'Unlearning Development':

MNREGA and the Right to Development

Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of

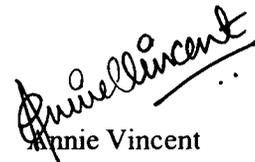## MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled 'Unlearning Development': MNREGA and the Right to Development' submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of either this University or any other University.

Annie Vincent

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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List of Acronyms

BJP	Bharatiya Janta Party
CG	Chhattisgarh
GSDP	Gross State Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary fund
KAJJ SAMITI	Khoj Avem Jan Jagriti Samiti
MNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MP	Madhya Pradesh
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
NIC	New Industrialised Countries
NSDP	Net State Domestic Product
PDS	Public Distribution System
RTD	Right To Development
SC	Schedule Caste
SDM	Sub District Magistrate
SRS	Sample registration System
ST	Schedule Tribe
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

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__Acknowledgement__

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Last but not the least I want to thank Zubair for being there for me. He was my strength and my biggest source of motivation.

Annie Vincent

Chapter 1

Introduction

It is always possible for a society to become more democratic and inclusive
even if 'perfect democracy' must remain an unobtainable horizon[1].

The ill effects of development practices in many countries may force one to believe
that such a society is an unachievable enterprise. However, the question that this study
poses is, can we invalidate the demands for development, only on the basis of the
elusiveness of a perfect outcome? How should then one respond to the agitations of
the tribals in Niyamgiri, Orissa against the mining project; the oppositions of the tribal
women of Chhattisgarh against liquor shops; the nationwide protests of the tribals and
farmers against the Sardar Sarovar Dam or the *sammelans* of the rural poor of
Chhattisgarh against the inefficiencies of MNREGA.

This is not to deny that it is difficult to locate a perfect practise of development. On
the contrary, this study wishes to argue that the idea of complete development may
remain unachievable, however efforts to realize one, continues.

The struggles of the marginalized and the excluded for the respect and recognition of
their human dignity and individual autonomy provides the impetus for continuance of
the project of development. The practise of development can never conclude as long
as the emancipation of these sections of the society remains unfulfilled. Development
has no end, as its ends are constantly redefined and recreated through such struggles
for a change.

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[1] Trevor Parfitt. *The End of Development? Modernity. Post-Modernity and Development*, London,
2002, p. 161.

I

Area of Focus:

As one unpacks the readings on the development discourse, one finds that defining development provokes intense contestations wherein a variety of interests draw the idea of development into different directions.

Development was, conventionally, connoted in the form of historical processes of 'industrialisation and urbanisation, technicalisation of agriculture, rapid growth of material production and living standards, and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values'.[2] By the end of the Second World War, this became a dominant path of economic development fulfilling the 'American dream' of 'peace and abundance expended to all the peoples of the planet'.[3] This path of progress was universally embraced as one that could produce economic improvement which, at the least, could 'lift all boats' and reduce inequalities within nations.[4]

However, the restructuring of the economies of less-developed countries along these lines of progress soon pushed large parts of this world into deeper levels of impoverishment, exploitation and deprivation. The American dream had failed to fulfill its promise of abundance.

This stage marks an important point of departure for this study. Development theory had reached an 'impasse' in the 1980s. One of the dominant critiques of development, ascertaining its end, was offered by the post development theorists like Wolfgang Sachs, Arturo Escobar and others. They were convinced that development was nothing but an aberration that had reached its conclusion. Sachs is of the view that

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[2] Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton NJ, 1995, p.4.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Graham Harrison, 'Three Themes: For the International Political Economy of Development' in Graham Harrison (ed.), *Global Encounters: International Political Economy, Development and Globalization*, Basinstoke, 2005, p.3.

development was a defunct idea that did nothing except pursue the hidden agenda of the western world[5].

> For development is much more than just a socio-economic endeavour; it is a perception which models reality, a myth which comforts societies, and a fantasy which unleashes passions. Perceptions, myths and fantasies, however, rise and fall independent of empirical results and rational conclusions; they appear and vanish, not because they are proven right or wrong, but rather because they are pregnant with promise or become irrelevant[6].

Right to Development: A New Global Context

By appealing to the basic components of the Right to Development (RTD) framework, the study invokes a new context of development and its growing relevance. It is framed as a response to the post development insistence on the irrelevance and redundancy of development.

The RTD approach was adopted in 1986. It was based on a universal human rights agenda and demands for the equal consideration of all rights; economic, social, political and cultural.

The study will argue that this framework of development is rooted in the emancipatory politics of social justice. It can be viewed as a condition that paves the way for all human beings to access equal and inalienable rights[7] and can create conditions for the sustenance of a just and stable society that caters to an overall improvement.

This study identifies social justice as a fresh theoretical approach to development. It is driven towards the objective to secure conditions of equality by meeting basic human needs. It insists upon the reorientation of our institutions and practices towards reducing inequalities and empowering the voices of the powerless by locating these processes in the conceptual works of John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Iris Marion Young and others.

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[5]Wolfgang Sachs, 'Introduction' in Wolfgang Sachs (ed.), *Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, London, 1992, p.3.
[6]Ibid., p.2.
[7]Behrooz Morvaridi, *Social Justice and Development*, New York, 2008, p.184.

3

MNREGA as a Practise of Development:

The study draws upon the idea of social justice to establish the foundations of actual projects of development such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005.

The MNREGA was passed by the Parliament in 2005. It can be viewed as a landmark step towards securing a sustainable solution to overcome rural deprivation. The act is aimed at eradicating poverty and enhancing rural capacity to build self sustaining economies. Unlike the other livelihood strategies that were allocation based, MNREGA guaranteed employment on demand. It was brought into force as an employment scheme guaranteeing the right to work to the rural poor of 200 districts in India. By sanctioning the legal entitlement of 100 days of unskilled manual work in a financial year to every rural household, MNREGA was to guarantee:

- Demand led productive income opportunities

- Productive asset creation for the development of local/regional economy

- Sustainable livelihoods

MNREGA marks a paradigm shift. It has been conceived as a most important step towards the realization of the right to work. By developing the social and economic infrastructure in rural areas, the act aims to enhance people's livelihood security on sustained basis. And most importantly it presents itself as a platform that empowers citizens to play an active role in the implementation process through decentralized planning and decision-making[8].

