On the title page of the life-book of a teacher, what is written is not knowledge but the subject of love.

– Zakir Husain

1878

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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Memorial Lecture Series

NCERT

Zakir Husain Second Memorial Lecture 2009

By Padmini Swaminathan

1897-1969

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MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

Zakir Husain Second Memorial Lecture

Regional Institute of Education
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PADMINI SWAMINATHAN

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Contents

Our Objective

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an apex organisation, assisting and advising the Central and State Governments by undertaking research, survey, development, training, and extension activities for all stages of school and teacher education[1].

One of the objectives of the Council is to act as a clearing-house and disseminator of ideas relating to school and teacher education. We have initiated the current Memorial Lecture series in order to fulfil this role and to commemorate the life and work of great educational thinkers. Our aim is to strive to raise the level of public awareness about the seminal contributions made in the field of education by eminent men and women of India. We expect that such awareness will set off a chain of discourse and discussion. This, we hope, will make education a lively subject of intellectual inquiry while simultaneously encouraging a sustained public engagement with this important domain of national life.

The memorial lecture series will cover public lectures commemorating the life and work of nine eminent Indian educational thinkers and practitioners —

Title	Venue
Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lectures	India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi
Zakir Husain Memorial Lectures	Regional Institute of Education, Mysore
Gijubhai Badhekha Memorial Lectures	Regional Institute of Education, Ajmer
Tagore Memorial Lectures	Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar

[1] More information on NCERT is available at: www.ncert.nic.in

Mahadevi Verma Memorial Lectures	Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal
B. M. Pugh Memorial Lectures	North East Regional Institute of Education, Shillong
Savitri Phule Memorial Lectures	Nehru Centre, Worli, Mumbai
Marjorie Sykes Memorial Lectures	Egmore Museum, Chennai
Sri Aurobindo Memorial Lectures	Indian Institute of Social Sciences, Kolkata

We will invite men and women of eminence from the academia and public life to deliver, in English or any other Indian language these Memorial Lectures. Our intention is to reach a large audience consisting teachers, students, parents, writers, artists, NGOs, government servants and members of local communities in particular.

The lectures will be made available on Compact Discs (CDs) and in the form of printed booklets for wider dissemination. Each booklet will consist of two sections: Section One highlighting the purpose of the memorial lectures and providing a brief sketch of the life and works of the concerned educational thinker and Section Two giving the lectures in full along with a brief background of the speaker.

We hope all these lecture series will be of use to our audiences as well as the wider public.

ANUPAM AHUJA
Convenor

SECTION I

ZAKIR HUSAIN
CREATING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PARADIGMS

TALAT AZIZ[2]

On the title page of the life-book of a teacher, what is written is not knowledge but the subject of love.

– Zakir Husain

As with many other quotations, the above-mentioned words may sound clichéd unless we realize that Zakir Husain, civic nationalist, Gandhian, economist, President of India from 1967 to 1969, above all, a true lover of children, lived it. Take, for instance, a momentous event in Zakir Husain's life, described for us by one of his biographers, Rajmohan Gandhi:

> *One day in 1933 when Zakir Husain was distributing sweets to the boys who had passed a test in the primary school, a peon came and whispered to him that his three-year old daughter, Rehana... was very ill. Zakir Husain continued to give away the sweets. A little later the peon came again and told him in his ear that Rehana had died. Zakir Husain turned pale but did not stop what he was doing. Then the campus bell was rung and everyone learnt that Dr. Zakir Husain's girl had died. Asked afterwards why he had not left the school at once, Zakir Husain replied that 'the children were feeling so happy, he did not like to interrupt it'. His wife told Mujeeb later that for several days after the event Zakir Husain's pillow was wet every morning.*[3]

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[2] Professor of Education at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia. The author wishes to thank Anil Sethi and Anupam Ahuja, both from NCERT for enriching the text and for eagle-eyed editing.

[3] Rajmohan Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim Mind* (Delhi, Penguin, 2000), pp. 290-291.

It was this love of children and an unflinching interest in their well-being and happiness that led Zakir Husain to make the transition from Economics (a subject in which he had been formally trained) to Education to which he contributed ceaselessly. As Chair of a National Committee on *Nai Talim* or Basic Education (as it came to be called), Zakir Husain helped create this alternative Gandhian paradigm and played a significant role in devising its syllabi. Like many other nationalists, Zakir Husain was no mere ivory-tower intellectual but an indefatigable institution-builder. He presided over Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University with distinction. As Vice-Chancellor of these institutions, he served as fund-raiser, accountant, secretary, editor and teacher – all rolled into one for many long years. In the universities too he attempted to implement the credo, 'learning by doing', and took a keen interest in their Education departments. The true educationalist in him did not allow for a distinction between school-education and the universities. Zakir Husain always viewed education as an organic whole.

The Early Years

None other than his mother sowed the seeds of truthfulness, self-discipline and universal love for mankind in Zakir Husain's personality. She played a decisive role in his upbringing, especially after his father died in 1907, when Zakir Husain was only ten years old. In keeping with his family traditions, Zakir Husain's early education in the Quran, Persian and Urdu was carried out at home. In 1907 he was admitted in Class V to the Islamia High School of Etawah, a residential institution founded by Maulvi Bashiruddin.

During his primary education Zakir Husain was under the care and guidance of Syed Altaf Husain, the Headmaster of the school, a rare teacher of great virtues, disciplinarian, and strict follower of his own principles. His influence on Zakir Husain was reflected in a paper 'Talib-e-ilm ki Zindagi' (Life of a Student) that the latter presented

in the school assembly when he was just thirteen years old. In his presentation, Zakir Husain described the duties of a student, as "… He [that is, a student] should propagate education among his illiterate brothers and should consider the propagation of education as a part of his own education.… He ought to acquire education for the sake of education… If not educated, he is not a man at all, he cannot do anything worthwhile in this world." To drive home, his central point Zakir Husain used Persian verses – 'set your goals high, as by that you are rated, not only by the creator, but by those also who are created.' This shows that at the age of thirteen Zakir Husain had a clear understanding of what is education and what it can do to a person. Zakir Husain continued his studies at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh from where he took an M.A. in Economics in 1920. He was appointed a Lecturer in the same year.

All through this period Zakir Husain also had a spiritual guide, Shaikh Hasan Shah, a *sufi* of the Chishti Silsila. Hasan Shah had a lasting impact on his disciple. He taught him to cultivate patience and diligence and a life-long love for books.

A Developing Educationist — Some Key Milestones

1920 was a crucial year for Zakir Husain, a sort of turning point in his life. This was the year when the Indian National Congress and the All India Khilafat Committee joined hands in launching the Non-Cooperation Movement and Gandhiji was touring the country to persuade teachers and students to leave government-administered schools and colleges. Zakir Husain who had a good grip over national and international affairs was keen on understanding Gandhiji's perspective. He attended one of his talks wherein Gandhiji urged fellow-countrymen to boycott the British system of education and join the Non-Cooperation Movement. He and his friends persuaded Maulana Mohammad Ali and Gandhiji to address the Aligarh students. Though the meeting was not successful,

Zakir Husain resigned from the post of lecturer and met Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. M.A. Ansari, and Maulana Mohammad Ali in Delhi. They proposed to set up a National Centre of Education for Indian Youth. Thus, Zakir Husain became a pioneer of a new venture and Jamia Millia Islamia came into existence on 29th October 1920. In 1921 Zakir Husain was appointed as a Lecturer in Economics at the Jamia.

The German Influence

Another milestone in becoming an educationist was Zakir Husain's doctoral studies in Berlin. He had been persuaded by his close friend Khwaja Abdul Hameed to choose Germany for this purpose. It was in Berlin that he first met Abid Husain and Mohammad Mujeeb, who were studying in Oxford and came to Berlin in September 1923 to work in a printing press. The three formed a troika and worked together for the next twenty-six years. Abid Husain was writing his thesis on the educational ideas of Herbert Spenser, which he submitted in 1925.

The three years spent in Berlin nurtured the teacher and educationist in Zakir Husain. Though his special subject was British agrarian policies in India and Agricultural Economics, he was more interested in literature and education. In particular, he attended Professor Edward Spranger's lectures and read his books. Professor Spranger was an outstanding figure in the field of Educational and Cultural Philosophy. During his stay in Germany he also cultivated a refined taste in music and theatre.

Zakir Husain was deeply influenced by German thought, particularly, by George Kerschensteiner's revolutionary principles in Education. Kerschensteiner was critical of bookish schools and had in fact founded a 'Work-School'. He advocated that Head, Heart and Hand, should contribute to the process of education, and education in turn should train all these. Kerschensteiner believed that 'an educated person never considers himself complete… to strive naturally for education is a true indicator of a

true education'. During his stay in Berlin Zakir Husain travelled to many places in Germany and visited important schools where various educational theories and methods of teaching were being practised. He also gave lectures on the philosophy of Gandhiji for whom he had great respect.

Contribution to a Growing Institution

Zakir Husain's far-reaching academic commitments, going well beyond Agricultural Economics, helped him broaden his vision and develop a firm grasp of Education. He co-authored with Alfred Ehrenfreich a book in German on Gandhiji, translated Plato's *Republic* into Urdu, imbibing Plato's reasoning and thoughts during the translation. He fully believed in and practised Plato's view that only proper education frees one from mental slavery and helps in the manifestation of creative abilities. This is the only way innovativeness and imagination can be nurtured, knowledge, wisdom and civilizations advanced. His interest in education and the Jamia Millia were inextricably interwoven, compelling him to accept an invitation to return to the Jamia when the chance came his way.

Hakim Ajmal Khan and M. A. Ansari visited Zakir Sahib in Vienna in 1925. Hakim Sahib persuaded him to return to Jamia after completing his education. He fulfilled his promise in February 1926, inspiring his friends Abid Husain and Mohammad Mujeeb to work with him at the Jamia. A journey for an educationist as well as an institution thus began from Qarol Bagh (Karol Bagh) where Jamia was shifted from Aligarh. Zakir Husain joined Jamia as its Vice-Chancellor or *Shaikhul Jamia* at the young age of twenty-nine.

In 1926 Zakir Husain went to Sabarmati Ashram to discuss education and the Jamia with Gandhiji. He returned from there with a renewed zeal. Gandhiji too was satisfied about the future of Jamia being in the hands of a confident and secular Zakir. Gandhiji's support for Jamia was an asset and later he sent his grandson Rasiklal to Jamia for his education.

If any single educational principle guided Zakir Husain in Jamia for nearly twenty-three years, it was 'learning by doing'. His concept of 'doing' was to a large extent spiritual also. He did not advise, preach or guide his fellow-workers but drove them to examine their own will power and further build upon their intelligence and sensitivity. He made Jamia a 'School of Work' where one found only a minimum use of books and many practical activities with educational values. He considered a true 'work-school' to be a place where children acquire the habit of planning, of considering ways or means thoroughly before they start work and examine their achievements critically when they have done what they set out to do. He introduced the Project Method of learning in schools, as he considered it appropriate for the mental and social development of children.

