
At a time when the conditions of labourers and their human rights have completely disappeared not only from the agenda of public policy but the discourse of civil society as well, that there is someone who has the restless urge to stir our conscience about the continuing slavery practices in the twenty-first century and the passion to advocate enforcement of laws and programmes to eliminate them despite indifference, non-cooperation and even hostility of the very agencies entrusted with this task should instantaneously earn our gratitude. No less deserving of our appreciation is the publisher who has decided to bring out this bulky volume on a subject not much in demand in the current matrix of reading choices.

The book *Human Bondage: Tracing its Roots in India* by Lakshmidhar Mishra is a landmark study on the subject because of comprehensiveness and multidimensionality of treatment of the subject. It has not left any aspect—conceptual, historical, legal, operational or prescriptive—unexplored. The study bears the imprint of scholarship, wide administrative experience and social activism and is an enlarged version of *Burden of Bondage*, published in 1997. It is difficult to think of a person more qualified than the author to produce this insightful treatise. As the biodata at the end of the book indicates, besides being a prolific writer, Dr Mishra has occupied positions at policy-making level in the agency dealing with labour in the government as well as in the International Labour Organization and has carried out numerous investigations for the Supreme Court and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). He continued to pursue his commitment to eliminate bondage system with a crusading zeal in his assignment as a rapporteur of the NHRC which has been mandated by the Supreme Court to monitor this work, till recently and current assignment as Special Advisor, National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights.

The book is divided into three sections. Section I dealing with overview traces the roots of bondage through the history specifying distinguishing characteristics in relation to origin, evolution, growth and practice of slavery in Greece, Roman empire, China, Russia, Islamic countries ranging from Arabia to Indonesia and Turkish empire and pre-Islamic Africa. In Americas, the practice of slavery was found in Caribbean, South America and southern states of America. Despite the
enormous economic contribution made by slaves to the prosperity of slave-owning countries, the treatment meted out to them was worse than that accorded to animals. Slavery was legalised by enactment of laws which made slaves a commodity and a property which could be inherited, purchased and moved from one place and owner to another. Though ill treatment of slaves was disallowed, there was little enforcement even of this restriction as the slaves were in no position to challenge their masters or protest against them. The slavery in India has been traced from the Vedic period and has been extensively dealt with in Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*. But its most institutionalised form emerged in the post-Mauriyan period through the Varna system reinforced by Manusmriti. It weakened in the post-Gupta period but mutated as debt-bondage which continues to this day in some form or another. The author bemoans that even the egalitarianism of Buddha and compassion of Ashoka could not make any dent on the system. The social evil therefore passed on to Medieval India, largely in the form of domestic slaves. The liberalism of Islam did not percolate to the practice of enslavement of conquered people which later extended to those who could not pay their debt and lost their free status. The latter phenomenon increased with frequent occurrences of famine. Strangely, the advent of colonial rule despite emergence of liberal thought in the home country did not produce any change in the practice. Rather, the introduction of Zamindari system rendered peasantry indebted and landless and led to what the author calls the monetised form of debt-bondage. The large-scale deindustrialisation and dispossession of people from land and forest paved the way for recruitment of these dispossessed people as industrial labour in mines and plantations both within the country and overseas. The export of labour to plantations overseas was similar to enslavement of Africans for working in diverse vocations in Americas. The colonial government, far from legislating for emancipation of slaves or even their humane treatment, legalised oppressive control over them by their masters. Only the post-independence period witnessed some measures, direct and indirect, which created enabling conditions for bonded labourers to free themselves from the clutches of their masters. The direct measure came much later with the enactment of the Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1976. But the indirect measures were initiated soon after independence. These included enactment of land reform laws and laws related to protection of interests of labour—minimum wages, equal remuneration, child labour, inter-state migrant labour, contract labour, etc.—and programmes of agricultural development, poverty alleviation and social welfare. But neither of the two measures has helped eliminate this scourge. The beneficial laws have been poorly implemented due to lack of political will, insensitivity of enforcement machinery while the development and welfare programmes have failed to change skewed distribution of land and other assets, institutionalised inequalities based on caste, perpetual indebtedness of the poor (particularly those belonging to lower castes) due to lack of employment and access to credit and cornering of benefits of development and affirmative action programme by the undeserving—in short the embeddedness of poverty and multi-faceted exploitation in the stratified social and economic structures based on caste and distribution
of land. This social and agrarian structure concentrates the phenomenon of debt-bondage in the most vulnerable and marginalised social groups, the SCs and STs.