The study will engage in a critical analysis of the working of MNREGA using RTD as a conceptual lens while placing social justice centrally in the development agenda. The premises of this inquiry are as follows;

1. The creation of entitlements i.e. securing access to food, health care, education, employment, adequate wages and other needs that constitute basic means of

[8] Indira, Hirway. Providing Employment Guarantee in India: Some Critical Issues in *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Nov. 27 - Dec. 3, 2004), 39: 48 p.5120-5124.

livelihood as a human right. The state is obliged to not to violate this right. It must also create conditions for the promotion and preservation of these rights.

2. This kind of accountability from the state demands the strengthening of the access to these entitlements through the processes of empowerment of the marginalized populations. It necessitates the creation of an enabling environment encouraging them to demand their rights and entitlements. The marginalized must not only have awareness about their own rights but also about the rights they hold in relation to the duty holders. Such a process of empowerment depends on the fulfilment of two important conditions; first, equal participation and involvement of the citizens in the development process and second, accountability of the state and its representatives.

The premises reflect the core of a rights based approach to development that relates to human dignity, equal opportunity and livelihood security. They prioritize the availability of a social and economic arrangement distributing individual rights and duties in a way that accrues benefits to the least advantaged and reflects the capacities of the duty holders or those constituting a given institutional arrangement created for fulfillment of the goals of individual well being. At the same time, they take into consideration the distribution of these rights based on the political, social, economic and cultural context of the rights holder. The study accords importance to the understanding that availability of rights and duties is necessary but not sufficient. Securing conditions of equality to participate in economic, political and social life freely not only facilitates access to these rights and opportunities, it strengthens individual capacity to translate these opportunities into valuable outcomes, at the same time.

The objective of the analysis is to understand how the problems of development can be approached through a process that can direct the development agenda into more inclusive directions.

II

Research Questions & Methodology

Central Question:

To what extent does the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act fulfills the requirements of a Right to Development approach?

Related Questions:

What is the development agenda of MNREGA? How far do these agendas reflect the basic principles of the Right to Development framework?

Can the Right to Development approach direct the development agenda towards more inclusive directions?

The field study was conducted in the district of Raipur. The two blocks selected within the district were namely Gariaband (90 Kms from Raipur) and Mainpur (130 Kms from Raipur). These are schedule areas. The primary criteria of incorporation into a scheduled area are based on the predominance of a tribal population, compactness and size of the area and high levels economic disparity between the people of the region[9].

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[9]Official website of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, 11.07.2011.
   It is to note here that the blocks were amongst the main centres of activity of the NGO Khoj Avem Jan Jagriti Samiti(KAJJ). The organisation assisted the researcher during site visits, group discussions and data collection.
   The communities covered during the research were located in the interiors of dense forests creating constraints in terms of access and security. Hence, the selection of the areas was also based on the organization's knowledge and understanding of the region.

RAIPUR
Chhattisgarh

Bilaspur Janjgir

N

Raigarh

Durg

Simga
Bhatapara
Nipania
Arjuni
Baloda Bazar
Kasdol
Sarsiwa
Maharaj
Lawan
Dhansiri
To Sarangarh
Madhuban
Semradih
Datan
Palari
Nawagaon
Arjuni
200
Tada
Neora
Deori
Chicholi
Baldakachhar
Tala
Kharora
Siari
Kanki
Nawapara
Makuhai
Samoda
Bhansoj
Arang
To Kumhari
Raipur
6
To Tumgaon
Mahasamund
Belsondha
Bhatgaon
To Belsondha
Abhanpur
Kosukhula
Nawapara
Fingeshwar
200
Rajim
Khadma
Chhura
Kopra
Deona
Kamraj
Parsuli
Rasela
Gariaband
Dhamtari
Bindra
Nawagarh
Litipara
ORISSA
Kusmi
Amarnora
Dhawalpur
Kalan
Mainpur Khurd
Bardula
Taurenga
Risgaon
Indagaon
Kuchenga
Gohrapadar
Amlipadar
Deobhog

Legend:
- District Boundary
- River
- National Highway
- State Highway
- Road
- Railway Track
- Trekking Routes
- ● District Headquarter
- • Taluk Headquarter
- ○ Town

Map not to Scale

Official Website of Raipur District, Chattisgarh

The study is concerned with reorienting policy processes towards the goals of combating instances of deprivation and poverty amongst less advantaged sections of the society. Given this position, the selection of the scheduled areas of Raipur was made on the following grounds;

- These areas were characterized by a high concentration of socially backward communities of Schedule Castes and the Schedule tribes.

- They are predominantly rural and depend on agriculture for sustenance. Low levels of agricultural productivity and uneven distribution of land has intensified the experiences of poverty for these communities in the form of high levels of food insecurity

- Their abysmal condition can be also ascertained by taking into consideration that access to basic facilities like housing, electricity, drinking water and toilets is limited amongst these sections. According to the 2001 Census, almost 41.9%[10] of its rural population has no access to such resources. In terms of literacy, health and income standards; the villages selected for the study can be ranked the lowest.

These features have an important bearing on the processes and practices of development. The persistence of these conditions invokes the need for active interventions by the state into these communities and creating conditions for the alleviation of the marginalized groups from deep levels of poverty.

By drawing upon these necessities, I wish to analyse how far the state has been able to respond to the needs of the marginalized communities through MNREGA and investigate its implications within the RTD framework.

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[10] www.raipur.gov.in. 16-04-2011.