An important feature of the Jamia schools was that they encouraged teachers to practise the constructivist approach, something that the NCERT's present-day National Curriculum Framework advocates. Zakir Husain himself taught at primary, secondary and higher classes in Jamia. Being an economist he introduced the concept of banking through a 'children's bank', 'children's book-shop' and the like at Jamia's primary school where students in residential hostels needed to manage their own money. The school also maintained a small zoo and farm, which were looked after by children under the supervision of teachers. Zakir Husain considered childhood as the most important period of life for the development of personality. He observed that children's nature compels them every moment of their waking life to experiment, to break and make things. So at the initial stage all children can be educated through similar practical activities.

For Zakir Husain the purpose of education was three fold – to develop students' faculties, to transmit to them their cultural heritage and to awaken in them an inner self. The best way for children to develop their mental faculties is to let them think through their hands, to acquire knowledge about things through practical use. Therefore

it is essential that practical work be made the instrument and focus of all mental training and education. Manual work proves to be more effective than books in promoting mental development. For Zakir Husain education was also the transmission of spiritual and cultural values of a nation to its younger generation in such a way as to make it an integral part of their life. For this, the educator has first to realise these values in herself and then to transmit them to her pupils. Furthermore, he regarded national integration as an essential objective of education and urged Indian educationalists to discover effective means for its attainment.

In 1937 India attained a measure of provincial autonomy and Gandhiji attempted to persuade the new popular governments of various provinces to adopt *nai talim* or Basic Education as a national system of education. Zakir Husain agreed with the spirit of Gandhiji's 'Basic Education' but was not satisfied with the mode. At a conference on the subject held at Wardha, he disagreed on several counts with Gandhiji. Aware of Zakir Husain's potential, Gandhiji gave him the responsibility of framing the curriculum for Basic Education in schools and asked him to do so within a month. Not only did he accomplish this successfully, he also undertook to train teachers. Thus a new department, 'Ustadon-ka-Madrasa' (Teachers' College) was started. As is evident from the Patel Memorial Lecture, delivered by Zakir Husain many years later, he believed that teachers be trained 'in the technique of such competent observations as will enable them to understand their pupils and direct their educational work in the light of this understanding.'

Serving a National Call

Zakir Husain remained associated, after Independence, with education as with the Jamia and Aligarh. The partition of the country had led to the migration of a sizable section of the Muslim elite to Pakistan. In the

circumstances, Nehru and Maulana Azad persuaded Zakir Husain to accept the Vice-Chancellorship of Aligarh Muslim University and provide academic stability to the institution in the larger interests of the nation. Zakir Husain served in that capacity for nine years until he became the Governor of Bihar. At heart, though, he remained a teacher throughout his life and displayed keen interest in academic work.

As Vice-President as well as President of India he spoke on a variety of themes including his favourite subjects of education and culture, science education, and sports in schools. He also shared thoughts on Gandhiji, special-needs education, the responsibilities and qualities of good teachers, education and the status of women, and the social responsibilities of the people of India, apart from addressing many other matters related to national and world affairs.

On the occasion of Teacher's Day (5 September) 1964, he communicated a message emphasizing that 'the teachers are responsible not just for themselves but also for the whole society. A teacher is the custodian of the highest values created and cherished by his people. Teachers have a mission and consciousness that they are engaged in the most significant task of building a free people.... You will have to transform mercenary labour into dedicated service. You will have to rise above the suffocating dust of uniformed partisanship into the purer region of impartial objectivity'. He urged them not to force children into silently brooding over books, unwillingly swallowing inassimilable information. He wanted them to be up and about, discovering things for themselves, not being condemned for their bursting energy.

Zakir Husain breathed his last on 3 May 1969. In her condolence message Indira Gandhi described Zakir Husain as 'an unforgettable teacher, a builder and a writer of distinction.' He chose the field of education because of his great faith in the power of education to mould the individual and society. He took pride in calling himself a teacher, believing that only through education would the

people gain a vision of the future while preserving their old timeless values.

Today we see a renewed interest in reinventing our education system as also in education as a vehicle of social change. In perceiving the child as a discoverer and constructor of knowledge for herself, the National Curriculum Framework-2005 offers us a step in the right direction. Achieving this lofty objective will indeed be a true homage to Zakir Husain, a great teacher and educationist, a humanist par excellence.

Section II

Literacy and Levels of Formal Education of the Indian Population

A National Report Card

Professor Padmini Swaminathan

RELEVANCE: Dr. Zakir Husain, I gather, chose the field of education because of his great faith in the power of education to mould the individual and society and in his belief that only through education would people gain a vision of the future while preserving inherited priceless values. Sixty odd years after Independence it is time we revisit the vision of this great educationist. While I am not competent to pronounce a judgment on the status of preservation of our inherited values, I have made a modest attempt to sift through statistical data and official reports to examine how educationally 'inclusive' Indian 'development' has been thus far, and, whether, the present pattern and direction of 'development', particularly as far as the field of education is concerned, is capable of achieving the vision of social change envisaged by leaders such as Dr. Zakir Husain.

Abstract

Through an analysis of official data on Education and through an examination of official Reports that have dealt with the theme of Higher Education including Vocational/ Technical Education, we explore the phenomenon of exclusion from and inclusion in "development". Analysis of available secondary data on employment and education for the decade 1991-2001 (Census) and post-

2001 (National Sample Survey) reveals a complex picture of exclusion and inclusion at the macro level. In 2001, 63 per cent of the male population has been returned as "literate" compared to 45 per cent of the female population nationally. The equivalent figures for rural India are 59 per cent males as against 38 per cent females, and for urban India 75 per cent and 63 per cent. In other words, for the country as a whole and after 60-odd years of independence, 37 per cent males and 55 per cent females suffer exclusion from formal literacy.

The analyses of data relating to those returned as literate provide a picture of the "nature and level of inclusion": for the country as a whole, 66 per cent of literate males have not gone beyond "matric/ secondary" against 72 per cent for literate females; only 7 per cent of literate males and 5 per cent of literate females figure in the category, "graduate and above other than technical degree", while the "technical degree" category has slightly less than 2 per cent of the literate males against 0.6 per cent of literate females.

In the recent past the subject of higher education in general and of the skill level of the population in particular, has received considerable official recognition. The Reports of two Task Force Committees on Employment set up by the Central Planning Commission (Planning Commission, 2001, 2002) the Report of the Review Committee on All India Council for Technical Education, September 2003, the Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS, 2007) have, in different ways, addressed the theme of the mismatch between the products of higher education and the absorptive capacity of the economy. Similarly, a World Bank study on Skill Development including the system of Vocational Education and Training in India (January 2008) dwells at considerable length on the nature, scope and adequacy of existing facilities for training in the public and private sector.

This presentation brings together the findings and recommendations of the different reports on the theme of higher education and the interface of the latter with employment. The emphasis on the interface of higher education with employment is crucial. While broad-basing vocational education/training is necessary, nevertheless, for the cause of social justice to be sufficiently and effectively served, the material base needs also to be expanded simultaneously.

Introduction: A Recapitulation

Almost a decade ago, I had engaged extensively with analysis of secondary data, mainly Census 1991, (supported with field-based information) to explicate how, an otherwise 'economically and socially developed' state such as Tamil Nadu perpetuated development-induced 'violence' on its citizens, particularly women, adolescent girls and girl children, with severity of this violence increasing for females of the SC community (Swaminathan, 2002). A quick recap of the main arguments and data-related findings of the above paper is in order here not only to enable an assessment of the situation a decade later, but to also deliberate on the implications that the macro scenario as captured by our official data systems has for our continuing efforts to make development more inclusive besides 'engendering' development itself.

In the paper mentioned above, Census statistics on 'education' was examined intergenerationally to investigate (a) the then level of education of Tamil Nadu's population; and (b) emerging future scenarios. The latter was attempted through analyses of data relating to school attendance status of child (5-14 years) and adolescent (15-19 years) population. Our examination of the education data was complemented with an examination of data on employment to gauge not just levels of literacy per se, but also to draw out the [statistical] nature of the emerging relationship between employment and education across age and caste. Hence data on education and employment was provided for Tamil Nadu population

by caste, sex, residence and age. In addition we computed a measure of 'gender gap' in levels of literacy – females per 1000 males - at each educational level, to get an idea of 'gender distance'.

Our analyses of Census data 1991 for Tamil Nadu, (Appendix Table 1) gave the following picture:

(i) The proportion of illiterates (those with no formal education) among the SC population was significantly higher for both males and females when compared to the non-SC male and female population respectively.

(ii) The problem of illiteracy in the population became more complex when the data was disaggregated further by sex and residence. Far more women were illiterate when compared to men; far more rural persons were among the illiterates when compared to the urban population.

(iii) That literacy did not necessarily and automatically get translated into higher levels of education was clearly evident from data relating to levels of education.

Taking total (rural plus urban) population as a whole, we found that:

- Almost 45 per cent of Tamil Nadu female population (of all ages) was literate against 64 per cent for male population. When we disaggregated this data by *level of education* we got the following picture:
- Just 15 per cent of the literate females had completed primary education against 20 per cent for males;
- Only 6 per cent of the literate females had completed secondary education against 10 per cent for males;
- 1.21 per cent only of the literate females belonged to the 'graduate and above' category against 3 per cent of males.

The picture turned more dismal when we analysed the data by caste. Just 30 per cent of SC females were literate against 49 per cent for SC males; only 10 per cent of SC females had completed primary education against 17 per cent for SC males; slightly above 2 per cent of SC females had completed higher secondary against 6 per cent for SC males;

less than half a per cent of SC females belonged to the 'graduate and above category' against slightly more than 1 per cent for SC males.

Needless to add that the detailed break-up of data by caste, sex and residence, for an otherwise 'developed' state of the Indian Union brought out quite starkly the gap in educational levels between SCs and Non-SCs whichever way the data was classified – urban/rural, male/female. The least educated were the rural SC females, 74 per cent of whom were illiterate.

Among the issues that we highlighted then was the manner in which officials, policy makers and social scientists conflated literacy levels with educational levels. Using official data sources we showed that, while the literacy base in educationally developed states such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala may be relatively high the formal educational levels of their population were by no means commendable. Thus, for example, we found that Kerala and Tamil Nadu were only marginally better than Bihar and Rajasthan, with respect to the educational category 'matriculation but below graduate'. In the 'graduate and above' category, Rajasthan and Bihar were almost equal to if not better than Tamil Nadu and Kerala, particularly in the urban areas. This held true even when we deducted the SC population from the general population and concentrated on the educational achievement of the Non-SC population (Appendix Table 2).