Section II of the book deals with issues which the author feels need to be seriously addressed if the bonded labour system has to be eliminated. Seven such issues, which contribute to this practice have been highlighted. These include land tenure system, tribal land alienation, illiteracy, child labour and trafficking, Devdasis and Joginis, credit and indebtedness, globalisation, state and market. As for the land tenure system, the distortions in agrarian structure have created a class of absentee landowners who engage in extracting maximum rent from the sharecroppers and tenants and labour farm workers, in the case of the latter due to under payment of wages, delayed payment, absence of any employment during lean season forcing them into condition of debt-bondage. The latter have no bargaining power due to total dependence on the landowners for survival. In the case of tribes, alienation of their land drives them to indebtedness and bondage. This alienation is facilitated by a number factors—uneconomic holdings, vagaries of monsoon, lack of resources for productive investment, unremunerative returns from their agricultural and forest produce, absence of credit facilities, usurious rates of interest charged by moneylenders, pervasive ignorance and illiteracy. The worst aspect is that laws preventing land alienation are poorly implemented rendering the tribals totally vulnerable. Despite programmes of literacy implemented across the country, the social and economic situation of these marginalised groups prevents them from availing of these facilities. These sections of society have not been mobilised for collective action to rid themselves of debt-bondage in the absence of dedicated agencies working for them and the suspicion with which mobilisation of poor is looked upon by the state agencies. Various legislative and administrative interventions notwithstanding, child labour and trafficking in women and children both in the country and across the border continue unabated. The grinding poverty, laxity of law enforcement and indifference of the larger society are some of the factors responsible for it. The Devdasi and Jogini systems are ugly manifestation of sexual exploitation of lower caste women which the law and the rehabilitation programme have been unable to eliminate. A social movement led by progressive persons in society alone can put an end to this practice through a twin strategy of social mobilisation and effective law and programme enforcement. Easy access to credit, when in need without hassles and collateral and at affordable and reasonable terms, alone can prevent indebtedness. This access does not exist despite affirmative interventions such as necessary directions to banks/cooperatives, encouragement of and assistance to self-help groups etc. The economic reforms and globalisation have also pushed the poor (particularly SCs and STs) to debt-bondage increasingly as a result of shrinking of employment opportunities, lowering of wages, uncertainty of income, increase in the incidence of poverty, informalisation of labour, deteriorating working and living conditions against which the poor and the vulnerable have no protection. The trade unions have virtually ceased to function because of the tilt in the establishment in favour
of employers and the pervasive insecurity and fear in labour that it may even lose its job if any attempt at organisation is resorted to. Economic reforms has also led to adverse health impact and declining access to health care. Tribals have been worst victims of globalisation because of the large-scale displacement from their land, habitat and environment, and loss of livelihood suffered by them with no rehabilitation to even partially mitigate its adverse effects. Women too turn out to be its victims as they are driven to engage in the most exploitative forms of work with pervasive threat of sexual harassment and low wages. The environmental degradation and poor quality of life are additional negatives of the neoliberal economic transformation pushing more and more people into debt-bondage.

The third section deals with policy initiatives at national and international levels. At the national level, policy instruments are impressive even though late in coming—a very good law, extensive guidelines for rehabilitation of released bonded labourers and favourable court judgments. Despite this, the enforcement of law is poor due to the indifference and even hostility of state governments to the programme. Even with extensive monitoring and exertion of pressure by the NHRC, there has been little by way of change in the attitude of state governments, most of whom are in denial of the existence of bonded labour in their territory. They have even failed to constitute state level and district level vigilance committees with persons of proper aptitude and empathy, empower them to function and appoint executive magistrates to try cases under the Act. The state level officials display ignorance of legal provisions, interpret provisions negatively and even frustrate efforts of NGOs and social activists to free bonded labourers. At the level of rehabilitation, the performance is dismal, by and large, although the author has cited a few positive developments in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Uttarakhand. A large number of cases have piled up in the courts of Executive Magistrates of which a substantial number have, after years of delay, ended in negative findings without adequate justification, displaying poor understanding of the law and its ethos. At the international level, significant initiatives have been taken in Europe, Latin America and Africa. A sub-regional project on prevention and elimination of bonded labour in South Asia has been launched though it faces formidable challenges in the concerned member states. NGOs take the larger share of credit, wherever some success has been achieved in identification, release and rehabilitation of bonded labour.

Given this pessimistic scenario, the author comes to the candid conclusion that the pernicious practice of bonded labour system cannot be eliminated by international instruments/treaties or an effective national law or even by welfare programmes and favourable court judgments. These instruments, important as they are, need to be complemented by a strategy which should consist of a national policy, a perspective plan and a national commission to translate the plan into action. He then sets out the details of these three components of the strategy. This begs the question whether the government which has failed to act with an already available and effective law and welfare programmes would display greater interest in implementing the strategy laid down? Considering that the evil of bonded labour system has not only persisted but mutated into more horrendous forms as seen in
the migrant labour, child labour and trafficking in women and children, without any change in the attitude of law-enforcement agencies, it is unlikely that more policy making and institution building would fare any better. With regard to newer forms of bondage, the author considers three factors crucial for making a change in the situation—

(a) how positive and supportive is the contemporary milieu,

(b) political will, commitment and determination and

(c) right attitude, approach, insight and perception on the part of multiple stakeholders—and concludes his study without answering whether there is any likelihood of these conditions being satisfied. Evidently, there is little possibility of these conditions emerging given the past experience and the current developments. The contemporary milieu is totally anti-labour. Since the onset of economic reforms, not only the enforcement of existing labour laws have been put on a back burner, there is persistent clamour for labour reforms which imply delegislating/reversing some of them with a view to giving greater freedom to employers to hire and fire and determine at will their working conditions. Never sincerely implemented in the best of times due to lack of organisation in the labour (in the informal sector particularly), the labour has no interlocutor in the present milieu of political economy where the government is ever ready to placate capital in the interest of attracting investment. Labour enforcement officials are governed by an unwritten diktat that they should not inspect establishments to check enforcement of labour laws and merely take a declaration from the employers that legal provisions have been observed. Bonded labour system would require greater persistence to examine in depth the working conditions of labour in an ambience where the victims muster courage to speak the truth without fear of reprisals. This condition simply does not exist. Even in the pre-reform period, except for a brief interregnum of emergency, when the implementation of Bonded Labour Act was placed as an item of priority in governance, there has never been any proactive pressure from the government on the officials to implement it because landowners enjoyed unmatched political clout. The conditions today are totally unfavourable. While the power of landowners has not diminished, much greater power is now enjoyed by employers due to obsession with growth at whatever cost. No degree of policy making for protection of women and children has made a dent on child labour and trafficking in them. Even the enactment of right to education, not to speak of the pressure of child rights activists, has not moved the government to remove the indefensible distinction between hazardous and non-hazardous activities in the existing child labour legislation. Similarly, the rescue of hapless children by NGOs now and then from brutal treatment of employers in various establishments has failed to stir the conscience of policy makers and enforcement officials. The civil society and media are indifferent (barring some exceptions) and the trade unions have shown little interest in organising the unorganised labour. The debt-bondage system would, therefore, persist and would, in fact, increase as a larger number of people face displacement and destitution on account of various economic policies. As for the political commitment and will, it has never been there even in the best of times as evident from the enormous delay in ratifying international conventions and
enactment of a national law on the subject although during emergency a contrived commitment was on display for political reasons.