Table.1. Raipur District Profile based on the 2001 Census	
Population: Persons 3,016,930 Rural 2,099,312 Urban 917,618 · Number of households 5 81,582 Household size (per household) 5 Males 1,523,925 Females 1,493,005 Sex ratio 9 80 Sex ratio (0-6 years) 9 64 Scheduled Caste population 487,723 Percentage to total population 16.17 Scheduled Tribe population 3 65,273 Percentage to total population 1 2.11	**Literacy and Educational level** **Literates** Persons 1,713,653 Total 1 ,713,653 Males 1,034,063 Without level 5 4,132 Females 679,590 Below primary 5 71,410 **Literacy rate** Persons 68.51 Males 81.97 Females 54.81 **Educational Level attained** Primary 4 62,342 Middle 2 34,779 Matric/Higher-Secondary/Diploma 2 68,987 Graduate and above 1 21,842
Scheduled Tribes (Largest three) 1.Gond etc. 271,906 2.Kawar etc. 33,902 3.Kamar 1 4,062	**Scheduled Castes (Largest three)** 1.Chamar etc. 362,097 2.Ganda etc. 66,453 3.Mahar etc. 36,766
Workers Total workers 1,264,663 Main workers -961,507 Marginal Workers- 303,156 Cultivators-333579 Cultivators-65113 Agricultural Labourers-204094 Agricultural Labourers-193294	
Amenities and infrastructural facilities Total inhabited villages 2 ,124 **Amenities available in villages and number of villages** Drinking water facilities 2,101 Safe Drinking water 2 ,100 Population Electricity (Power Supply) 1,955 Electricity (domestic) 1,240 Electricity (Agriculture) 481 Primary school 1,987 Middle schools 5 30 Secondary/Sr Secondary schools 215 College 10 House Type Medical facility 696 Primary Health Centre 35 Primary Health Sub-Centre 377 – Post, telegraph and telephone facility 6 22 Bus services 267 Paved approach road 857 Mud approach road 1,468	

Sample Size:

Table.1.1.			
Name of the village	**Block**	**Social constitution**	**Groups present during the discussions**
Bhaisamuda	Gariaband	Kamar	Men and women
Chindabhata	Gariaband	SC,ST(Gond),OBC	Women
Jhalkhamhar	Gariaband	SC,ST(Gond),OBC	Men and women
Tawarbhara	Gariaband	SC,ST(Gond),OBC	Women
Badegobra	Mainpur	Kamar	Men
Pathari	Mainpur	Kamar	Men
Source: Census: 2001			

Table.1. depicts the sample covered during the research. A total of six villages were visited across these blocks over a period of 20 days. In each village a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 15 villagers participated.

The persons sampled for the study were mainly agricultural labourers and cultivators belonging to the socially deprived communities of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes. The objective behind the selection of this particular section of the population has been addressed in Chapter 2.

Bhaisamuda, Badegobra and Pathari are forest villages inhabited by a dominant population of the primitive tribal group of Kamar. They depend on the forests as the primary source of livelihood. Traditionally, these communities survived on the use and consumption of forest resources and practiced shifting cultivation. However, with the declaration of these forests as reserves, their traditional patterns of consumption have been completely disrupted. Today, the Kamar tribe meets its basic needs through the collection of non-timber forest produce, the public distribution system and MNREGA.

Chindabhata, Jhalkhamhar and Tawarbhara were constituted by a more diverse population which included Schedule castes, Schedule tribes and Other Backward classes. The Gonds were the dominant tribal group in these villages.

In Tawarbhara, the villagers owned small land holdings. Yet, forest produce remained an important source of livelihood. Communities inhabiting Jhalkhamhar and Chindabhata were only dependent on forest produce besides working under MNREGA.

The attempt was to select villages that could reflect the social composition of the region. As a tribal state, the objective was to document the experiences of primitive tribal groups however, at the same time in order to acquire a holistic understanding of the status of deprived communities in the region, villages like Chindabhata, Jhalkhamhar and Tawarbhara were selected.

Apart from the study conducted across the six villages, group discussions during an all women's meet organised by local NGOs Ekta Parishad and Khoj Avem Jan Jagriti Samiti on the 20th of April, 2011 in Gariaband, provided an additional source of local information. It was attended by more than 300 women and men from across 30-35 villages of Raipur. They were gathered by the NGOs to voice their concerns about MNREGA and other developmental schemes.

Insights from a conference attended by the almost 50-70 representatives of civil society and the Governor of Chhattisgarh on the 26th of April, 2011 in Tilda, served important sources of information. The conference offered an understanding of the way in which the interests and needs of the poor were being represented at the level of the state and the civil society. The inferences drawn from the discussions have been used to establish the role of the state and the civil society in the conceptualization and practise of development in rural Chhattisgarh.

Research Method and Tools:

The study is based on the use of qualitative methods. It relied on primary sources of information entailing extensive use of group discussions with villagers, interviews with government officials and NGOs and direct observations. Group discussions and interviews were based on a semi-structured questionnaire[11] that addressed different aspects of the MNREGA and the impact of its working on the villagers. The

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[11]The questions were reframed according to the nature of the interactions with the villagers. This was also the case during the interviews with government officials and NGOs.

representatives of the NGO, KAJJ Samiti assisted in locating the primitive tribal communities and other social groups for the study. The interactions with the respondents were only conducted in groups[12].

The stratum of villagers and local heads such as the *sarpanch*, *sachiv* and panch were located on the basis of snowball sampling and the stratum of government officials and NGOs were located on the basis of purposive sampling for interviews.

The observations made during the field visits also constituted an important part of the study.

III

Plan of the study

Chapter 2 examines the central themes of the development literature. It will provide a detailed understanding of the theories of development and demonstrate the problems that these have imported into development thinking and practice. This chapter will lay out the basic principles of the RTD approach as a response to the gaps in earlier practices of development. Chapter 3 sets the context within which the basic components of the RTD framework will be analyzed. This gives a detailed assessment of the field area of Chhattisgarh, its political economy and socio-economic profile. The objective is to understand the way in which the state and its development practices frame the basic components of the RTD model. Chapter 4 locates MNREGA as a tool of the process of development in the region. Against the basic premises of the RTD approach, it will engage in a critical analysis of MNREGA as development policy and highlights its implications for the marginalized and excluded communities of Chhattisgarh. Based on the inferences drawn from the discussions, chapter 5 will trace out the directions that a viable development policy can take in the future.