Our reading of the above finding was as follows: Kerala and Tamil Nadu have, historically, and through conscious state interventions, managed to widen their literacy base to cover as many segments of the population, including girls and the socially deprived sections of society. Hence, the issue of inequality in access to education at lower levels had to a significant extent been successfully addressed in these two states. What had not received adequate attention in these states was the issue of higher education and professional skill acquisition, that is, the wider attainment of education beyond the 'matriculation' category. In Bihar

and Rajasthan, on the other hand, the stark inequality in educational achievement between rural and urban areas, and between males and females was very clear. Only a thin stream of the urban population was able to access education at higher levels, leaving the vast majority behind. Therefore, we emphasised the need to talk of state specific policies; in the case of states such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala we could perceive the emergence of serious social problems because of inadequate investment in higher education by the state consequent to larger numbers of students knocking at the doors of secondary and higher education as these states veered towards universal primary education.

The negative impact of continuing caste and gender gap in school attendance could be gauged to some extent from data on levels of education of the *worker* population. In a nutshell, these data revealed:

- A clear polarisation in the educational status of SC and non-SC male workers. The non-SC workers were clearly more literate and also (formally) more educationally qualified when compared to non-SC males.
- In the case of females, whether SC or non-SC, the proportion of illiteracy among female workers, particularly in the rural areas was significantly high. 84 per cent of SC female workers and 71 per cent of non-SC female workers had no formal education.
- Thus, between the sexes, relatively more males in general and male workers in particular were literate and better off educationally than females in general and/or female workers in particular. Further, in our analysis of the data on employment, we found that the proportion of female child workers (5-14) was higher than the proportion of male child workers. Again, among female child workers, the proportion of SC female child workers was greater than non-SC female child workers. We also found that there was a significant drop in female adolescents (15-19) attending school.

Given that female workers were proportionately less educationally endowed than females in general, *our surmise was that for most females (more than for males) employment was at the expense of education.* This proposition was true for both SC and non-SC female workers. But between SCs and non-SCs we found that, in Tamil Nadu, a high female WPR was generally equivalent to high SC female WPR, which again correlated with (a) lowest caste status, and, (b) least education (Appendix Table 3).

A decade later, is there a change in the way we view our record of 'development'? And, do we still characterise our 'development' as one that continues to inflict 'violence' on the poor in general and women in particular? My own submission is that not only does 'development violence' continue but the violence itself has become more overt with severe consequences for the poor and poor women in particular. Sixty years after independence, our Plans are still struggling to make 'development' inclusive, with the Eleventh Five Year Plan Approach Document being entitled, 'Towards More Inclusive Growth' – an indirect acknowledgment that the previous ten five-year plans have failed the 'inclusiveness' test.

This text is organised in two parts as follows. Part 1 has two sections. In Section 1, available secondary data has been analysed to compare and understand 'change' during the decade of the nineties using, largely, data from Census 2001 and from data provided by the Central Statistical Organisation in the various National Sample Survey Reports. While the aim in this Section is to capture the all-India situation in 2001, a focus on Tamil Nadu is continued in order to unravel whether 'better developed states' such as Tamil Nadu have been able to translate faster growth into more 'inclusive' growth during the decade of the nineties. In Section 2 we shift our emphasis to a discussion of the interface between education and employment and the record of the Indian state in operationalising the concepts of *gainful* and *decent*

employment. In particular this section brings together official findings on the state of vocational/professional education in the country.

Part 2 of the text discusses the findings of a field-based study undertaken jointly by the author in Tamil Nadu (Livelihood Assessment Study)[1]. The 'Livelihood Assessment Survey' (IDA, 2004) was an attempt to understand the nature of risks faced by the poorest among the poor and also their coping mechanisms. The relevance of reproducing here the observations from the survey lie in the remarkable manner in which people on the ground, women in particular, in their own words linked their inability to make a transition to a better life because of the disjuncture that they perceived between the macro-economic issues of employment and growth on the one hand, and the realities of their everyday life on the other. In the process they also revealed their growing anxieties about the uncertain future facing them, since macro-economic development did not seem to directly benefit them and which therefore forced governments to institute ad hoc welfare policies that were by nature non-universal, discretionary and not in synch with ground requirements. A more crucial significance of these findings also lie in the fact that, they, inadvertently, provide a nuanced understanding of villagers' perceptions of the circumstances that force them to make gendered choices on a range of issues, including education of their children.

Part 1

Section 1

Understanding Educational Inclusion/Exclusion from macro-data

Analysis of available[2] secondary data on employment and education for the decade 1991-2001 (Census) and post 2001 (National Sample Survey) reveal a complex picture of exclusion and inclusion at the macro level. While in

2001 per centages of population returned as 'Literate' have shown significant improvements for all classes of people when compared to 1991, yet only 63% of the male population and 45% of the female population has been returned as 'Literate' at the national level.

When literacy data of total population of the country is divided into Scheduled Caste and Non-Scheduled Caste, we realize that, against 65% of Non-Scheduled Caste literate males, only 55% of Scheduled Caste males are literate; similarly against 47% of literate Non-Scheduled Caste females, only 35% of Scheduled Caste women are literate. In rural India, 59% of males are 'Literate' against 38% of 'Literate' females. For Urban India, the respective figures for Literacy are 75% and 63%.

In other words, for the country as a whole and after 60 odd years of Independence,

- *37% males and 55% females suffer exclusion from formal literacy*
- *45% SC males and 65% SC females suffer exclusion from formal literacy*
- *41% Rural males and 62% Rural females suffer exclusion from formal literacy*

The further analyses of data relating to those returned as 'Literate' provide a picture of the 'nature and level of inclusion'. More important, the data once again cautions us against reading 'literacy' as 'education', a point we made earlier. For example, when we examine the data for levels of formal education, we find that, for the country as a whole, almost 24% of Literate Males are 'Below Primary' (28% for Literate females); only 15% of Literate Males have managed to come up to the 'Matriculation/Secondary' level (12.5% for Literate Females); only 8% of the Literate Males (5% for Literate Females) have managed to cross the 'Graduate and Above' category. The picture gets more dismal as we disaggregate the data by caste and residence and within each by gender (Appendix Table 4).

In Appendix Table 5 we have examined data relating to the educational level of Tamil Nadu population in an

attempt to understand how 'inclusive' better 'developed' states of the Indian Union are. On several parameters, Tamil Nadu state scores over the average for the country as a whole; again when we compare Appendix Table 1 and Appendix Table 5, we realize that the state has made tremendous strides since 1991 to close the literacy gap at all levels: between genders, between rural/urban and between Scheduled and Non-Schedules Castes. Yet, the translation of 'Literacy' into more and better 'Formal Levels of Education' for all classes and categories of population remains elusive. In other words, economic growth is still not 'inclusive' for large numbers of people if formal educational level is taken as an indicator of 'inclusive' growth.

Educational levels of Worker Population

The analysis of literacy levels of the 'worker' population for 2001 reveals a disturbing contrast between male and female workers. While almost 71% of the male workers are literate [against 63% literacy among males in the population in general], only 36% female workers are literate [against 45% literacy among females in the population in general]. In other words, while 'development' may have increased the work participation rate for females, it has not translated into a greater proportion of literate women becoming workers as has happened in the case of males. What is also of concern is that, this national picture of relatively greater illiteracy among female worker population is repeated in socially and economically developed states such as Tamil Nadu (Refer Appendix Table 6).

The debates among feminists and women's studies scholars around issues of relatively larger numbers of women workers being crowded in low paying jobs and in tasks designated as unskilled needs to also factor in the theme of why employment and education is moving in opposite directions as far as females are concerned.

Using Census data we have computed a measure to understand the distance between the genders in levels of

literacy, among the general population as well as among the worker population – what we have termed the gender gap, namely, females per 1000 males (Appendix Table 7 – A & B). For the country as a whole, for every 1000 literate males in the general population, 666 females are literate. But among the worker population, for every 1000 literate male workers, only 234 female workers are literate. As we disaggregate the 'literate' population figures, the starkness of the distance between the genders among the general population and among the worker population becomes sharper. Thus, in the category, 'Graduate and above other than technical degree', for every 1000 males we have only 490 females in the general category; but in the worker population category this figure drops to 165. In the 'Technical Degree or Diploma equal to degree or post-graduate' category, for every 1000 males we have 388 females in the general population category and only 264 females in the worker population category.

A point also to be noted from data is the proportion of population returned as 'Non-Workers' and the proportion of 'Literate non-workers' among males and females (Appendix Table 8-A & B). For the country as a whole, 48% of males have been returned as 'non-workers' against 74% for females. The urban areas have a larger proportion of population returned as 'non-workers' when compared to the rural areas. However, unlike in the case of males, the rates of literacy for female 'non-workers' are higher than the rates of literacy for females in the population in general, and in both rural and urban areas. The same is true for states such as Tamil Nadu, indicating and emphasising the phenomena that social and economic development (such as what states like Tamil Nadu represent) are not necessarily gender just. Despite the fact that states like Tamil Nadu reveal 'higher than national level' work participation rates for females, these rates are still far below the rates obtaining for males in Tamil Nadu; further, rising levels of female literacy in Tamil Nadu are not reflected in the literacy levels of the worker population. *'Development'*

then, has not been able to reverse the opposite direction in which literacy and employment have been moving for females both at the national level and including in states whose economic and social indicators of development are better than the national figures.

The 61st round of the National Sample Survey (NSS) on Employment and Unemployment Situation in India covering the period July 2004–June 2005 provides another facet of the disproportionately greater education-employment divergence for females in the country. The NSS provides data on what it calls the education level specific worker population ratio, namely, the number of persons of age 15 years and above who are usually employed in a particular education category per 1000 persons in that education category (Appendix Table 9). Appendix Table 9 also provides comparative information from earlier rounds. What is revealing is the very low levels of educated employed among the females; thus, for instance, in rural India, while 851 males per 1000 males in the category 'Graduate and above' are employed, in the case of females, of every 1000 females in the category 'Graduate and above', only 345 females are in employment. For urban India, the respective figures for the same educational category are 795 and 290.

Section 2

The statistically visible disjuncture between education and employment sketched above calls for an examination of the nature of discourse (or more correctly, the lack of discourse) between what passes for higher education in the country and the ability of the economy to absorb the products of higher education through creation of 'quality'[3] employment. Research to unravel and understand the interface between education and economic development has hardly begun in India (Swaminathan, 2007). Even so, the levels of unemployment among the educated has led to demands to reduce the intake and/or, close down particular streams of higher education, declare certain

other streams as non-utility courses, etc. At another level, the state in India faced with the embarrassment of having to answer for large numbers of formally illiterate persons as well as for large numbers of 'out of school' children, has reacted by turning the issue into one of competing resources between higher and elementary education. The excuse of competing resources flies in the face of the fact that, in India, only 7 per cent of the population in the age-group 17 to 24 attends higher educational institutions as against 92% of the eligible age group population attending higher educational institutions in USA, 52% in U.K. and 45% in Japan (Geetha Rani, 2003).