But today it is a lost cause because that compulsion does not exist and the political economy to which the ruling class is so passionately committed is conducive to creation of bondage system rather than its elimination. The attitude of stakeholders would never change in such a political economy. The employers as a class are the beneficiary of bondage system. The media and upper crust of civil society swears by the current model of economy. The bureaucracy looks up to the political class for signals. On its own, it never had nor has empathy and concern for the poor, even less for the unfortunate bonded labourers. The bonded labour has no voice in the current system. Therefore, beyond the officials of the NHRC and a few NGOs and activist organisations, the desired positive attitude towards the plight of bonded labour does not appear to be in evidence and is unlikely to emerge.

The prospects for elimination of bonded labour system therefore are bleak. The system in the past was an outcome of skewed agrarian structure superimposed on an even more unequal caste-based oppressive social structure. The law to eliminate bonded labour system could not realise its objectives because the two structures have continued to persist and have in fact reinforced each other. The bondage system has now mutated into varied forms in the changed political economy with the unquestioned supremacy of the capital. It cannot be eliminated without reversing the neoliberal globalised economy and making a determined assault on the skewed agrarian and oppressive social structure to produce desired social change. Only a massive political mobilisation against landed and caste relations of power and national and global capital can create conditions for loosening of debt-bondage. No such mobilisation is in sight although the poor and the oppressed are struggling in this direction in their own way in several places. At the international level, global capitalism is showing signs of collapse and is unlikely to recover. Our only hope lies in these challenges growing to create conditions for a larger political mobilisation for social transformation to emerge.

This pessimistic note withstanding, Dr Mishra’s book, I hope, would stir the conscience of all those who subscribe to the liberal and humanist values and induce them to act, in whatever manner they can within the realm of their activities, to work towards eliminating this scourge in society.

The book is a must read for all those who claim to have a social conscience. For officers of civil services, state and central, who have the primary responsibility to enforce the law and development programmes, the book must be prescribed as a compulsory text in the syllabi of their training programmes if not already included. If at least some of them are inspired to take up this work with sincerity and commitment before they are disoriented by more glamorous work of their jobs, Dr Mishra’s labour would have been rewarded.

K. B. Saxena

csdnd@del2.vsnl.net.in

*Social Change, 42, 1 (2012): 135–155*

DOI: 10.1177/004908571104200112

This volume, focusing on the Indian experience, contributes to reinforce the understanding of the process of resettling development-displaced population. It does so through 15 chapters from experts with different backgrounds, approaches and sensibilities. From this variety of perspectives emerges a tension between theory and practice, which is also underpinning the entire field of resettlement practice and research, as it has been previously and elsewhere noticed, for instance, by Cernea (1999: 1) and Dwivedi (2002). It is manifested in the chapters contained in this volume primarily as the tension between what Dwivedi (ibid.) had named the ‘reformist-managerial’ approach to development-induced displacement, and the need to revise and reinforce its theoretical understanding in the face of the paths undertaken by the dominant development strategy. This is well represented by the comparison between the opening chapter (by Hari Mohan Mathur, also the editor of the volume) and the closing chapter of the book (by Jayantha Pereira).

Mathur’s chapter offers an optimistic seizure of the problem of resettlement, which is deemed as ‘not insurmountable’, provided certain legal, policy, planning and management issues are adequately tackled. This view indeed constitutes the core of the ‘reformist-managerial’ approach. According to the author, a fair legal framework for land acquisition is needed in the first place, one which also defines the boundaries of the ‘public purpose’ upon which land confiscation by the state is legal and justifiable, so as to avoid that the process of land acquisition replicating the existing inequalities. The legal framework must then be accompanied by policy guidelines which create uniformity in the way in which resettlement is dealt with across sectors, allowing to overcome the ad hoc approach which has dominated so far. The latter in fact is appropriate at the stage of implementation of a resettlement programme, but the process in its wholeness needs to be regulated by general principles which ensure its fairness. Legislation and policies, says Mathur, however cannot make the difference unless resettlement is properly planned and implemented. Effective planning and implementation require accounting for the social impact of displacement, adopting a participatory approach in the process of resettlement design and addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups, women and indigenous population. This wariness has to be reflected in the compensation provided to the affected population (in the form of cash, land, employment schemes) and the extent to which this permits to restore and improve the previous quality of life. The success of this phase also depends upon the existence of the right institutional arrangement, that is, project and government agencies, professional figures and NGOs coordinating the process.

The approach to resettlement promoted by Mathur, despite acknowledging the complexities and dynamicity of the process, is fundamentally a policy tool for problem-solving and little space is left to the questioning of displacement and
resettlement. As the term ‘reformist-managerial’ suggests, the focus is on finding practical solutions, with much less attention given to the theoretical understanding of the issues raised by resettlement.

This interpretation of the problem interestingly contrasts with the stance taken by Jayantha Pereira in the closing chapter of the volume. The author reviews the two dominant involuntary resettlement models (Scudder’s Four-Stage Framework and Cernea’s Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction model) and points out how both are underpinned by a linear approach to resettlement which is consistent with a stagist view of development, so that resettlement is successful as long as it culminates with the ‘modernisation’ of the displaced population. Pereira’s claim is that this managerial approach to resettlement takes displacement for granted, hiding that it is in fact a violation of human rights. New models, he argues, are instead needed which focus on displacement rather than resettlement and promote a comprehensive human rights-based approach to displacement and resettlement.

This tension between the opening and the closing chapters, which is also the tension between the practical need to provide tools for policy making and the need of theoretical elaboration to understand a complex problem, is also found in the remaining chapters of the book. In one way or another they all point towards the inadequacy of the existing policy and legal framework in accounting for the complexities of the resettlement process and the systemic nature of the problem of displacement. The case studies collected in the volume are grouped and discussed so as to articulate this inadequacy in the form of shortcomings and the directions for improvement that they suggest.