Having delineated the central themes of the study, the following sections will stretch the contours of the analysis to accommodate a wide range of complex and conflicting ideas, thoughts and ideologies. The objective of the study is to locate a common

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[12]While the primary intention of the research was to conduct individual interviews, however, several factors restricted the pursual of this method. The villagers remained unresponsive when approached individually and were much more interactive and open within groups.

thread that weaves these contestations into a desirable and meaningful approach towards development.

Chapter 2

Unlearning Development:
The Conventions of Development Theory and Practice

The chapter undertakes the overview of the evolving development discourse and explores the way in which development can create conditions for the sustenance of a just and stable society that caters to an overall 'improvement in a complex of linked natural, economic, social, cultural and political conditions'.[1] It traces the fundamentals of this understanding in a process that synergises development with social justice.

Social justice can be viewed as a condition that paves the way for 'emancipatory politics' wherein all human beings have access to equal and inalienable rights.[2] It urges a change in the institutions and practices of the society towards this goal.

The achievement of greater social justice necessitates a condition that requires people to have equal access to:

> ...economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.[3]

A framework of thought that aligned international political order with these conditions of social justice was the Right to Development approach. The Universal Declaration of the Right to Development adopted in 1986 embodies these conditions as an 'inalienable human right'[4]. It forwards an idea of development as a:

> ...comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from.[5]

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[1] Richard. Peet and Elaine Hartwick. *Theories of Development: Contentions. Arguments, Alternatives,* New York, 2009. p. 3.

[2] Behrooz Morvaridi. *Social Justice and Development,* New York. 2008. p.184.

[3] Arjun. Sengupta. 'On the Theory and Practice of the Right to Development' in *Human Rights Quarterly.* 24:4. p.846-847

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 847.

Perceived as a paradigm shift within the development discourse, the chapter critically analyses the Right to Development approach as that coherent alternative which can guarantee an overall advancement of the society, against a neo-liberal path of development driven by the goals of economic prosperity alone.

This critical engagement with the RTD approach is premised on the view that only a development path that promotes effective mechanisms of social justice in a society can cater to its holistic welfare and wellbeing. It identifies social justice as an imperative to achieve greater freedom and wellbeing for all in a just and an equitable way.

The study sets out to explore the answers to two critical questions here: first, was an approach that fulfilled only an economistic purpose, too narrow; and, secondly, with such a stance and its deep western inclinations, to what extent could the needs of a heterogeneous world with differing cultures and experiences be served fairly.[6]

The chapter is divided into three sections: the first part summarizes the factors that led to a rethinking of the goals of development. It traces the important turning points in the international political economy since the 1950s and their impact on development thinking and practice. Based on this understanding, the second section sets the foundation of a new era in development thinking that prioritized the goals of social justice and human rights and was marked by the enhanced role of the state as an agent of a development. The concluding section of the chapter outlines the fundamental premises of the RTD framework based on these discussions.

I

Why Development Thinking Changed Around the 1980s?

The meaning and significance of the basic premises of development have continuously transformed with changing circumstances within the politics, economy and ideology of the world, overtime. The objective of this section is to trace the

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[6] Louis Emmerij. *Turning Points in Developing Thinking and Practice. UNU-WIDER.* No.2006/08. Helsinki. 2006.p. 5.

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dynamic evolution of idea of development and in the process pick up the relevant pieces of its character to conceptualise the foundations of the RTD framework.

The 'Impasse' In Development Theory:

Hans Singer, while examining the successes and failures of the history of the development process describes the period of the 1950s and the 1960s as the 'golden years'.[7]The experiences of Second World War and the Great Depression had motivated the First World countries to move increasingly towards greater expansion of trade, production and economy.[8] By this time, industrialised countries began to experience high rates of growth, investments, expansion in trade and production with full employment and very low inflation.

One of the earliest formulations on the development practises of countries, during this time, was influenced by the writings of John Maynard Keynes and the post wartime state interventions in the economy.[9] Keynesian economic theory legitimized state intervention with the aim of achieving higher rates of growth based on social policy. Keynes was of the view that free market cannot spontaneously create human well being; it depends on active state intervention driven towards the goal of enhancing aggregate demands through full employment.[10]For him,

> ...economic problems yield to actions of benevolent states endowed with
> sufficient supplies of capital and armed with good economic analysis.[11]

During the post-war period, Keynesian economics became the basis of growth theories. P.W. Preston called this the period of 'Positivist Orthodoxy'[12]. Many countries outside America began to embrace Keynes social-democracy ethos.[13]For example, Japan's rapid industrialization during the 1920s was attributed to direct state intervention in the development process. The Japanese state played a key role in rationalizing key industries, enhancing economies of scale and introducing scientific

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[7] Hans Singer. 'Lessons of Post-War Development Experience. 1945-88'in Soumitra Sharma. ed.. *Development Policy,* London. 1992. p. 34
[8] Ibid.
[9] Colin Leys. *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory.* Bloomington. IN. 1996. p. 8.
[10] Peet and Hartwick. Op.Cit..p.58.
[11] Leys. Op.Cit.. p.7.
[12] Ibid.. p.8.
[13] Ibid.

management. At the same time it played an active role in establishing social and economic goals to guide the process of development.[14]

By the 1950s however, the weaknesses of Keynesian economic began to surface. Gunnar Myrdal argued that orthodox economic theory were inadequate to understand the dynamic character of development and under-development. These could not explain the persistence of inequalities in the developing countries. Myrdal refers to the 'softeness' of the Indian state and drew attention towards the incapacities of the Indian economy to follow 'the social-democratic ideal of a rational, firmly benevolent enforcer of the national interest and impose the necessary discipline on everyone from businessmen to landlords to small peasants'.[15] He opines that the developing problems of the underdeveloped countries can be attributed to the indifference and disregard to the non economic variables: the attitudes and institutions and the social and economic stratifications that act as obstacles to the development process. These were corruption, nepotism and low levels of social discipline. This persistence of these problems disabled these states.