The argument of this text is certainly not that the subject of higher education has not been academically engaged with; our concern, however, is with the interface that this education has with economic development in general and employment in particular. This interface or the lack of it has merited very little academic attention. The controversy around the report, entitled, *A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education,* submitted to the Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry (Ambani and Birla, 2000) provides an illustration of the particular nature of our concern. Briefly, the Ambani-Birla Report argues, among other things, for an overall change in the approach to higher education, one where there is full cost recovery from students of public higher education institutions and immediate privatization of entire higher education except those areas of education involving 'disciplines that have no market orientation' (quoted in, Ravi Kumar, T and Sharma, V. 2003: 607). The Ambani-Birla Report has drawn flak from all over, particularly academicians. While, very rightly, these critiques[4] have condemned the report and its authors for perceiving higher education as largely a profitable industry, not a single critique, that we have read so far, has taken the industrialist-authors to task for not including even a single line outlining industry's responsibility towards the products of higher education. The state in India, for its

part, is bent on downsizing higher education through starving Universities of resources, freezing appointments and encouraging commercialisation (Ravi Kumar and Sharma, 2003).

It is important to point out in this context that in much of the literature covering particularly the developed as well as the East Asian (miracle) economies, the state has played a signal role, either through direct interventions or by facilitating the setting up of appropriate institutions. The issue of state intervention in development is crucial at this juncture given the policies of international bodies like the World Bank. The conditionalities of the Bank include asking recipient states to pursue uniform policies of progressive withdrawal from several activities in favor of marketisation and privatisation ostensibly to promote efficiency and reduce fiscal deficit. Bennell and Segerstrom's (1998) article dealing with vocational education and training in developing countries offers a trenchant critique of the World Bank's shift in educational priorities in favor of primary education. According to the authors:

The World Bank has also been trying to convince governments in developing countries that, in terms of their own resource commitment, basic education should be their top priority and that public expenditure on VET (Vocational Education and Training) should be reduced significantly (ibid: 271).

According to the World Bank, (as quoted by the authors):

Vocational and technical skills are best imparted in the workplace, following general education. The private sectors should be directly involved in the provision and governance of vocational schooling. .. Enterprise-led training is usually the most cost-effective means of developing worker skills. By comparison, government delivery in most countries has proved expensive and provided trainees with few marketable skills. .. Especially in the area of training, governments should focus more on financing and less on production (ibid: 272).

In its publication, The East Asian Miracle, the World Bank (1993) argues that by giving priority to expanding the primary and secondary bases of the education pyramid, East Asian governments have stimulated the demand for higher education while relying to a large extent on the private sector to satisfy that demand.

Bennell and Segerstrom (1998) expose completely the factual inaccuracy and specious interpretation of events by the World Bank in the High Performing Asian Economies (HPAEs) to bolster its agenda of pushing through privatisation and marketisation. Neither in the HPAEs nor in the mature industrial market economies, the authors note, has there been any withdrawal of governments from their VET systems. On the contrary, their governments are becoming increasingly involved in all aspects of skill training, in particular the development of core competencies among the workforce as a whole, and a wide range of occupational training. The authors are apprehensive that the medium to long-term development costs of failing to support VET could be potentially very serious for LDCs. They find it ironic that the Bank has turned its back on VET precisely at a time when the development process is becoming increasingly skill-driven, particularly in the traded goods sectors where countries have or could have comparative advantage.

While the Bank extols the virtues of the education development strategies of the HPAEs, these countries are in fact prime examples of where governments have adopted from the very onset aggressive, proactive manpower development strategies. These have been based on a medium to long-term vision of occupational skill requirements rather than short term, market-driven considerations (ibid: 286).

In the recent past the subject of higher education in general and of the skill level of the population in particular, has received considerable official recognition. The Reports of two Task Force Committees on Employment set up by the Central Planning Commission (Planning Commission,

2001, 2002), the Report of the Review Committee on All India Council for Technical Education (September 2003), the Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS, 2008) – have, in different ways, addressed the theme of the mismatch between the products of higher education and the absorptive capacity of the economy. Similarly, a World Bank study on Skill Development including the system of Vocational Education and Training in India (January 2008) dwells at considerable length on the nature, scope and adequacy of existing facilities for training in the public and private sector. Among the reports mentioned above, the Report of the Review Committee on AICTE, given its mandate to suggest steps to revitalize technical education in the country, has frontally addressed a major component of higher education based skill development, namely engineering education.

Official Speak on Higher Education and Skill Development: Salient Findings

Planning Commission Task Force Reports, 2001, 2002 on Employment and Unemployment

In the space of just two years the Central Planning Commission of India constituted two Committees to examine the 'problem' of growing incidence of unemployment and under-employment in the country.[5] Our purpose here is not to discuss the politics of why, within a space of two years, we have had two official committees set up by the same department to examine the same theme. Rather, for us the important aspect in both the Reports is the very considerable emphasis that has been placed on the lack of interface between employment and education. In the process both the Reports have expanded the definition of 'quality' of employment to include the 'skill' component of those employed and of those returned as unemployed (Swaminathan, 2005).

Both reports emphasize the fact that there has been a steady decline in the job creating capacity of the economy, which decline has accelerated since 1993-94. For example, the Reports point out that the employment growth fell to 1.07 per cent per annum (between 1993-94 and 1999-2000) from 2.7 per cent per annum in the past (that is, between 1983 and 1993-94) in spite of acceleration in the growth of domestic product from 5.2 per cent (between 1983 and 1994-94) to 6.7 per cent (between 1993-94 and 1999-2000). This in turn means that the capacity of job creation per unit of output went down about three times compared to that in the 80s and early 90s. The organized sector's employment generating capacity (measured in terms of employment elasticity) came down to near zero; in the public sector, it has been negative in most cases. Thus the major source of employment generation and for labor absorption is the unorganized sector of the economy whose employment weightage is as high as 92 per cent (of the total employed labor force) (Planning Commission, 2001: 34 and Planning Commission, 2002: 2 and 26).

On examining all major sources of information, the Committees found that the rate of unemployment in India has increased significantly in 1993-94 and was above 7.3 per cent in 1999-2000 compared to 6.0 per cent in 1993-94 on Current Daily Status (CDS) basis.[6] The number of unemployed has increased from 20.13 million in 1993-94 to 26.58 million in 1999-2000. Nearly 74 per cent of the unemployed are in rural areas, while 60 per cent of the unemployed are educated (higher secondary and above).

Another dimension of the employment-unemployment problem is the serious mismatch between the expectations of the new entrants to the labor force and the quality of employment opportunities available to them as revealed by the very high unemployment among certain groups, especially among educated youth. "Given the high expectations of the increasingly better educated new entrants to the labor force the employment problem for

this group cannot be addressed by creating more jobs of the same low quality that exist at present. What is needed is a strategy that will create more high quality jobs that generate higher levels of income" (Planning Commission, 2001: 41). This despite the fact that, overall, educational levels of the labor force in India are very low. About 44 per cent of all workers in 1999-2000 were illiterate and another 22.7 per cent had schooling only up to the primary level. "If we define the minimum level of education necessary to function in a modern economy as schooling up to the middle level, then only about 33.2 per cent of the labor force had schooling of that level and above. The per centage was higher at 57.4 per cent for the urban labor force, but it was correspondingly worse in rural areas, with only 25.4 per cent for the rural labor force meeting these standards" (Planning Commission, 2001: 124).

The regional disaggregation of unemployment data raises further issues of concern. The unemployment rate (on the CDS basis) is higher in high literacy states, almost 21 per cent in Kerala; next is West Bengal with 15 per cent followed by Tamil Nadu at 12 per cent of their respective labor force. Further in each of these states, the incidence of unemployment among youths is even higher and more so for females. Among female youth in Kerala, the unemployment rate is as high as 46 per cent, in West Bengal it is 39 per cent and nearly as high in Tamil Nadu. Once again this feature of higher incidence of unemployment among youths needs to be juxtaposed against the positive aspect of increasing levels of education discernible among the younger age groups of the population[7].

The statistics discussed above relate to general education, which is not the same thing as possession of 'marketable skills'. At the same time it is not easy to quantify the level of skills in the labor force since such data are not readily available. However, in 1993-94 the National Sample Survey Organisation of India conducted a survey where information on the possession of 30 different

marketable skills by persons in the labor force was sought. The results of this component of the survey reveal that hardly 10 per cent of the male workers and 6 per cent of female workers in the rural areas possessed specific marketable skills. The urban areas returned relatively better figures but still abysmally low by any yardstick – 19.6 per cent for male workers and 11 per cent for female workers.

Both the Committees emphasize the painful fact that the level of vocational[8] skills in the labor force in the age category 20-24 has vocational skills whereas the per centage in industrial countries is much higher, varying between 60 per cent and 80 per cent. It may be argued that in developing countries like India, economically productive skills are acquired not only in formal training/ education institutions but also through the family. But it also needs to be stressed that currently, the traditional artisan classes are among the poorest, in economic terms, in the country. "The developing countries... have per centages that are significantly lower than the developed countries, but they are still much higher than India, example, Mexico at 28 per cent and Peru at 17 per cent. Differences in definitions may make comparisons somewhat unreliable but the level in India is clearly far too low" (Planning Commission, 2001: 128).

One of the Committees (Planning Commission, 2001) has devoted considerable space in its Report to discuss the nature of vocational education and training, and the system of apprenticeship available to students in India. Its overall assessment of the situation is as follows:

The actual number of persons expected to enter the labor force (on the 1.8 per cent labor force growth assumption) is about 12.3 million per year. Allowing for underutilization of seats in training institutions and some overlaps, the per centage of those entering the labor force with some degree of formal training is probably around 1.5 million or about 12 per cent of the gross new entrants in to the labor force. While a significant number of the

new entrants will be absorbed in various types of unskilled labor in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, where skills are not needed, the level of skill endowment of new entrants to the labor force revealed by these numbers is clearly not consistent with triggering a process of rapid economic growth and high quality employment generation. The inadequacy of training capacity in quantitative terms is not the only problem. There are also serious problems relating to quality (Planning Commission, 2001: 133).

An added feature of the above Committee's Report is that, it has tried to map the 'School-to-work' transition systems in several countries, and has even provided an elaborate table comparing the vocational training systems of India and the Republic of Korea (ibid: 146). Our point of departure with the Committee's Report lies in the complete silence that ensues thereafter on how other countries have been able to not only operationalize their 'School-to-work' transition-enabled vocational education and apprenticeship systems but also make it as broad-based as possible to cover large numbers of their school-going population – a feature conspicuous by its absence in India. An examination of the systems of vocational education in other countries would no doubt enable us to understand to some extent the kind of institutions that have been put in place, the nature and depth of interactions among these institutions, so that it becomes possible to gauge how smoothly or otherwise students are able to make the transition to work. Much more significant, however, in our opinion, is the need to capture the kind of discourse that preceded these arrangements in these countries, in the first place, and the changing nature of the discourse over time. It is our contention, that a large part of the explanation for the poor record in vocational training and the almost complete lack of interface between even this miniscule vocational education and employment in India has a lot to do with the absence of any worthwhile discourse on this subject in post-independent India, and the consequent

inability to set up appropriate institutions and systems to forge such an interface.