The (in)adequacy of the existing policy and legal framework in tackling resettlement and its challenges constitutes the common topic of a group of chapters in the section Emerging Issues in Resettlement Policy. In Ramaswami Iyer’s chapter, the new Indian Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy, issued in 2007, is reviewed, with a discussion of the potential and the flaws of the two bills (the R&R Bill and the Land Acquisition Amendment Bill) drafted as a complement to the policy. While significant progress has been acknowledged by the author, he also makes clear that the legal framework ‘in the making’ leaves a number of issues unaddressed. A number of these are due to the fact that some key concepts are left undefined or are narrowly incorporated. It is the case of Social Impact Assessment (where impact refers merely to physical assets) and of the ‘public purpose’ for which land acquisition is justified.

Two chapters then follow which instead point out the flexibility and the breadth of the World Bank Operational Policy (O.P. 4.12) on involuntary resettlement, reflected in their sector-wide applicability and in the broadening of the definition of population displacement. Gordon Appleby’s chapter in fact, using a number of case studies, shows how the policy can be tailored to be applied to the transport sector, not only when new infrastructure are built, but also when it comes to their maintenance and rehabilitation. Cernea’s chapter instead reviews the widening of the definition of population displacement adopted by the World Bank since 2002. The new definition includes not only displacement as a physical change of place,
but also as ‘restriction of access’ to land or other natural resources. The importance of this change rests not only in the expanded applicability of the World Bank policy to Nature Conservation Projects but also in the implied broader understanding of the concept of displacement, which is made to encompass occupational and economic dislocation as well as geographical relocation.

The last chapter of this group looks instead at the gap existing between the policy framework and the realities of its application, focusing on the case of Orissa and its R&R policy. The two authors, Padel and Das, suggest that a major reason of the inability of resettlement policies to keep the promises they make is their failure to account for corruption. Corruption, they argue, together with different forms of intimidation and exploitation, tends to emerge at every stage of a development project (at least in India). Nonetheless, corruption is absent from most of the theoretical models, which also fail to acknowledge that displacement and resettlement are underpinned by contrasting social construction of realities, that is, models do not account for the gulf existing between the development ideology invoked to justify displacing projects and the ways the latter are understood and experienced by the affected people. This mismatch also contributes to explain the failure of resettlement policies. This first group of chapters then seems to suggest that a first way to tackle the inadequacy of policies and frameworks is the adoption of broader definitions of the concepts used and the introduction of new categories of analysis.

The narrowness of the concepts and the categories used by the dominant resettlement frameworks and policies is also hinted by the two chapters of the section Compensation and the Resettlement Process, which more closely focus on different modalities of compensation and resettlement schemes. Case study analysis shows how the latter are not adequately articulated by the different models and guidelines. The reason is the generalised neglect of the existing constraints in providing land for land compensation and the difficulties in implementing employment creation and income-generation schemes as part of resettlement programmes.

Accordingly, Vasudha Dhagamwar, recollecting the experience of Orissa with the Korean POSCO steel plant and of West Bengal with the TATA Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Singur and Nandigram, argues that land for land compensation is not a sustainable and in fact feasible option for India. This is due to the immense land requirement of the development path undertaken by the country, on one side, and the increasing population vis-à-vis the decrease in the average plot size, on the other, so that if land is increasingly scarce, small farming is not profitable anymore. While the author acknowledges the clear preference expressed by tribal people for land for land compensation and the peculiarities of the displacement and resettlement experience for tribals, he also suggests that a pragmatic approach to the resettlement problem is required, one which aims at the reduction of the number of people dependent upon land. This argument is well complemented by the chapter by M. P. Roy on the experience of the Coal India Limited (CIL) with the implementation of self-employment and income-generation
schemes in lieu of land compensation. CIL was in fact renewed for offering a job inside the company as part of the compensation package to the affected family; however, the decreased capacity of the mining sector to create additional employment opportunities has forced CIL to focus instead on a resettlement strategy based on income restoration. Of course, the change in the compensation and resettlement strategy is meeting the resistance of most of the affected population, not the least because employment creation in non-farming activities is indeed the key development challenge for rural areas in India.

The complexities of adequate compensation and of the resettlement process are well demonstrated by Tulsi Charan Bisht’s ethnographic account of displacement in the case of the Tehri Dam. It documents the difficulties of re-building a new livelihood after resettlement, especially in agriculture, including for the families which did receive land for land compensation. Difficulties arise from the fact that monetary transactions (to which the affected population is not accustomed to) are needed at the new location to perform any type of productive and reproductive activities, including farming, together with the increasing cost of agricultural inputs.

The last three chapters taken together clearly indicate that the next challenge for resettlement frameworks and policies is incorporating livelihood restoration through employment creation into the analysis. The two remaining chapters of the section deal differently with the shortcomings of the existing resettlement frameworks and policies: they look at the problem of adopting an alternative methodological approach. Supriya Garikipati, collocating herself into the ongoing debate on the creation of an Economics of Resettlement (see Cernea and Mathur, 2008), explores the notion of ‘compensation’ as understood by Neoclassical Economics. While this exercise does not add much to an ontological understanding of compensation, it leads the author to a novel approach to the investigation of the preferences of the affected population for different types of resettlement packages. People displaced by the Sardar Sarovar Dam project were consulted through a methodology drawn from experimental economics. The findings make Garikipati conclude that the optimal approach to resettlement rests in tailor-made schemes which account for people’s preferences.

Medha Chandra instead sets herself to the task of explaining why displacement and resettlement in each specific case happen the way they do, using micro-politics as the main explanatory factor. This is done looking at environmental conflicts over access and control of urban water bodies in Kolkata and comparing how the different articulation of social and political conflicts in two settlements led to different outcomes in terms of eviction (who is evicted and who is not) and compensation (whether compensation is paid and to whom). This approach offers a different perspective on the mechanisms underpinning displacement and eviction, which can inform the design of policies and resettlement schemes.