Another kind of response to the incapacities of these societies to respond to the positivist orthodoxy was offered by the evolutionary theories of Modernization.

The theory of Modernization was an overarching discourse that treated development as a multidimensional process representing endogenous change such as 'social differentiation, rationalization, the spread of universalism, achievement and specificity' and exogenous change, namely 'the spread of capitalism, industrialization through technological diffusion, westernization'.[16] It was introduced as a grand paradigm bifurcating traditional societies from modern societies wherein the transition into becoming a modern nation was influenced by the developmental experience of Western Europe.

The 'modern' West was posited as a benchmark against which the progress of newly independent nations began to be measured. According to this line of thought, each country underwent same historical trajectory of development, which would ultimately

[14] Peet and Hartwick. Op. Cit..p. 64.
[15] Leys.Op.Cit.. p.8.
[16] Jan Nederveen Peiterse. The Development of Development Theory: Towards Critical Globalism. *Review of International Political Economy*. 1996. 3:4. p. 552

align them to the Western model. Within this paradigm, W.W. Rostow identified five 'universal' stages of development; traditional society, precondition for take-off, take-off, the drive towards maturity and high mass consumption. Rostow envisaged these as the "right conditions to move from a traditional economy towards modernity or from a state of 'underdevelopment' or poverty to that of developed".[17]

Advocates of Modernization theories opined that the transition from traditional to modern forms of social organization was already experienced in the developed and industrialized west and had to be diffused into traditional societies through industrialization, technological innovation and capital formation.[18]

The Neo-Marxist school of thought offered one of the robust political and intellectual critiques of the theory of modernization and the idea of the state as the agent of development. They argued that the Third World was assessed not on the basis of its present reality, but rather on how far it deviated from a 'future Western norm'.[19]

By the 1960s, the Marxist and the Neo-Marxist schools of thought set the foundations of a more radical theory of development.

Contradicting the basic premises of the social democratic paradigm, the Marxists traditions stressed on the role of the state in sustaining capitalism. Capitalism compels economic growth to occur through competition and exploitation.[20] The state, according to these theories, sustained the 'regime for ensuring the continued reproduction and maintenance of an essentially exploitative capitalist socio-economic order'.[21] The state was referred to as an apparatus of control that:

> ...contributed to the continual struggle to accumulate capital by materially assisting in bringing labour and capital together profitably...[22]

Advocates of this school were of the view that; 'Europe's development was based on external destruction rather than internal innovation—brutal conquest, colonial control,

[17] Morvaridi. Op. Cit., p. 11.
[18] Leys. Op. Cit., p. 8.
[19] Ray Kiely. Sociology and Development: The Impasse and Beyond. Oxon. 1995. p. 5.
[20] Peet and Hartwick. Op., Cit., p. 156.
[21] Anthony Mc Grew. 'The State in Advanced Capitalist Societies' in John Allen. et.al. Political and Economic Forms of Modernity. Cambridge:Open University Press and Polity. 1992. p. 88.
[22] Ibid., p.89.

and stripping non-Western societies of their people, resources, and surpluses...'[23].Paul Baran reinforced this view:

> Far from serving as an engine of economic expansion, of technological progress, and of social change, the capitalist order in these countries has represented a framework for economic stagnation, for archaic technology and for social backwardness.[24]

It was based on a new global geography wherein the economies in which capitalist production first penetrated were called the 'centre', while the non European Third World was called the 'periphery'. Mainstream development theorists claimed that the diffusion of capital from advanced countries to the less developed would help the latter progress. Such a position was refuted by the Neo-Marxists on the grounds that development and underdevelopment were related processes emerging from within a highly unequal economic system. Baran stated that capital accumulation in advanced countries was sustained by blocking the development in less developed countries. In other words, such a system created favourable economic conditions in dominant countries by appropriating indiscriminately the resources and surplus of the less advanced nations[25]. Teontonio Dos Santos describes this as the structure of a world economy which:

> ...favors some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economies...a situation in which the economy of a certain group of countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which their own is subjected.[26]

This kind of critical enquiry challenged the ethnocentrism of such a political economy drawn intrinsically from Western experiences from the perspective of peripheral countries.

It could be argued however, that the dependency theory offered only a 'tentative and a defensive alternative'.[27] These theories could not completely depart from Western influences. While they criticized modernization theories, the growth oriented model of

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[23] Peet and Hartwick. *Op. Cit.*, p.166.

[24] Emmerij. Op. Cit... p. 3.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Peet and Hartwick. Op. Cit., pp. 166-167.

[27] Emmerij. Op.. Cit. p. 3.

development propounded by mainstream theories[28] remained implicitly acknowledged within the discourse. Their rejection of the dichotomy between tradition and modernity which is situated at the core of the modernization theory was, in fact, based on a theorization of the Western model as the norm and the Third World underdevelopment as a deviation of that norm.[29]

With the changes sweeping international political economy during the 1960s and the 1970s, the weaknesses of the theories of classical economics and dependency became apparent.

By the 1970s, the international economy underwent a 'stagflation' with high levels of inflations, unemployment and low growth rates. The period not only marked the advent of a crisis in Keynesian economics, it also overthrew the basic premises of the Neo-Marxist theories.

Keynesian economics came under a series of attacks. Harry Jonson, an economist from Chicago University, was of the view that the limitation of Keynesian economics largely responded to social needs and lacked scientific truth. He rejected Keynes's lack of faith in capitalism to rectify economic problems. Jonson stressed that the economic deterioration confronting African and other developing countries was because of 'misguided'[30] Keynesian developmental policies. State intervention in economic activities was a futile attempt towards the achievement of social justice.[31] Similarly, P.T Bauer was of the view that Keynes theory lacked empirical evidence. He insisted that government participation in the economy must be refrained from. Deepak Lal, therefore argued that:

> ...imperfect world, imperfect market mechanisms do better, in practice, than imperfect state planning mechanisms.[32]

Lal opposed redistribution of income from the rich to the poor, economic planning and government interventions and favoured the need for greater liberalization.