Report of the National Commission on Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganized Sector, (2008)

A signal service of the above Commission is the collation and analysis of data to provide as comprehensive a picture of the segment of the economy that employs the bulk of the country's labour force, namely, the Unorganised Sector. According to the Commission's estimate, in 2004-5, total employment (principal plus subsidiary) in the Indian economy was 458 million, of which the unorganized sector accounted for 395 million, constituting 86 per cent of total workers. The Commission's estimates showed that between 1999-2000 and 2004-5, of the total incremental employment generated, only about 14 per cent was absorbed in the organized sector while 86 per cent was absorbed in the unorganized sector. Within the unorganized sector, wage workers [that is, those employed by others], constituted only 36% of the workers, and the remaining 64% were self-employed. Three major structural features of employment in the Indian economy highlighted by the Commission, therefore, are that first, the informal sector is hugely preponderant in the Indian economy, second, that the increases in employment have been of the informal kind and third, that within the informal sector, there is a huge preponderance of self-employed workers.

The Commission has analyzed the educational status of various groups of workers, that is, workers in the organized and unorganized sectors, formally and informally employed workers, by social and gender status, etc. In 2004-5 the share of 15 and above population who were illiterate or below primary education comprised 47%. The share was higher among women (58%) and in rural areas where more than 50% of population were illiterate and below primary. While 13 per cent of population had primary education, 16 per cent had middle level of

education. The share of educated persons that is those with secondary education and above was higher at 24%. The share of educated persons was higher as expected among men and in urban areas. The Commission has noted that low levels of education and skills are one of the primary reasons leading to a hierarchy of work relationships, segmentation of the workforce and vulnerability.

Using NSSO data from Round 2004-05 which collected information about the skill profile of youth (15-19 years population), the Commission points out that only 11.5 million of those in the age group 15-29 have received or were receiving formal training while 22.3 million were being trained informally. 253.7 million received no training. Data also reveal significant differences in skill training by gender and urban/rural location; further and equally significant is the fact that only 2.1% of the youth population had acquired (or was acquiring) formal skill training in rural areas, in urban areas, this per centage was much higher at 7.3%.

Similar to the findings of the Planning Commission Task Force Reports mentioned earlier, the NCEUS finds that, across states, the pattern of skill acquisition varies quite considerably. The largest share of youth population with formal skills was in Kerala (15.5%), followed by Maharashtra (8.3%), Tamil Nadu (7.6%), Himachal Pradesh (5.6%), and Gujarat (4.7%). The lowest incidence of formal training was in Bihar (0.5%). Among those trained or undergoing formal training, Maharashtra accounted for 21.7% share. Kerala and Tamil Nadu had more than 10% share in the skilled youth population of population with formal skills. Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh too have a relatively higher share of skilled population in 15-29 age groups. Thus, the Commission notes, the southern and western states form a continuous zone wherein the share of population with formal skills is relatively higher and together the above six states account for 63% of formally trained people. These are primarily states which either have more industries, a higher level of education, and a higher

availability of training infrastructure and training capacity both in the public and private sectors.

Again, similar to the Planning Commission Task Force Reports, the Commission has shown how low levels of education and formal training have resulted in a majority of workers being excluded from participating effectively in development processes.

World Bank Study on 'Skill Development in India: The Vocational Education and Training System', Human Development Unit, South Asia Region, (2008)

The above study makes some telling comments on the state of vocational education and training in India. One, using NSSO data, the Report observes that, "there is growing demand for workers with secondary education but that the same cannot be said of workers with technical/ vocational education or training. Since the early 1980s, the relative wages of workers with secondary education have been growing even as these workers have become relatively more abundant. However, the relative supply of workers with technical/vocational skills has declined throughout this period while their relative wages have also come down since the early 1990s".

Two, the study finds that: "Labour market outcomes for graduates of the training system are fairly poor. Even three years after graduation, over 60% of all graduates remained unemployed. Although a significant proportion of apprentices find employment, close to two-thirds is not employed in the trade for which they were trained – a third of these had been trained in obsolete trades. There appear to be three reasons for this: (a) limited growth and labour demand in the manufacturing sector; (b) mismatch between skills attained and those actually in demand, and (c) mismatch between the skills taught and the graduates' own labour market objectives".

Three, the study notes that, "these poor outcomes arise owing to the public training system facing many constraints. These include the following: the management of the system is fragmented. While different authorities have

clearly specified functions on paper, there is little coordination between them leading to diverse accountability. Furthermore preoccupation with providing and financing training has resulted in government neglecting a key role – providing information about the availability and effectiveness of training programmes. Institutions do not have incentives to improve their performance; Industry involvement in the vocational training system is nascent".

Four, unlike other Reports, the World Bank study has engaged to some extent with the theme of interface of vocational education/training with employers. According to the study, skills rank below other constraints to productivity among Indian firms. Indian employers rank four other constraints as more important than 'skills and education of available workers'. The top three constraints are 'tax rates', 'policy uncertainty' and 'access to finance'. This, according to the study, may account for manufacturing establishments in India providing less in-service formal training than the average for Europe, East Asia and Latin America. To the study's surprise, it finds that, in-service training in India is also lower than other countries in the South Asia region. No more than 7% of employees received training in a given year and there are also significant variations in the provision of training across states.

Five, "almost no attention is paid to using financing as an innovative means to encourage either good quality public training, private training or as a way of providing incentives to enterprises to train their workers... The funding model used by the states is largely ineffective. Although the resources available to the states are limited, no state seems to follow a transparent funding formula in funding vocational education or training. Once an institution begins to receive funding, subsequent funds are guaranteed irrespective of the institution's performance. The same levels of finance are allocated to poorly performing institutions with high drop-out rates as to those that maintain a high quality of teaching and performance".

Six, "there is little capacity in vocational education and even that is under-utilised. MHRD's original intention was to place 25% of all grade 11-12 students into vocational courses by the year 2000. This has not happened. Only 6800 schools have received grants and the total enrolment reported is only about 5% at most. In fact this figure more closely approximates the capacity of schools to offer vocational education rather than enrolments. More recent information suggests that the enrolment figure is less than 3% of the students attending Grades 11-12... It would also imply that less than one per cent of students who had entered Grade 1 over the last decade or so would have eventually participated in vocational education".

Seven, "a survey of 55 enterprises by FICCI in late 2001 assessed the quality and relevance of vocational/technical training from an industry perspective. Close to 60% of the respondents felt that institutions were not geared to meet the challenges of the global economy and over 43% felt that academic institutions were not aligned to the needs of industry. 87% felt that institutions should have greater exposure to industrial practices. They stressed the importance of a collaborative approach between academia and industry as a means of ensuring a better match between what industry wants and what the institutions produce... Until recently, it had been hard to detect the hand of industry in the vocational training system... There also seems to be a lack of employer interest in the apprenticeship system. Regulations require public and private sector employers in designated industries to engage apprentices according to set ratios of apprentices to workers for prescribed trades... despite the legislation, only 1900 private establishments were registered for the Apprenticeship Scheme in 2001; compared to some 16,000 other establishments, essentially government agencies and enterprises. This lack of private sector interest compares to the 250,000 establishments covered by the Employees Provident Fund".

Eight, "the quality of teachers appears to be poor. A slightly dated survey conducted of over 262 ITI teachers in 14 states showed that 61% of teachers have less than 12 years of schooling, and a third had no industrial experience. Of those who had some industrial experience, a significant majority had less than two years experience. Furthermore, two-thirds of instructors had not received any training in the past five years".

Revitalising Technical Education: Report of the Review Committee on AICTE (MHRD, 2003)

The Government of India, through a resolution passed on 30 November 1945, set up the AICTE to supervise all technical education above the high school stage. The Council consisted of representatives of the Ministries of Education, labour, Industry, and Commerce, the Inter-University Board, the Central Advisory Board of Education, the Association of Principals of Technical Institutions, the Institution of Engineers, the Indian Legislature and the provincial governments. As constituted, the AICTE was an advisory body with no statutory powers; nevertheless, it played an important role in the development of technical education in the country (p. 23). Significantly, *while the expansion of technical institutes in the fifties was done with the approval of the AICTE and the Government of India, the expansion in the eighties was localized mostly in the four southern states and was primarily in the self-financing sector without the approval of the AICTE and the Government of India* (emphasis added, p. 23).

The National Policy on Education, 1986, made a specific mention of the need to vest the AICTE with statutory powers; accordingly, among other things, it laid down that:

(a) The AICTE will be vested with statutory authority for planning, formulation, and maintenance and standards, accreditation, funding of priority areas, monitoring and evaluation, maintaining parity of certification and awards, and ensuring the coordinated and *integrated development of technical and management education* (emphasis ours); and,

(b) In the interest of maintaining standards and for several other valid reasons, the commercialisation of professional and technical educations will be curbed (p. 24).

In December 1987, the AICTE became a statutory body through an Act of Parliament. Apart from setting up the AICTE and providing it with statutory powers, the Government also came out with Technology Policy Statements (most notably in 1958 and again in 2003) wherein it reiterated the central role of Science and Technology "in raising the quality of life of the people of the country, particularly of the disadvantaged sections of society, in creating wealth for all, in making India globally competitive…' (p. 34). The implementation plan of these policies emphasized human resource development. Thus, for example, the Science and Technology Policy Statement of 2003 states: "…There is need to progressively increase the rate of generation of high quality skilled human resource at all levels…In order to encourage quality and productivity in science and technology, *mobility of scientists and technologists between industry, academic institutions and research laboratories will be ensured"* (emphasis added) (p. 35).

Viewing the development of technical education from the demand side, the Report offers the following perspective on the changing employment scenario since the enunciation of the first of the Technology Policy Statements:

In more than one place the report emphasises the point that, there has been a "rapid expansion of supply of technical personnel, far in excess of the absorptive capacity of the economy, leading to under-employment and even unemployment of graduates and a deterioration of their real-income levels. It has also led to a degree of substitution, whereby, in many cases, degree holding engineers are taking up employment opportunities that could have gone to the diploma holders…Manufacturing, the traditional user of technical manpower, does not exhibit an ability to provide significantly expanded employment

opportunities for technical persons. The growth of the manufacturing sector has been largely job-less, due to its low employment elasticity, almost close to zero…Compared to the past, employment opportunities would be more sensitive to the quality of the graduates. In an internationally competitive environment, it is the quality and not numbers that would matter. Graduates of sub-standard programmes and institutions will find it increasingly harder to get employment even if they are prepared to sacrifice on the income level. Past pattern of long term employment in a particular enterprise or even in the same industry is beginning to break down. Ability to keep up-to-date with changing knowledge and skill requirements in the wake of frequent technological restructuring and making significant lateral shifts and across disciplines, would be crucial for remaining employed. *The implication for the technical educational system is two-fold: [a] the pedagogy should focus relatively more on the development of higher-order, generic, transferable skills and autonomous learning strategies, and [b] more opportunities for non-formal education and training, continuing education and training, and distance education, should be offered by the system"* (emphasis added) (p. 37-38).