Finally, the last section (Privatising Development) represents a good sample of chapters which deal with the new key topic for empirical and theoretical research.
in the field: the relationship between development, displacement and resettlement in the face of the increasing involvement of the private sector in displacement-inducing projects. While Walter Fernandes points out the increase in the practice of development-induced displacement in India since independence, and links it to the spread of liberalisation and privatisation in the country, the chapters by Manshi Asher and Yamini Atmavilas and by Abhijit Guha look more specifically at the problems raised by land appropriation for SEZs, drawing from the happenings in Goa and West Bengal. Hari Mathur describes instead the consequences for tribal people of Orissa of living in a state endowed with abundance of natural resources and of a private investment-friendly policy. What most strikingly emerges in all cases is how the existing policy framework for land acquisition is unfit to deal with the issues raised by SEZs’ land requirements and more generally with the increasing prominence of the private sector. The main unresolved issue appears to be the fine line which separates state expropriation of land in the name of public purpose, on one side, and private purchase with some forms of government mediation, on the other side. The tendency so far has been for state governments to act more in the interests of the investors than the citizens. As SEZs and private sector projects appear to trickle down less benefits to the displaced population than infrastructure projects, resistance so far has been intense: successful in some cases (see Nandigram) or leading to dramatic clashes with the police in others (like in Orissa’s Kalinganagar incident).

In conclusion, this book can be read as a stimulating whole of case studies drawing from the Indian experience, which together with some policy-oriented and theoretical contributions with general relevance update and enlarge our knowledge and understanding of the issues surrounding resettlement and displacement. But more importantly, it can also be read as an invitation to start revising the way we understand and learn about these issues. In particular it seems compelling in intensification of the dialogue between theory and practice, possibly between the ‘reformist-managerial’ approach and alternative (as well as more problematic) theoretical understanding of what resettlement is and how it relates to the development discourse. The existing literature seems already to pull towards this direction, particularly through the pursuit of a broader conceptualisation of the two key concepts, the adoption of new categories of analysis and of alternative methodological approaches, and the expansion of the framework of analysis to incorporate displacement in the discourse of liberalisation and privatisation.

Chiara Mariotti
Teaching Fellow
Department of Economics
School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London
United Kingdom
mariottichiara@gmail.com

References


DOI: 10.1177/004908571104200113

Reading Andre Béteille’s Omnibus could be a wonderful experience for a student of Sociology and Social Anthropology for a number of reasons. Not only one gets a clearer idea of history of Sociology in India of last four decades but also realises that many of the propositions that now dominate sociological thinking took shape against dominant ideas of own their times. And unfailing intellectual commitment of some scholars made this possible.

The first book included in the omnibus Caste, Class and Power has many firsts to its credit. In an era when stalwarts like M. N. Srinivas and Louis Dumont gave primacy to caste in their analysis of Indian society, this study, on the basis of empirical evidence, argued that attention should be paid to class as well. Not only this, this study recognised multiple dimensions of inequality and also inter-relations between them. Today nobody would be surprised if we talk about inter-relatedness of caste and class but almost half a century ago making a statement ‘the class system has progressively detached itself from the caste structure, although there is still a high degree of correspondence between the hierarchies of caste and class’ (p. 221) was a remarkable finding. Further, on this basis of this study, Béteille underlined linkages of village with the outer world. He also delineates its dynamics with his empirical findings about sale of agricultural surplus outside the village, landowners living and having white collar jobs in the neighbouring towns and land coming into market. Another interesting finding that one finds relevant even today is about settlement pattern of the village. This study underlines that even if ‘many areas of social life are now becoming to some extent “caste-free”’, the settlement pattern of the village continues to reflect the basic cleavages of the traditional structure’ (p. 3). Béteille seems to suggest here that settlement pattern experience change very late after land ownership pattern; power structure and village economy have already changed to some extent.

The sequence of writings included in the Omnibus also represents Béteille’s interests during last four decades. The Idea of Natural Inequality and Other Essays is a collection of his lectures mainly focused on relationship between

existential and normative structures of the society. He argues that a gap exists in every society between what is considered right and what happens at the ground.

In the first essay of this volume ‘The Idea of Natural Inequality’, Béteille discusses notions of natural inequality and social inequality and while rejecting ‘idea of natural inequality’ as ambiguous notes that nature presents us with differences and these differences do not become inequalities unless they are assigned different values by cultural processes. Portrayal of Indian society as truly hierarchical as against modern societies leads him to negotiate these questions in ‘Homo Hierarchicus, Homo Equalis’. In this Kingsley Martin Memorial Lecture (1979), he argues that ‘no major civilization has ever fully excluded a concern for equality, and that inequality—not only the fact of inequality but the need to explain and justify it—bedevils every modern society’ (p. 4). And explains it further in another essay titled ‘Harmonic and Disharmonic Social Systems’ by adding ‘contemporary societies are permeated by the contradiction between the fact of inequality and ideal of equality and that sense constitute disharmonic systems’ (p. 5).

Béteille has always been expressing his discomfort with the way affirmative actions have been conceptualised and practiced in India. Presenting a critique of equality provisions in Constitution of India, he opines that strengthening of caste identity even if aimed at equalisation could prove counterproductive in the end. Béteille’s critiques have been pointing out that caste has remained an instrument of oppression so it could also be meaningfully used for identifying ‘backwards’. Béteille pursues his interest in studying contradiction between inherent inequalities in the society and declared goals of equality in the context of Indian university in his chapter on ‘The Pursuit of Equality and Indian University’. He observes that Indian universities have made some progress in terms of admitting students and recruiting faculty from diverse social background, but poorly funded state universities remain dependent on their immediate environment marked by inequalities rather than previously designated ‘elite institutions’. Further he says that ‘far from eliminating all forms of inequality, the modern university creates new inequalities, but by a process of competition in which ‘pure merit’ is believed to count as against race, caste or sex, or what is loosely described as ‘social background’ (p. 154). Further explaining his argument, in ‘Equality of Opportunity’ and ‘Equality of Opportunity and the Equal Distribution of Benefits’, Béteille finds it difficult to create full equality in the external conditions of competition. And he considers individualism still relevant for advancement of equality of opportunities between sexes. While exploring nature and implications of the tension between high value placed on individual in contemporary Indian society and persistence of collective identities, which appears paradoxical, Béteille recognises contribution of individualism in the growth of civilisation and autonomy of the individual but makes an important point that beyond this, course of pursuit of equality sometimes diverges from individualism.