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[28] Ronaldo Munck. Denise O. Hearn ed.. Critical *Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm.* New York. 1999. p.12.
[29] Kiely. Op.Cit.. p.5.
[30] Peet and Hartwick. Op. Cit.. p.75.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.. p.76.

These criticisms can be summarized as the neo-liberal responses to Keynesianism, social democracy, state intervention and dependency theories. The discrediting of these theories paved the way for the resurgence of a new wave of neo-liberal revolution during the 1980s.

Neo-liberalism set the foundation of a:

> ...a liberal global order characterized by multilateralism, nondiscrimination, minimization of impediments to the movement of goods and factors...and the control of such movements by privately owned rather than publicly owned entities.[33]

The most important role in laying these premises of neo-liberalism can be attributed to the writings of Friedman, Mises and Hayek. These writers were committed to the ideas of personal freedom. They were convinced that socialism was a threat to the Western civilization and capitalist liberalism alone upheld freedom[34]. Mises is the view that a state may be necessary, however, in order for *Laissez Faire* to work out its 'miracles of development', state's power should be minimised. Hayek opines that role of the state should be restricted to the preservation of the rule of law, peace and ensuring unhampered market coordination. Friedman thought that 'millions of able, active and vigorous people exist in every underdeveloped country' and 'require only a favorable environment to transform the face of their countries' within neoliberal policies aimed at creating 'more competitive markets with brave, more innovative entrepreneurs.'[35]

Neo-liberal theory began to exert its practical influence in the international political economy. Under the presidency of Jimmy Carter, deregulation began to be intensively pursued in response to the stagflation that the US economy faced during the 1970s. Under the leadership of Margret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, a strong neo-liberal mandate was adopted to reform the British and the American economy. This was

[33] Stephen D Krasner., *Structural Conflict: The Third World Against Global Liberalism*. Berkeley.1985.p.61.
[34] Peet and Hartwick. Op. Cit..p. 79.
[35] Ibid., p.83.

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based on massive deregulation, rolling back of the state, privatization, tax cuts and restricting unionism[36].

Stephen.D. Krasner was of the view that this global liberal order was established with the goal of preventing the experiences of 1930s. The economic instability and repression of this period overthrew the American belief in a 'closed...state-run international economic system' that was now considered 'destructive to both peace and prosperity' of the country.[37]

Krasner highlighted the way in which the less developed were included into this liberal order. They were asked to open their economies to policies facilitating greater foreign investments and free trade. The basic assumption behind these policies was that foreign investments would stimulate growth; growth would promise greater political stability and this in turn would preserve democracy. And democratic regimes would be open to embracing policies that align with the American vision of the global order.[38]

The neo-liberal economic regime pushed for policy reforms that demanded the debtor countries to 'set their houses in order'.[39] The use of the term 'policy' meant policy instruments rather than policy outcomes. The policy instruments applied to the Third World included that of increased liberalization, privatization, deregulation, reduction in public sector expenditure and such.[40] During the 1970s, countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America embarked upon a path of 'un-underdeveloping'[41] themselves by subjecting their economies to significant changes under the Structural Adjustment Program, an institutional reform endorsed by large international financial bodies like the World Bank and IMF to encourage a neo-liberal path of development based on limited interference by the state in the third world[42].

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[36] David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York. 2005. p. 22.
[37] Krasner. Op. Cit., p.61.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Peet and Hartwick. Op. Cit., p.84.
[40] Ibid., pp.84-86.
[41] Arturo Escobar. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton. 1995. p.6.
[42] Morvaridi. Op. Cit.,p. 73.

Most of the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America were facing financial deficits by the 1980s. This period proved to be devastating for sub-Saharan African countries as they were rapidly acquiring the status of a marginalized 'Fourth world'.[43] The social and economic vulnerabilities of these countries forced them to open their doors to the processes of aid, stabilization, adjustment and liberalization.

While western aid and development policies were thrust upon the less developed countries in the name of democratization and improvements of human rights, the main objectives of this approach was to promote open and market friendly economies and overthrow the state-led development paradigm. These served to preserve the ascendency of neo-liberalism in economic theory and public policy.[44]

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s paved the way for the West to impose explicit political and institutional conditions on the borrowing countries through aid without any threat of communism. It also seemed to have proved the neo-liberal assertion that state controlled economies were bound to tread a path ridden with corruption, inefficiency, stagnation and collapse[45].

The restructuring of the international economic order along neo-liberal lines could not, however, reverse the impact of the problems of poverty, inequality, unemployment and other forms of human deprivations in the Third world countries. The persistence of these problems was justified as a 'necessary price to pay' until the process of growth and capital accumulation enlarges. Once this was accomplished the negative impact would recede as growth will gradually 'trickle down' to the poor[46]. However, in actual fact most of these countries found themselves much more vulnerable. The sustenance of their economies was greatly dependent on extensive borrowing from international institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. Evidently, the diffusion of capital into these societies had not produced the progress that was presumed by mainstream development theories.

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[43] Hans Singer. 'Lessons of Post-War Development Experience. 1945-88'in Soumitra Sharma.ed.. *Development Policy.* London. 1992. p.65.

[44] Adrian Leftwich. Governance. the State and the Politics of Development. *Development and Change.* 25:2. 1994. pp.364-366.

[45] Ibid.. p.369.

[46].Singer. Op. Cit.. pp. 47.

While the rest of Asia, Africa and Latin American struggled to cope with poverty and economic stagnation, the newly industrialized countries (NICs) of East Asia experienced rapid economic development. Their success not only challenged the basic premises of the Marxist and the Neo-Marxist theories that diffusion of capital, technological innovation and industrialization, contrary to the claims of the mainstream theories of development, only led to greater underdevelopment of the less developed countries but also the liberal prescription of market oriented policy and planning based on a limited state. The high growth rates in the NIC were attributed to state led economic planning. The state played an active role promoting industrial expansion, regulating foreign investments and building its skill bases and technological capabilities. Forces dominating the international political economy were caught unawares by economic 'miracle'[47] in the East Asian newly industrialized countries.

