decided to locate its Imperial Forestry office as well at Oxford, and India was asked to join as a member and contribute £ 3000 per annum, which she did not agree.

The Under Secretary of State for India, India Office, London wrote to the Governor General of India with a request that India should make a grant of £3000 a year for five years towards maintenance of the British Imperial Forestry Institute, Oxford. The latter agreed to pay £ 2000 per annum, once the Provinces in India agreed to share the same.¹⁵ It appeared from the Forestry Commission's proposals for financing the Oxford Imperial Forestry Institute that the Institute and the International Union would co-operate in bibliographical work.

Accordingly Ram Chandra, Joint Secretary of the State for India, wrote to His Majesty's Under-Secretary of State for India, Economic and Overseas Department, India Office, London, from Simla on October 2, 1929 : "I am accordingly to request that steps may be taken for the admission of the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun to the membership of the Union and for the payment to the Union on behalf of the Institute, of the annual membership subscription of 120 Swiss Franc for the year 1930-31. It is suggested that the expenditure may be met, if possible, from within the sanctioned budget grant for expenditure in England for 1930-31".¹⁶ The first instalment of the annual subscription of 120 Swiss Franc was paid in November, 1930 and the second such instalment in March, 1931.

It appears that no regular decision on the issue was taken immediately. Thus, Girija Shanker Bajpai, ICS, Secretary to the

Government of India addressed to the Under Secretary to the State for India, Economics and Overseas Department, India Office, London on proposed contribution by the Government of India, towards the maintenance of the Imperial Forestry Institute, Oxford ...that the financial position ...imposes the need for the strictest economy and that this expenditure of outside institutions can be justified either to the legislature or the public, except where the benefits are received, are actual and substantial and the share demanded from them is inequitable proportion to that of other beneficiaries. As neither of these conditions appears to be satisfied in the case of the Imperial Forestry Institute, Oxford, the Government of India do not consider, they would be justified in contributing anything towards it in present circumstances. Nor do they consider it proper to urge the local (provincial) Governments ... to pledge themselves to any annual grant for the purpose".¹⁷

E.J. Turner, Under Secretary to the State for India, Economics & Overseas, India Office, London informed F.W.H. Smith, Government of India on January 13, 1933.¹⁸ "Subject to any thing you may wish to say I propose to submit a draft reply to the effect that we shall raise no objection to the exclusion of India from the Advisory Committee (of the Imperial Forestry Institute, Oxford) on the understanding that if India at any time decide to contribute, the question of representation will be reconsidered at the first convenient opportunity". Though at the same time, a plea was made that the local (provincial) Governments in India should be asked to pay their contributions to the tune of proposed £. 1850 per annum.

At the end, we find a kind of verdict on the issue in the form of a note from the Colonial Office, London to Oxford University, which says: "The Secretary of the State for India desires to add that so long as the present arrangements for the appointments of Forest Officers in India continues, the Government of India cannot be regarded as directly interested in the provisions of the (Imperial Forestry) Institute of a four years training for the Government

Service.”¹⁹ After a meeting with the Director of the Institute and the Registrar of Oxford University, the Secretary of the State released £ 5,000/- for the year 1933-34. And thus ended the British efforts to link and seek support from India for the Imperial Forestry Institute.

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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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