The Part III of the Omnibus, which was earlier published as Equality and Universality, deals with social policies for greater equality and argues that neither it is possible nor even desirable to eliminate all forms of inequalities. Instead, he
opines that one should learn to discriminate among different forms of inequalities and ensure that basic rights and capabilities are made universally available. Apart from providing excellent survey of the field, Béteille discusses roots and different aspects of inequalities in Chapter 1. Here also he never misses his favourite subject, the tension between ideal and the reality of social stratification. While dealing with the contrast between hierarchical and egalitarian societies, Béteille makes a brilliant point that European societies cannot be characterised egalitarian on the basis of ideals that they set for themselves but one will have to see their attitude towards their colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In Chapter 2, in his discussion on relationship between class and status, he emphasises on considering distribution of symbolic capital along with material capital. Following two chapters, ‘Varna and Jati’ and ‘Caste in Contemporary India’, talk about decreasing influence of caste in social, intellectual and moral life. Béteille argues that erosion in moral and intellectual legitimacy is reflected in the fact that caste is often referred to in the sense of jati today than in the sense of varna. Similarly, although politics have given a new lease of life to caste, but its significance in social life has not remained the same. He points out ambivalent attitude of upper strata towards caste to substantiate his point.

In Chapter 5, the author argues that ‘private and public are complementary categories and that they are held together by the value placed on the individual as citizen. Citizenship is both an individualizing and a universalizing concept, and the progress of democracy is intimately linked to the enlargement of citizenship’ (p. 107). Béteille has always taken an anti-reservation stand despite severe criticism from scholars having different point of view. In ‘Distributive Justice and Institutional Well-being’, while making a note that during Mandal Agitation, both sides, proponents and opponents, had based their claims on the premise of equality, Béteille comments that ‘It can hardly be said that by imposing caste quotas in government employment we are taking a significant step towards equality of results—or any kind of equality—in a country where substantial numbers of persons remain ill-fed and unlettered’ (p. 133). In large part of Chapter 7 ‘The Reproduction of Inequality’, author deals with role of family in reproduction of inequalities, although he does not deny persistence of inequalities based on caste and class but emphasises on role of family and schools especially in urban context. Although Béteille’s focus here is on families employed in modern occupational system in metros but provides insights, although limited, for the study of families located in a different milieu. Béteille comes back to his favourite subject of discussing and rejecting sharp contrast made by some scholars between ‘homo hierarchicus vs homo equalis’ in ‘The Antinomies of Equality’. He takes it further in the chapter on ‘Hierarchical and Competitive Inequality’ where he makes it clear that distinction between both kinds of inequalities is conceptual and not empirical. They coexist and reinforce each other in most of the contemporary societies including India. The last chapter on ‘Equality and Universality’ and the running argument throughout this book make a case in favour of universality. In the end Béteille quotes Rawls to further clarify his position, ‘although the bias of
the policy should be towards equality, an increase of inequality overall is justified if it benefits the most disadvantaged members of society’ (p. 221).

Béteille was perhaps one of the first sociologists who applied Weberian categories and method to conduct a village study in India. Till then these studies were largely dominated by functionalists under the leadership of M. N. Srinivas. He used class along with caste, although with a clear emphasis on caste, in his analysis but at the same time he maintained a distance with Marx. In his own words, he says, ‘They were also unhappy with my treatment of Marx for they believed, not without reason, that I favoured Max Weber over Karl Marx in the analysis of social stratification. I was not willing to dismiss Marx as a mere ideologue, as many academic sociologists were; but I was not prepared to adhere to the Marxist canon in my analysis of society’ (p. xiv).

The best thing that many Indian sociologists find in him was his critique of Dumont who was trying to present a contrast between hierarchical Indian society and egalitarian Western societies. But at the same time several of them seem to disagree with him on his position on affirmative actions in India. All in all, one can agree or disagree with Béteille but one cannot afford not to read this Omnibus.

Prashant Kumar Trivedi
Council for Social Development, New Delhi, prashantcsd@gmail.com


DOI: 10.1177/004908571104200114

One of the central goals of people-centred democracy is to goad the process of circumventing the acquired hiatus between haves and have-nots, caste-subjugated groups and caste benefiters and fight for sexual equality. Envisioning and shaping of the institutions by way of democratic participations have been sine qua non aspect of social visionaries and revolutionaries. Here, democracy takes the grandeur status in form of universal philosophy whereby outcomes are expected in equivalence. Nonetheless, democracy as universal philosophy does not produce universal outcomes. The hiatus needs to be explained to make functional aspect of democracy more diaphanous.

The book under review is a robust attempt to explain the democratic politics of two Indian states Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Democratic politics or in author’s lexicon ‘patrons of the poor’ is linked with caste politics and policy making. The exploratory aspect is to discern inter-linkages and intricacies of party politics, caste politics and policy making in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. A part of the title Policymaking in India is slightly misleading since the book is focused entirely on political economy and caste interlacement of these two states. Even the author is
cautious of this generalisation while suggesting that ‘each state of India or other country where the arguments of this book might be applied, there is a need for caution in identifying the primary locus of mobilization’ (p. 234).

Amongst two debates, marginalisation of redistribution issue in policy cum academic circles and role of the state governments to reduce poverty, the author stresses on the latter issue. The linchpin aspect of this book is to explain why some state governments are great poverty reducers than others. The primary questions are ‘who gets what’ and ‘why’. Regarding the first question, resource allocation of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka between 1985 and 2000 has been analysed. Explanation of ‘what’ leads to the second question ‘why’. In other words, what has been distributed and why? It is being explained through recourse to political history of both states and thereafter implications on present outcomes.