In this context, Peter Evans opines that with the emergence of NIC, the 'market as magic bullet' model of conventional economics was challenged by the central role of public institutions[48]. Evans was of the view that the 'East Asian miracle' helped broaden the development framework. It invoked the role of the state as a developmental agent and its relationship with informal networks and community norms that constituted 'social capital'[49]. He refers to the synergy between public institutions and civic engagement.

> The actions of public agencies facilitate forging norms of trust and networks of civic engagement among ordinary citizens and using these norms and networks for developmental ends. Engaged citizens are a source of discipline and information for public agencies, as well as on-the-ground assistance in the implementation of public projects[50].

Evans further quotes Robert Putnam and Nugent to elaborate that;

> ...there is evidence that the existence of the state and the rules it establishes and enforces can strengthen and increase the efficiency of LOIs [local

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[47] Peet and Hartwick. Op. Cit.,p. 64.
[48] Peter Evans. 'Introduction: Development Strategies Across the Public-Private Divide' in Peter Evans. ed.. *State-Society Synergy. Government and Social Capital in Development.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.p.3.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

organizations and institutions] and that, atleast in coalition with other urban-based groups, LOIs can give rise to collective action increasing the power of the state[51].

Evans attributes the successes of the NIC to the robustness of their bureaucratic structures. The pursuit of developmental ends and formation of social capital in these countries, he opines, was not because of centralized structures, but rather their capabilities to effectively distribute power and therefore strengthen the processes of decentralisation and openness of local self organizations[52]. He notes:

> The value of synergistic strategies is evident. Creative action by government organizations can foster social capital; linking mobilized citizens to public agencies can enhance the efficacy of government. The combination of strong public institutions and organized communities is a powerful tool for development. Better understanding of the nature of synergistic relations between state and society and the conditions under which such relations can most easily be constructed should become a component of future theories of development[53].

The discussions summarise the contestations pervading development theory until the 1980s. The dissatisfaction with the elusiveness of the development project, led some to believe that development was dead.

It was evident that development theory was undergoing a serious crisis. Emmerij summarises the dead end that development theory confronted during the 1980s:

> They do not explain why so many countries do not seem to be able to take off economically or are regressing to previous levels of economic development. They do not explain either the 'ennui' in the apparently successful countries. Examples are the totally unanticipated collapse of communism and the reintegration of Central and Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union into the capitalist world economy. Nor do they give an explanation of the reappearance of virulent nationalism and ethnic conflicts as well as the rapid growth of the militant religious fundamentalism in both Western and non-Western societies. The economic stagnation and the decline in African and Latin American countries; the imposition and the lack of success of structural adjustment programs, especially in Africa, the rapid state-led industrialisation of the East Asian countries cannot be explained by any rational criteria of the Washington Consensus School[54].

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[51] Ibid., p.3-4.
[52] Ibid.,p.195.
[53] Ibid.,p.204.
[54] .Emmerij. Op.Cit.. p.4.

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In the same vein, Schuurman concludes that the realization of the expanding gap between the rich and poor countries, the preoccupation of developing countries with short term goals, absence of a viable alternative to overcome the problem of underdevelopment with the de-legitimation of socialism, the bifurcation of the world into First World and Third Torld countries by these dominant theories, ignorance of the differentiation that existed within the third world and the growing recognition of the voices of the marginalized and the poor and such other factors challenged the validity of the dominant theories of development[55]. The period was marked by a widening gulf between development theory and practice.[56]

The weaknesses within the dominant explanations to development were apparent by the 1980s. While some presumed this to be the end of development, there also emerged a line of thought that drew upon its continued relevance and its dynamic presence. It invoked the need to rethink and reform the premises of development thinking and practice.

The End of Development?

> Like a towering lighthouse guiding sailors towards the coast, 'development' stood as *the* idea which oriented emerging nations in their journey through post-war history. No matter whether democracies or dictatorships, the countries of the South proclaimed development as their primary aspiration, after they had been freed from colonial subordination. Four decades later, governments and citizens alike still have their eyes fixed on this light flashing just as far away as ever: every effort and every sacrifice is justified in reaching the goal, but the light keeps on receding into the dark[57].

In the absence of any firm theoretical grounding, there emerged a strong inclination towards the renunciation of any commitment to the idea of development. One of the most radical reactions to the impasse in development came from the post development

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[55] Frans Johan Schuurman.. *Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in development Theory*, London. 1993.p.9

[56] Morvaridi. Op. Cit..p.13.

[57] Wolfgang Sachs. 'Introduction' in Wolfgang Sachs (ed.). *Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London. 1992. p.1.

thought. It was also known as 'anti development' or 'beyond development'.[58] The proponents of this line of thinking were Wolfgang Sachs, Arturo Escobar, Gustavo Esteva and others.

Post development critiques were inspired by the position that 'history incorporates a teleogy of progress'[59]. They were critical of the view that human history undergoes a process of progress towards a greater human emancipation or, in other words, that development could have a societal end goal (communism or capitalism). They upheld the understanding that history was a 'contingent succession of events'. This idea reinforced the belief that humankind did not possess the ability to secure beneficial outcomes 'through science...application of technology and such methods as rational techniques of planning'.[60]

The post developmental critiques locate development as a discourse. Amongst the most influential writings within this line of thought was by Arturo Escobar. He viewed development 'not [as] a natural process of knowledge that gradually uncovered the problems and dealt with them' but rather 'as a historical construct that provides a space in which poor countries are known, specified and intervened upon'.[61]

Development was perceived as a misconceived enterprise that supported the ideological project of western domination. Escobar opined that the idea of Third World poverty was a nothing but an organizing principle on the basis of which new forms of power and control were brought into operation[62]. He argued that the West believed that it had the financial and the technological capacity to secure economic growth across the world. Sachs describes the implications of this western model of growth:

> The campaign to turn traditional man into modern man has failed. The old ways have been smashed, the new ways are not viable. People are caught in the deadlock of development: the peasant who is dependent on buying seeds,

[58] Jan Nederveen Peiterse. My Paradigm or Yours?Alternative Development, Post-Development. Refexive Development. *Development and Change*. 29:2, 1998. p. 360.