We have dwelt at some length in reproducing the above observations from the Report, since the current ground reality in terms of, *on the one hand*, (i) the unplanned and unregulated quantum leap in technical institutions that have come up, (ii) the absolute shortage of technical teachers, (iii) the low quality of teaching, (iv) the low levels of formal coordination between educational institutes, industry, trade unions and the government (the latter through, say, the AICTE), *and on the other*, the inability of the economy to absorb the products of these institutes, makes us wonder whether there is a fundamental flaw in the way we have comprehended (or not comprehended) the two broad institutions of 'school' and 'work', with which vocational/technical institution is intimately connected and deeply embedded.

It would be useful to engage with the numbers of technical institutes and personnel provided by the AICTE Report in order to get an idea of the dimensions of the problem being considered by the Review Report. At one level, we are told that the number of Degree Engineering Colleges practically doubled in the decade 1980 to 1990, from around 158 institutions to over 337; during the next decade, 1990-2000, it increased from 337 to 776, three quarters of which were self-financed. As of 2003, there are 1208 engineering colleges including 986 self-financing institutions with a total intake of over 3.5 lakh students. Equally spectacular has been the growth of MCA and MBA degree institutions, which now stand at 1006 and 930 respectively, with an intake of over 53000 and 64000 students. At another level, data put out by the National Technical Manpower Information System (NTMIS) reveal that considerable numbers of engineering graduates remain unemployed even 2 years after completion of their graduation; current estimates indicate that the unemployment rate of engineering degree holders could exceed 20 per cent (AICTE Report: 47). The story of the growth in PG institutions in engineering is similar.

Several aspects of the above growth in technical institutions need to be explicated. One, data on region-wise and state-wise distribution of institutions, and sanctioned intake of students reveal the highly skewed geographical distribution of institutions across the country with more than 52 per cent of the institutions being located in the South and South-West, whereas East and North account for just around 7 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. Likewise 43 % of MBA institutions and 59 per cent of MCA institutions with an intake of 35 per cent and 57 per cent of students in the above disciplines are in the South and South West, almost equal to the total number of MBA and MCA institutions and their sanctioned intake in the entire region of the country covering Central, East, North and North-West region.

Two, analysing the status of Faculty availability to impart technical education to such levels of student intake, the AICTE Report records: "as of today, going strictly according to the prescribed norms, there is shortfall of over 26,000 Ph.Ds and 30,000 M.Techs for meeting the teaching requirements in the engineering institutions alone. Even if the teacher to student ratio is relaxed to 1:20, the shortfall in Ph.Ds and M. Techs should still be over 18,000 and 20,000 M.Techs. The faculty position in other disciplines such as MCA, management education, pharmacy, architecture and town planning is as bad, if not worse…many of the private colleges, in particular, employ fresh graduates passing out of the college with poor grades as teachers, thus totally compromising on the quality of teachers. It must be recognized that mediocrity in the teaching fraternity can only multiply mediocrity and cannot lead to the creation of excellence" (ibid: 77). The largest shortfall of teachers is in the southern region with Tamil nadu alone accounting for almost 50 per cent of the shortfall (p. 76).

Three, a serious issue of concern recorded by the AICTE Report is one of accreditation. The AICTE has instituted an accreditation programme to ensure quality education in all the technical institutes under its purview. The AICTE established the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) as an autonomous body… accreditation is based on an assessment of the physical infrastructure, availability of competent and qualified faculty, teaching learning process being followed, R&D work being carried out, placement of students and other aspects of relevance. Accreditation by the AICTE, follows the report of the expert committee members appointed to carry out the above task… "As on May 2003, only 895 programmes from 202 institutions have been accredited as against a total of about 28,000 programmes in 3589 accreditable institutions. Fifty-three of these are Government-aided institutions (9.3%) out of a total of 567 such institutions and the rest 149 are private institutions (4.9%) out of a total of 3022… It is a matter of

great concern to find that over 90% of technical and engineering graduates are studying in non-accredited institutions" (p. 87).

A compounding problem flagged by the Report is the inability of most of these institutions to ensure even minimum quality of education. "In Tamil Nadu where expansion has been greatest in recent years, in a recent semester examination conducted by the Anna University, no student passed in 5 colleges, 28 had less than 5 per cent passes, 78 had less than 10 per cent passes, 108 had less than 15 per cent passes and only 17 had more than 40 per cent passes, with only 8 having more than 50 per cent passes" (ibid: 174).

Observations and Recommendations of the AICTE Review Report: A Discussion

Based on its mandate of reviewing the functioning of the AICTE and seized with the burning desire to revitalise technical education in the country, the Review Report has made certain very specific observations and recommendations, that, in our opinion, if adopted, could have, far reaching social and political implications. Further, these observations and recommendations, when posited against the observations of the Reports of the Planning Commission Task Forces, NCEUS and World Bank, immediately bring home the diametrically opposed nature of suggestions for action offered to the government by the different Reports depending on the differing assumptions, understandings, and approaches to the theme and problem of skill development of the Indian population.

One, the AICTE Review Committee recommends "a much stricter control in giving further approvals to new institutions especially in the South, Southwest and Western regions, to slow down further proliferation of such institutions... even for a sustained economic growth rate of 8% per year, the country can at best support 4-5% growth in the technical personnel, as against the current 15-20% annual growth in the intake of undergraduate

technical students. The committee, therefore, strongly recommends that no further expansion of UG technical institutions should be allowed and approvals for new institutions should be stopped for a period of at least 5 years, in states where the intake for UG technical education exceeds the national average of about 350 per million population. As expected, it is these states which have a very severe scarcity of qualified faculty, which justifies the suggested bold step. This will not only improve the quality of existing institutions by enabling the AICTE to provide better support and prevent the social unrest that can ensue from unemployment of qualified technical personnel but also indirectly assist in promoting the establishment of quality institutions in areas/states suffering from severe scarcity of technical institutions" (p. 47-52).

Two, the Committee notes: "It is increasingly clear that the organized sector in any country and particularly in India can only provide a limited number of jobs. Even the job availability in the manufacturing industries is generally smaller than the per centage of growth. The vast majority of technical graduates have to find jobs either in the service sector or preferably be trained to seek independent jobs and become entrepreneurs... The Committee believes that the Govt must make it mandatory for all industries, including small-scale industries, to employ qualified diploma holders or engineers for all technical jobs in order to become competitive in the global market. The existing or presently employed personnel who do not have technical qualifications must be sent for training by the industries to enable them to acquire knowledge of the latest trends and practices, of quality control and production techniques" (p.162).

Three, the Committee's solution to the growing mismatch between "what the economy can support and what has been sanctioned by the AICTE", is to "conduct a systematic study to determine the numbers that will be reasonable for intake into technical education".

Four, the Committee observes that: "So far, the AICTE has left the issue of quantitative expansion to market forces, and permitted unchecked growth without reference to the actual manpower requirements of the country. Taking advantage of the large demand from students, and ignoring the realities of economic conditions, many over enthusiastic [and some unscrupulous] entrepreneurs have over expanded technical education. Hence the AICTE should shrink excess flab in technical institutions in a relatively painless manner by insisting that student admissions should be strictly to the number that can be handled by the available faculty and no more. The AICTE should even close institutions, which are not up to minimum standards" (p.173).

It is immediately clear from the above that, while the AICTE Review Committee has provided important and thought provoking details of the pattern of quantitative growth of technical education in the country, and also highlighted the nature of problems afflicting this growth in terms of (a) the lopsided nature of geographical development of technical education institutes, (b) the severe shortage of qualified faculty, and (c) the unaccreditable nature of growth of institutes – all of which compromise quality of technical education provided, yet, the recommendation of the Review Committee to place a moratorium on expansion of technical education institutions, among others, is unacceptable, not only because of its politically explosive overtone but also, more importantly, from the point of view of achieving socially just economic development. As the Reports of the Planning Commission Task Forces, NCEUS and World Bank have pointed out, the per centage and levels of formally trained technical population/workforce in this country is unacceptably low, the uneven nature of growth regionally, notwithstanding. These Reports have also provided data that, in different ways, unambiguously depict how segmentation of the workforce and hierarchy of work

relationships take place because of low levels of education and skills.

The problems of shortage of qualified faculty, of lopsided geographical spread of technical education institutes, poor performance of students, etc alluded to by the AICTE Review Report are systemic in nature; each of which either individually or taken together does not warrant that a moratorium be placed on further expansion of technical education institutions.

However, an important problem flagged by the AICTE Review Report largely because of which it has recommended putting on hold further expansion in technical education institutes, is the inability of the growing Indian economy to absorb those passing out of these institutions. In a different way the AICTE Review Report echoes the point made by all other Reports, namely, the gross inability of the Indian economy to generate formal employment. What is problematic about the manner in which this observation is made is the manner in which all of the Reports seem to take this phenomenon, namely, that of the economy's inability to generate formal employment, *as given*. In fact, the AICTE Review Report goes further and laments that had the country made proper use of the data generated by the National Technical Manpower Information System (despite all its limitations) "for real decision-making", the country could have avoided investment in such large numbers of technical educational institutions and thereby the numbers of educated unemployed could have been considerably reduced.

The concern of the AICTE Review Committee begins and ends with analysing the growth and expansion of technical education institutions in the country. There is no attempt to situate this growth within the larger context of the developments in the educational sector over time (wherein, with economic development, larger numbers would be going in for higher/technical/vocational education in their quest for formal degrees to be able to access formal employment); there is also no attempt to

relate this growth to the need of a growing and diversifying economy for skilled personnel. This inability of the AICTE Review Report to contextualise its findings and observations makes it unable to expand the scope of its review to grapple with the issue of why the economy is not able to absorb even the miniscule numbers of formally trained technical personnel.

In addition, Section 10(e) of the AICTE Act stipulates that it shall be the duty of the AICTE to "formulate schemes for promoting technical education for women, handicapped and weaker sections of society". On this, the Review Committee merely notes: "In so far as the mandate of the Council for formulating schemes for women, and physically disabled is concerned, the AICTE has not evolved any separate scheme except for providing some relaxation in age limit under the scheme of Career Award for Young Teachers and in Project and Travel Grant Schemes. In so far as schemes for promoting technical education for weaker sections of the society are concerned no specific schemes have been formulated by the Council"(p. 71). In its recommendations, the Review Committee is content to suggest that disaggregated data be collected by AICTE separately for male and female enrolment in various disciplines, that AICTE conduct studies to ascertain the problems faced by women, the handicapped and the weaker sections of society regarding access to technical education and subsequent employment, and also address the problem of lack of accommodation for women students in all institutions.