There are two justifications for comparing both states to understand the poverty reduction. First, both states had experience of two-party competition during 1985–2000. Second, important constituents which affect poverty level like average yields in agriculture, agricultural infrastructure, central governmental allocation, levels of state domestic product and development expenditure do not differ significantly.

The landscape of this book runs through political economy (particularly chapter two) and political history of Tamil Nadu (chapter three) and Karnataka (chapter four). The political economy and political history are enmeshed towards realisation of impeccably holistic overview. The political economy explicates what are being distributed whereas political history unearths the beneath factor in terms of why are resources being distributed the way they are. Sales tax, Noon Meal Scheme and Liquor Excise are significant aspects of Tamil Nadu’s political economy. Sales tax is a major source of revenue and regressive sales tax affects poor badly. Noon Meal Scheme, universal in nature, has registered a tremendous success vis-à-vis poor upliftment, especially on nutritional and educational outcomes. The third point where political economy and fate of poor meets is Liquor Excise. Since 1991, arrack and toddy have been prohibited thus debarring poor from consumption. Author suggests that Noon Meal Scheme ‘itself was introduced partly to compensate poor households for income lost on alcohol consumption, and thus was, in a sense, a complementary policy to prohibition laws’ (p. 53).

Like Tamil Nadu, sales tax is a serious constraint on poverty reduction. In respect of Liquor Exercise, there is no prohibition but mere taxation on cheap domestic liquor which means siphoning off more resources from poor to the state. Unlike Tamil Nadu, there is hardly any major scheme in Karnataka like Noon Meal Scheme to compensate the poor.

Analysis of two major schemes (Noon Meal Scheme in Tamil Nadu and irrigation policy in Tamil Nadu) reveals the nature of distribution of resources. Noon Meal Scheme expenditure amount to 15 per cent of the state annual outlay or 11 per cent of the state’s tax revenue. Number of centres and benefitters has increased along with impact on development outcomes in Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka, irrigation
is one of the major public expenditures. In contrast to Tamil Nadu’s Noon Meal Scheme, irrigation has had indirect impact on poor. Narayan Lakshman states ‘that there is likely to be a strong positive incentive for investment in this sector because this sector is particularly leakage prone in terms of deficiencies in the design of institutions that administer resource allocation in this sector. These deficiencies lead to elites at multiple levels (from the state governmental level to the local level) being able to capture resources before they reach the intended agents, often poor farmers….’ (p. 77). There was also no major initiation on poverty reduction front. Why have welfare measures adopted by two states producing different outcomes? Here the issue of political history becomes important.

There are two important factors which decide the pro-poor outcome before making sense of political history of both states. First, formation of poor as cohesive groups and non-co-option of leadership in non-poor groups. Second, greater centralisation of power of ruling parties or fierce competition between parties. Besides, institutionalisation of a pro-poor image is important at the local level to channelise the pro-poor resource allocation from the state institutions. In Tamil Nadu, fragmented caste dominance paved the way for poor mobilisation against the Congress by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). In DMK, people were mobilised by way of bypassing local elites. After pro-poor measures became evident, AIADMK accentuated policies through personal charisma of its leaders. These have generated pro-poor regimes in Tamil Nadu. In case of Karnataka, dominance of Vokkaliga and Lingayat perhaps face insignificant challenge on redistributive policies. Major policies have been formulated in tune with their interests. Absence of factors like charismatic leadership has prevented spreading movement across the state.

Lakshman argues that fractured caste domination in Tamil Nadu has generated class-based politics whereas it was denied in Karnataka due to caste dominance. The populist policies in Tamil Nadu generates a slew of welfare measures and in case of Karnataka’s patronage-based politics, benefits go to dominant caste while negating the interest of poor. Irrigation canals are not result of political mobilisation of farming class. Whatever the little mobilisation existed was diverted towards Cauvery dispute which was almost beyond the lone purview of Karnataka state.

The book captures and provides original insights on many accounts. First, fragmentation of dominant caste’s domination is needed and necessary for pro-poor outcomes and especially for class-based politics. Second, political economy cannot be understood, as trend exists in mainstream economists, sans political history. Third, political processes are equally important as organisation and ideologies of political parties because it cannot be argued that societal forces and social power play no role in the emergence of pro-poor regime. The explanation of political process remains bypassed in Atul Kohli (Kohli, 1987). The further explication of Dalits’ locations in Tamil Nadu in terms of ‘equal material and social benefits’ could have added the extra advantage to the book. Nonetheless, the book
remains vital for everyone who resists differentiating between political economy and political history.

Dhananjay Rai
Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, Gujarat
jnudhananjayrai@gmail.com

Reference


DOI: 10.1177/004908571104200115

After 1996, when the first Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) was released, PROBE team has again made a significant contribution in the field of elementary education. The present PROBE report has been prepared largely by the same team (Anuradha De, Reetika Khera, Meera Samson and A. K. Shiva Kumar) on the basis of data collected in 2006 largely in the same villages that were covered by the PROBE survey in 1996, in Rajasthan, undivided Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh by applying the same tested methodology of PROBE 1996 on the by and large same sample size. This time upper primary section has also been included in the report.

*PROBE Revisited* is an earnest effort to take stock of the significant changes in the delivery of primary education in the decade 1996 to 2006, and to assess the impact on school access and quality in the north Indian rural schools. The report focuses on the major progress that took place in the PROBE states and Himachal Pradesh in terms of availability of schools, educational facilities in schools, provision and impact of mid-day meals scheme on participation, surge in enrolment rates, decrease in the number of never enrolled children and shrinking of social and gender gaps. At the same time, it finds that fundamental problems remain the same as it was in 1996 particularly in the case of teaching–learning process and the teacher’s related issues. Mindless rote learning still dominates.

After introducing the report and its implication the report begins with analysis of major policy initiatives undertaken by the central and state government after 1996, such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, The National Curriculum Framework, policy related financing education including education cess and the Right to Education Act, 2009. In Chapter 3, the findings of the survey on the school
environment at primary stage has been analysed and concluded that the situation is mixed with expansions of schooling facilities and improvement in infrastructure. It also focuses on the functioning of government schools and emergence of private schools in rural areas. The chapter critically examines the findings of the survey on the teacher-related concerns, such as profile of the teachers, shortage of teachers, pupil–teacher proportion and change in the teaching–learning process. In Chapter 4, the report tries to relate the school and family context of the child. It concludes that the socio-economic context and family attitudes influence educational outcome.

In Chapter 5, for the first time, the PROBE survey looks at the situation of middle schooling and examines all aspects for quality schooling at the level in detail. It finds that the demand for middle level schooling has grown substantially over the past decades or so, but children from more disadvantaged groups, particularly girls from these groups, mostly dropped out just after completing grade 5 or between 6 and 8. Chapter 6 of this report takes the stock of ongoing revolution in Himachal Pradesh and critically examines the successful implementation and delivery mechanism of government school in the state. The chapter concludes with how the ‘system works’ and sustained systemic improvement is possible. In Chapter 7, the report presents the conclusion of the survey and discusses the critical areas and concern that require immediate attention and integrated efforts for achieving the goal of education for all.

The report PROBE Revisited is not a simple revisit of the 1996 PROBE but the present report goes beyond by extending the focus in many ways. Though it is not an all-India report on elementary education but the outcome of this report may be useful for educationists, planners and policy makers, funding agencies and NGOs, who are involved in planning, administration and implementation of elementary education, and researchers across the social sciences and all those concerned with elementary education in India.

Mukesh Kumar Shrivastava
Associate Fellow
Council for Social Development, New Delhi
mukeshpriya@yahoo.com


DOI: 10.1177/004908571104200116

Timing is everything in comedy and in scholarship. One cannot imagine a better timing for this book’s publication.

Conceived in 2003 as a collaborative effort by activists and academics from across the world, the Global Health Watch questions present policies on health
care and propose alternatives. The first and second editions of the *Global Health Watch*, published in 2005 and 2008, were hailed for their groundbreaking analysis and mobilising call to action. *Global Health Watch 3* (GHW3) has been coordinated by the five civil society organisations. With an incisive and even militant tone, the book proceeds at a brisk pace with many original insights.

GHW3 provides an overview of the multiple crises facing the globe—the financial, food and fuel crisis (the ‘three Fs’) as well as two ‘slow burn’ crises—the climate crisis and the crisis of development. It argues that these are not transient crises, but point to a deep ‘systems failure’ that plagues capitalism as informed by neoliberal theory and practice. The report traces the links between the global food crisis and the process of replacement of food crops with biofuels, and the huge increase in speculative trading of food grain commodities. The report advocates the urgent need to redesign the global economic and political architecture as a necessary condition to address widespread health care inequity and the rapid deterioration of conditions of living that adversely impact health and the access to health care.

The report characterises many of the features of the present articulation of primary health care as clearly departing from the more radical vision of the 1978 Alma Ata Declaration. It makes a strong case for the promotion of public financing of health care predicated on a tax-based financing system. Evidence from three of the largest countries in the world—China, India and the US—suggests the link between the application of neoliberal economic theory and the collapse of health care systems. Positive experiences from Costa Rica, Thailand and Sri Lanka, on the other hand, highlight the possibility of building health care systems that advance equity in health care much better through intervention by governments in both the financing and the running of health care systems.

GHW3 uses the lens of equity and of human rights to examine several issues that impact on health care. It emphasises the importance of a much larger scrutiny of the upstream causes of poor health care and inequity—within countries, as well as across countries. The report argues for an approach that locates the problems associated with high maternal mortality and morbidity in a framework that is sensitive to women’s concerns and vulnerabilities. It discusses how technologies targeting women lend themselves to commercial appropriation and the victimisation of women, especially women in poor and socially disadvantaged communities. GHW3 appropriately draws attention to mental health problems that are often rooted in structural problems of inequity, rising consumerism and the marginalisation of communities. GHW3 also calls attention to the deep and persisting inequality in access to the available tools that can control the spread of diseases. These are further perpetuated by the existing global trade regime, the way the pharmaceutical industry operates and the manner in which research is heavily skewed in favour of biomedical interventions.

GHW3 reminds us about the enormous challenges faced by health care workers in conflict situations while attempting to collect and disseminate information on access to health care and health care inequalities. It traces the deep links between
the biotech industry and speculative finance, both premised on a ‘future’ that is illusory and often false. The report advocates for an approach on the climate crisis, based on ‘carbon budgeting’ that could balance the requirements for decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, on one hand, and servicing the development needs of developing countries, on the other. At the same time the report raises concerns about the renewed focus on ‘population control’ in many developed countries, a focus that seeks to fundamentally link the climate crisis with population increases in developing countries.

GHW3’s scrutiny of global institutions (actually its ‘watching’ chapters) identifies the fundamental problems in the existing global health care governance. There are serious concerns, today, that the influence of large corporations and of a few developed countries is leading to a shift in WHO’s constitutional mandate. Similar concerns exist as regards UNICEF’s role in promoting narrow biomedical approaches to the problem of malnutrition and its association with platforms of agribusiness corporations and private corporations. While UN bodies face a crisis of legitimacy, alternate centres of power influence global policies—prominent among these being private philanthropies. GHW3 examines the functioning and priorities of one of them, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and furthermore looks at the alignment of corporate interests and philanthropic investments.

Why should you want to read GHW3? Because on the action side, the GHW3 proposes a framework for civil society movements to intervene and challenge the existing order, and provides examples of how this is already happening in many parts of the world (a timely section given the recent Wall Street-type mobilisations around the world).

GHW3 does not claim to have made all the connections necessary to change global health care. But it does aspire to be a prime agent of change, a change that it clearly considers both possible and urgent.

In this book you will find much useful intellectual ammunition. With its measured optimism, this book is a timely wake-up call and is thus welcome.

Amit Sengupta
PHM India
cddsf@vsnl.com

Claudio Schuftan
PHM Vietnam
schuftan@gmail.com