Issues for Discussion

If none of the Reports deem it their responsibility or mandate to engage with and/or examine the theme of why the Indian state's paradigm of development is unable to generate formal employment of the quantum and kind that will enable larger numbers of formally trained personnel to be employed, it is not clear why any of these Reports

should be concerned with the quantity, quality and skill level of the working population and particularly of the vast majority condemned to work in the unorganised sector.

Having stated the above, it is important to take note of the implications of several of the observations in the Reports discussed above.

One, the NCEUS, in its drive towards formalising the informal/unorganized sector, not only makes a case for expanding general education given the present abysmal levels of education of bulk of the general and working population; more significant, the NCEUS asserts that the skills necessary for the unorganized sector should be 'formally' provided. Formal provision, according to the NCEUS would involve the processes of accreditation, certification and standardization. The World Bank study goes further and notes that the lack of evaluative evidence on the impact of vocational education or training makes it difficult to make informed decisions on the effectiveness of such programmes, even if these were to be 'formally' provided. Hence the need, according to the World-bank study, "to define transparent criteria that are easily measured but not easily manipulated"(x).

Two, unlike the NCEUS, the World Bank study and to a limited extent the AICTE Review Committee bemoans the lack of employer participation in skill development programmes. In fact the World Bank study puts it forcefully thus: "Critical to the success of any reform in public training system is buy-in from employers and their participation in decision making not only at the national and state levels but also at the institutional level" (v). It is important to engage with the nature of industry involvement in training substantively so that issues of standard setting and overall process of certification of courses, contents, and performance evaluation of students are linked and work within a framework agreed upon by government as facilitator and industry as implementer.

Three, the World Bank study and the AICTE Review Report have flagged the issue of poor quality of teachers

and teaching in most vocational training/education institutions. A major obstacle identified is the way training institutions are governed. Most vocational training institutions are part of the government and therefore teachers and trainers are civil servants, while resources are part of the government budget. The space for innovation, experimentation, so crucial for improving performance are practically nil in such a set-up.

Four, except the AICTE Review Report, all other Reports clearly demonstrate the miniscule scale of the institutional set-up for vocational education and training in India, and the low level of in-service training provided.

Despite the different entry points of each of the reports, a common theme that emerges is that the theme of vocational education/training/skill development has to be addressed forthwith howsoever intractable the problem may seem to be. What our engagement with each of these reports individually and collectively seems to suggest is that evolving a framework to address the theme in all its complexity seems more intractable than the problem itself. A major reason for the growing frustration on this issue could also be the assumption with which almost all reports begin and that is, that the ability of the economy, as presently constituted, to generate quality employment is limited or nil. Any attempt at resolving this issue will necessarily have to begin by examining why the Indian economy cannot be made to generate quality employment for its citizens. The reason for emphasizing the need to frontally confront this development paradigm that is not geared towards formal employment generation is also to underscore the point that merely increasing the base of formally provided vocational education/training will not by itself serve the purpose of enabling larger numbers to participate in development processes. While broad-basing vocational education/training is necessary, for the cause of social justice to be sufficiently and effectively served, the material base needs also to be expanded simultaneously.

Part 2

Perspectives from the Ground

Tamil Nadu is generally perceived as one of the well-developed and fast growing states of the country, which perception has enabled the state to attract considerable amounts of investment (foreign and domestic). Nevertheless, the conventional notion that growth powered by the secondary and tertiary sectors would generate sufficient decent employment so as to absorb the emerging literate population as well as the surplus labour from the primary sector, that is the agricultural sector, has not taken place; on the contrary, the primary sector continues to maintain its rank as the largest employer of the rural people even as income from the primary sector has declined over time. While, as mentioned above, on several parameters, the state of Tamil Nadu has performed better than the average for the country as a whole, it was imperative that an examination of whether, and, if so, how, better [than the national] indicators of growth had been operationalized on the ground to transform for the better the lives of the poor and marginalized in particular. The visits to twelve villages that we undertook in 2004 as part of the Livelihood Assessment Survey (IDA, 2004) provided us an opportunity for such an examination. It gave us tremendous insights into the dynamics of the functioning of the village societies as well as the manner in which internal/external factors either jointly or individually impact on the lives of different segments of the population in the villages, and of the men and women of these segments in particular. Some of the key questions that we set out to explore (from a gender perspective) included: the characteristics of deprivation faced by women and girls in comparison to men and boys among the poorer sections of the village population; the specific ways in which households and women in particular slip into poverty and/or continue to remain vulnerable; how have government

interventions aimed at alleviating poverty and/or empowering women impacted on the lives of the villagers and the village community; and, how do women in particular view the changes that have occurred over their lifetime. What follows is a consolidated summary of our findings based on discussions that we have had with several sets of women in each of these villages.

At the outset, it needs to be recorded, that, across the villages, and among almost all sections of the agricultural labouring population, the risk and therefore vulnerability due to declining agricultural activities (the most important source of livelihood for those with land as well as for those without land) has increased considerably. The villagers in general, women included, traced the decline in agricultural activities to a combination of factors: continuous failure of monsoons, depletion of ground water, change in cropping patterns, changes in institutional patterns that govern agrarian relations, etc., all of which has combined to erode the livelihood base of much of the agriculture-dependent population. Public intervention programmes by their very design and nature has been singularly ineffective in addressing regressive agrarian structural factors, caste for example, and has more often than not contributed to problems rather than to solutions.

A direct economic consequence of this combination of factors is the decline in the number of days of employment, hitting hard the landless agricultural labouring population in particular. Most villages have no other major activity that can provide alternate employment (and therefore some source of income) to the erstwhile labour employed in agriculture. Because of this dip in their major source of income, the landless households among the agriculture employment-based groups are the most vulnerable since they have nothing to fall back upon. Consequently, these households are forced to cope by cutting down the number of meals they take in a day, discontinue schooling of their children, delay seeking medical attention for their ailments, default on repayment schedules on their loans, and/or

become more indebted, thereby further increasing their vulnerability. The one significant point that was uniformly stressed was the tremendous increase in vulnerability that poorer sections of the landless agricultural population faced due to the erosion of their main source of income, namely, paddy cultivation. The non-availability of alternate sources of income to compensate for the above erosion enhances the risk that these sections face on a day-to-day basis. The gender question that emerges here is the differential impact that this vulnerability holds for men and women: while to some extent men venture out in search of coolie work, at times even staying out for days together, such options are not available to women. They have neither the resources nor the support system to enable them to make these search trips. At the same time, we need to stress that a resolution to this gender problem does not lie only [or not even] in enabling women to go out in search of coolie work, but in addressing the larger question of the erosion in the main source of livelihood of these populations.

Fall in and/or lack of income has other adverse fallouts. For example, women in one village pointed out that all children were not in school and further that there was considerable dropout at the middle and higher levels for one or several of the following reasons: deteriorating income standards meant that they were forced to pull out their children from classes that did not serve noon-meals and also because they could not meet other school-related expenditure such as travel (since for classes beyond 8th standard the children have to travel outside the village), and notebooks. In some cases older children had to discontinue schooling in order to share household responsibilities while their parents went out in search of work. In quite a few villages, girls' education was constrained by the fact that the only school in the village had classes only upto the 8th standard. Thereafter the parents would have to invest resources in travel and other expenses to enable their daughters to pursue their studies further. A combination of limited income as well as poor

transport meant that, while parents expressed their willingness and desire to educate their daughters further, they could not translate this desire in practice. *Hence, beyond the 8th standard, the gender gap in educational level becomes stark.*

Another dimension of the gendered nature of the problem relating to education is the following: in almost all villages women clearly expressed the point that, while they were happy that some among their village children, girls as well as boys, had managed to study up to the 12th standard, they were very aware of the futility of being 'educated' only up to the 12th. One, it was pointed out that, pursuing education beyond the 12th was expensive even in government higher educational institutions and also at times non-accessible (because of non-fulfillment of eligibility criteria by these children). Not all could afford to educate all their children; forced to make a choice, the parents opted to expend on higher education and hostel accommodation for their boys rather than for girls. The parents had a reason for this gendered choice: opportunities for employment outside of the ones available in the village, namely, agriculture, was nil, unless the 'educated' chose to go to large metros and towns. While in fact a few boys from these villages have found some service jobs in metros like Chennai (like lorry booking, cleaner jobs with transport companies, etc), similarly 'educated' girls were handicapped by lack of social support and economic opportunities, and were therefore confined to their households. Villages close to metros such as Chennai were sourced for adolescent girl labour to work in garment units particularly in the Export Processing Zone; the latter organised pick up and drop services for such labour but most villagers were reluctant to send their daughters to these units.

All sections of the population were extremely anxious about the uncertainty facing their children, educated or otherwise. Their hopes of a better future for their children were shattered because of their realisation that the children

had no future either in the 'traditional' occupation, that is agriculture (which was declining), or in 'modern' occupations; the latter required more and different kind of qualifications that the village population could, as of now, ill afford. Women were frustrated that their work and levels of earnings were not sufficient to enable their children rise above a certain level of education and/or acquire any form of professional skill. This in turn implied that they could not get in to better paying jobs – a necessary condition for reducing the intensity of insecurity of their lives and very existence.

While the nature of problems encountered by *adivasi* villages in hill areas were similar, in such areas the topography of the area further compounded the problem of access to services like education and health. Conventional solutions that generally mark all government intervention programmes were neither suitable nor viable for such locales.

Women and young girls, in almost all the villages we visited, were very critical of the poor communication facilities in their villages, since more than for men and boys, lack of crucial infrastructure facilities reduced their options in several ways. While some problems such as decline in employment opportunities, limited access to higher levels of education particularly for girls because of poor transport connectivity, etc., cut across classes and castes within the village, quite a few problems were specific to particular classes and castes depending on their endowments and location within the village. For example, in one village, the SC women had been provided with 'houses' under the government's Group Housing scheme for SCs but the entire segment had no electricity. (Most parts of the rest of the village had electricity). Besides, in this and in most other villages we found these group houses to be of extreme poor quality – leaking and falling apart – particularly in all those cases where the inmates had not been able to pay adequate bribes. In most hill areas most group houses remained empty for the simple reason the hill people found them

totally unsuited for their weather. *Given the inability of the government to change its stipulation of materials and design according to the topography and living patterns of people, it is not surprising that well intended schemes of government have failed to make the expected impacts.*

The physical location of a Christian Dalit colony in one of the villages, about 3 kms away from the main village, had contributed in no small measure to the colony people being deprived or poorly serviced by otherwise functioning public institutions located within the main village. The colony people felt that not only their location but also the fact that they had converted themselves to Christianity had worked against them since, because of this religious conversion, they were not able to access facilities otherwise due to Dalits. The ration shop was located in the main village; officially supplies to the entire village, which included the colony, was downloaded and accounted for in the main village. Despite repeated requests, the panchayat president had not been able to put in place a system whereby supplies meant for this colony could be delivered in the colony itself. Similarly, the *balwadi* for the village was located in the main village. Supplies meant for the children and pregnant/lactating mothers of the Dalit Christian colony were deposited in the main village. However, it was physically not possible for the children and pregnant women of the colony to travel 3 kms on a day-to-day basis to the main village to access these supplies.

Another dimension of the different perspectives and emphasis expressed within a village had to do with the class status of the population. Thus for example, the women of the main landowning class of a village felt that the prime institution that needed to deliver quality service was the school in their village. According to them while their village had a functioning school where education was provided up to the 12th standard, where the Panchayat has ensured that teachers come to the school on a regular basis, where the school itself was well endowed in terms of

classrooms and playground, where noon meals, text and note books were provided, etc., nevertheless, there were specific problems such as lack of teachers with specialised qualifications, such as mathematics and science. This deficiency was beginning to impact adversely on their children in that the latter were not able to cope in these subjects in competitive examinations, which in turn deprived these children of seats in institutions of higher learning.

Across all villages and among all sections of the population, including women, the need to generate employment and provide households with a fairly steady source of income, was the prime demand. The erosion of their basic livelihood, namely agriculture, combined with poor access to alternate sources of livelihood, namely, construction activity, brick-kiln work and the like, had rendered households vulnerable apart from increasing survival risks.

'Development', symbolised by public interventions in the fields of education, health, basic infrastructure such as drinking water and electricity, and through public institutions such as PDS, Balwadi, SHG, etc., had mitigated to some extent the severity of the crises caused by loss of livelihood. But the impacts of these interventions had been quite uneven across villages and across classes and castes within villages.

The women were very vociferous in stating that they did not require to be told of the importance of educating their children; their anxiety was the futility of educating their children upto the primary, secondary or even higher secondary – none of which could fetch their children any job. For 'educated' girls the scenario was even more pathetic since whatever their level of education, in the absence of social and economic support their mobility was restricted, unlike the boys, some of whom could venture outside the village in search of low level service jobs such as cleaners, etc. Further, women and girls wanted skill-based training/education for themselves. The SC women in particular in quite a few villages were frustrated that

despite being SCs, and despite being aware that SCs have reservation in jobs in all government and government-aided institutions, they were not able to source any reserved post in any establishment.

In almost all villages the women in particular wanted transport and road infrastructure to be improved substantially. Particularly in those villages that were close to cities and towns, the women felt handicapped by poor frequency of bus services and/or bad roads, which made it difficult for them to seek work in these towns and cities.

During the discussions on the quantum, nature and adequacy of government's welfare policies aimed at different categories of people such as the poor, women, disabled, widows, destitute, girl children, pregnant women, etc., the women were very emphatic that, while through their local bodies and/or SHGs they did source the different programmes and very often also ensured that the targeted population benefited from the welfare schemes, these ad hoc 'schemes' did not address the two hard questions that they posed: one, restoration of the source of their livelihood, and two, *when, how and what would enable their children to make a transition to a better source of livelihood and life since their present levels of education had failed to do so.* These questions made us re-examine the rationale of our 'social sector/welfare policies' and its relationship to 'economic development'.

By Way of Conclusion

We began our study by recapitulating our earlier work that 'interrogated' development through a disaggregation of macro data on education and employment – sex, caste and region-wise in order to enable us to measure change (statistically) by examining available data post-1991. Our analyses of official data since 1991 reveals that while significant strides have been taken to close gaps across caste, region and gender as far as literacy is concerned, *formal* levels of education of the population in general and of female worker population in particular continue to remain dismal.

Our discussion of Reports of Officially constituted Committees and Commissions in different ways confirm the statistical disjuncture that we observed between education and employment apart from elaborating on the dismal state of vocational education and skill development of the Indian population. In the course of our critical examination of these Official Reports we emphasised the one common thread running through these Reports, namely, the fact that these Reports have taken as given the inability of the Indian economy to generate formal/quality employment.

Our field-based observations discussed in Part 2 above brought out the anxieties of people on the ground who clearly articulated the fact that their current levels of income and/or the educational levels of their children was totally inadequate to enable them to make a transition to a better life. They were also vociferous in stating that ad hoc welfare schemes were not just insufficient but also diverted attention from hard macro decisions that needed to be taken.

In other words, what data, official reports and the field-based observations reveal are problems and inequities that are structural in nature, and, those which cannot be rectified by addressing individuals or even individual households. There is almost nothing in any of our existing operational public policies that can or is actually being used to tackle the *systemic* nature of the class, gender and caste-based social and economic discrimination outlined above. And yet, unless such structural inequities are confronted frontally, their entrenched nature will render them more resistant to change.

Not only has the country not been able to address basic issues like universal access to education and/or implement existing labour laws (not to mention the gross inadequate attention to infrastructure like fuel, water and sanitation), but worse, with changing macro-economic conditions, existing distortions are deepening while hitherto dormant ones are surfacing. With rising aspirations (due also to a large measure because of increasing awareness), the

perception of violence and injustice of the current 'development' paradigm is also high among vast sections of the population including women and the scheduled castes. There is therefore no excuse for the state not to take its own data and the recommendations of its own Committees and Commissions seriously.

End Notes

1 The "Livelihood Assessment Survey' undertaken in 2004 was part of the preparation for the World Bank's 'Tamilnadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Programme'. The survey

covered 3864 households and a population of 16325 individuals spread over eleven villages in ten districts of the state. Three of these eleven villages are tribal villages. Forty per cent of the surveyed population is from the scheduled caste community, seventeen per cent from scheduled tribes' community and the rest from 'others'. The male-female break-up of the surveyed population is 50.5 and 49.5 per cent respectively. Nearly 15 per cent of the surveyed households are female-headed households.

2 Despite the fact that the nation was assured that Census data collected in 2001 would be made available in quick time because of the availability and access to state-of-the-art IT infrastructure, considerable amounts and crucial aspects of the data collected have yet to become accessible. Hence in this paper it has not been possible to undertake the level and depth of analysis done earlier (using the 1991 census data) in the paper published in the 2002 volume mentioned in the text.

3 What constitutes 'quality' is highly problematic. However, rather than getting in to a philosophical discussion of the term, which would take us away from the purpose of our paper, we have described 'quality employment' to indicate broadly the terms and conditions of employment; specifically, it refers to the adequacy of wages paid to particular kinds of employment and the environment in which such works have to be carried out. Thus for example, rising incidence of unemployment among educated youth would indicate not just lack of employment opportunities, but also lack of acceptable (in terms of wages, nature of job (manual or otherwise) and conditions in which these jobs have to be performed) opportunities, as perceived by those choosing to remain unemployed.

4 See for example, the following; (i) K N Panikkar, 2001, "Whither Indian Education", Inaugural address to the 'National Convention Against Communalization of Education in India', organized by

SAHMAT, August 4-6, New Delhi, India. Available on net; (ii) Vijender Sharma, 2002, "WTO, GATS, and Future of Higher Education in India", People's Democracy (Weekly Organ of the Communist Party of India, Marxist), Volume 26, Nos. 6, 7, and 8, February 10, 17, and 24, 2002. Available on net; (iii) The Tribune, 2002, "Teachers' panel opposes report", newspaper from Chandigarh, India, March 2, p. 5. Available on net.

5 The first Committee, chaired by Montek Singh Ahluwalia, submitted its Report in July 2001. It went by the name of Task Force on Employment Opportunities. The second committee, chaired by Dr. S P Gupta, submitted its Report in May 2002. This committee was called the Special Group On Targeting 10 million Employment Opportunities.

6 The National Sample Survey Organization [NSSO] of India collects detailed information on the employment status of the population through large-scale, nation-wide sample surveys in which individuals are categorised as employed or available for work but not employed, using different criteria. Rates are calculated as per centages of the total labor force. The NSSO provides four different measures of employment and unemployment, each of which captures different facets of the employment-unemployment situation. One of these is the Current Daily Status (CDS). Based on the reported time disposition of the person on each day of the reference week, person-days in employment (unemployment) are aggregated to generate estimates of person-days in employment/unemployment. The person-day unemployment rate is derived as the ratio of person-days in unemployment to the person-days in the labor force. This measure captures the within-week unemployment of those classified as employed on the Weekly Status. The CDS-measure of unemployment is widely agreed to be the one that most fully captures open unemployment in the country)Planning Commission, 2001: 15-16).

7 Both the Planning Commission Reports give a large number of tables containing state-wise data relating to the nature of employment generated, the level of unemployment disaggregated
by sex, age and level of education.

8 For a description of what constitutes formal vocational education in India see, India, Planning Commission, Report of the Task Force on Employment Opportunities, New Delhi, July 2001, p.129.

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About the Speaker

Professor Padmini Swaminathan is currently holding the Reserve Bank of India Chair in Regional Economics at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Professor Swaminathan specialised in Economics (Main) and Political Science (Subsidiary) for her BA degree and then went on to specialize in Economics for her MA Degree. Immediately after MA, Professor Swaminathan taught Economics for two years at St. Xavier's College, Bombay. She received her doctorate in Industrial Economics from the University of Bombay in 1982. The doctoral thesis examined the functioning of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act in the context of Product Concentration in Indian Industry. Professor Swaminathan relocated to Chennai and joined the Madras Institute of Development Studies in 1982.

At the Madras Institute of Development Studies, a Social Science Research Institute under the aegis of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, Professor Swaminathan has been able to broad-base and provide a multi-disciplinary focus to development research. Her research interests now cover and explore the linkages between the themes of industrial organization, labour, education and health – all from a gender perspective. The emphasis on exploring and highlighting linkages between seemingly different academic topics and/or disciplines has enabled Professor Swaminathan to establish, for example, the connection between industrial organisation, employment of labour, educational and skill level of the labour employed, and, conditions under which labour, particularly women labour, is employed. Similarly, Professor Swaminathan's research also highlights the adverse health outcomes of increasing informalisation of work whether employed in

formal or informal units. Professor Swaminathan's publications in a wide range of development journals reflect very much the diversity of her research explorations.

As Director of the Madras Institute of Development Studies, Professor Swaminathan was able to streamline and provide a structure to the Institute's Ph.D programme and in bringing together faculty to provide a collective focus to the institute's academic activities. Professor Swaminathan actively serves on the Editorial Boards of several academic journals; from time to time, her services are also requisitioned by Provincial and Central Government Bodies such as the Tamil Nadu State Statistical Committee and the High Court of Madras.

APPENDIX

Tables 1 - 12