[59] Trevor Parfitt. *The End of Development? Modernity, Post-Modernity and Development*. London. 2002.pp.4-5.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.,p.28.

[62] Arturo Escobar. The Invention of Development. *Current History*. 1999, 98:631. p.382.

yet finds no cash to do so; the mother who benefits neither from the care of her fellow women in the community nor from the assistance of a hospital; the clerk who had made it in the city, but is now laid off as a result of cost-cutting measures. They are all like refugees who have been rejected and have no place to go. Shunned by the 'advanced' sector and cut off from the old ways, they are expatriates in their own country; they are forced to get by in the no-man's-land between tradition and modernity[63].

He further argued:

[t]The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development, and they tell a common story: it did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions which catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated. But above all, the hopes and desires that made the idea fly, are now exhausted: development has grown obsolete[64]

However, despite having rejected development as a redundant concept, Sachs admits:

Nevertheless, the ruin stands there and still dominates the scenery like a landmark. Though doubts are mounting and uneasiness is widely felt, development talk still pervades not only official declarations but even the language of grassroots movements[65].

Why does the development talk pervade despite these weaknesses? A brief study of the involvement of the Third World in altering the international system of politics and governance reveals that, perhaps the quest for human emancipation can never conclude as the post development critiques would have liked to believe. The Third World challenges to the liberal regime frames the political economy of alternative patterns of development driven towards the achievement of substantive outcomes of the development process.

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[63] Wolfgang Sachs. 'Introduction' in Wolfgang Sachs (ed.). *Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London. 1992. p.2.
[64] Ibid.. p.3.
[65] Ibid.. p.1

II

Towards a New Concept of Development:

By the mid-1970s the Third World had emerged as a potent force challenging the American supremacy that had begun to wane. New instruments for development such as the demands for a New International Economic Order, OPEC, the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States demonstrated to the North that it was possible to challenge the liberal norms, rules and decision making procedures by the Third World. The restructuring of the international regime during this period had impacted the relationship between the North and South. It had paved the way for the articulation of new variants of the liberal approach and invoking greater sensitivity towards the concerns of the developing countries demanding a more equal relationship between the developed and the underdeveloped world.

An outgrowth of decolonisation was the inclusion of the less developed countries into the United Nations (UN). These countries began to organise themselves and worked together to change the norms of the existing International order[66]. In 1974, the UN General Assembly adopted a Declaration and Program of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order. Herein:

> ...based on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest and co-operation among all States, irrespective of their economic and social systems which shall correct inequalities and redress existing injustices, making it possible to eliminate the widening gap between the developed and the developing countries and ensure steadily accelerating economic and social development and peace and justice for present and future generations[67].

A reassertion of this understanding came with the adoption of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States. It declared that 'every State has the responsibility to promote economic, social and cultural development and progress for both its own people and those of developing countries.'[68] The international and national attention had gradually shifted from the economistic orientations of the 1980s

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[66] Isabella D.Bunn. The Right to Development: Implications for International Economic Law. *American University International Law Review.* 15:6. 2000. p.1430.
[67] Ibid.. p.1431.
[68] Ibid.

to that of human development. UNICEF's report entitled *Adjustment with a Human Face* in 1987, the United Nations Social Summit meeting in Copenhagen in 1995 and the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 represented the opposition to an purely economic focus and marked the movement towards drawing international legitimacy to the demands for preservations of human rights and promotion social and economic rights at par with civil and political freedoms. There was an increased emphasis on the democratization of decision-making processes to allow the articulation and protection of individual and group rights as a political norm and entitlement.[69]

The significance of these transformations resonated across the international political economy. In 1979, the president of the World Bank, Robert McNamara while addressing the board of governors of the Bank stated that:

> [i]If we focus on the ultimate objectives of development, it is obvious that an essential one must be the liberation of the 800 million individuals in the developing world who are trapped in absolute poverty — a condition of life so limited by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, high infant-mortality, and low life expectancy as to be below any rational definition of human decency.[70]

Hans-Otto Sano wrote that by the 1990s developing countries began set their imprints on the rights thought by making rights socially oriented.[71]The opportunity of an individual or a group to participate in development was asserted as a human right. It represented a paradigm shift that stressed on the idea of 'development from below'.[72]

Within the emerging intellectual positions in the Third World, there was a clear recognition of the understanding that the basic problems of the developing world cannot be resolved through the past strategies of growth and the diffusion of its benefits into these countries. The need for basic structural changes was emphasized. It was argued that the severity of poverty, unemployment, marginalization and human deprivations that drained large parts of the Third World could no longer be

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[69] Hans-Otto Sano. Development and Human Rights: The Necessary. but Partial Integration of Human Rights and Development. *Human Rights Quaterly.* 22:3,2000. p.740.

[70] Krasner. Op. Cit.. p.19.

[71] Sano. Op. Cit.,p.738.

[72] Ibid.,p.739.

downplayed by the rich countries or be considered as an occasion for charitable aid and assistance.

The need for a normative approach to development was forwarded, one that is 'socially situated' through its commitment to human freedom and wellbeing[73]. It became important within this perspective to view development as a comprehensive, all embracing whole that impinged upon the social, political, cultural as well as economic dimensions of the society.

Development is headed in a direction where the goal of human development is being increasingly construed as the fuel that can sustain it through what seems to have been a tumultuous journey so far. It was ridden with enumerable breakdowns.

The next section is devoted to understanding 'human development' and its basic components. Perhaps, this discussion can demystify the ends of development and the extent to which these can be realized in practise.

III

Reorienting the Goals of Development:

The publication of UNDP's *Human Development Report* in 1990s marked the turning point in development discourse. It propounded an idea of development that 'came from below- from the choices made by the development's actors themselves', capturing the essence of social justice.[74] It was defined as the process:

> ...of enlarging the range of people's choices—increasing their opportunities for education, health care, income and employment, and covering the full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to economic and political freedoms.[75]

In other words development was recognised as 'the commitment to the idea of 'promoting freedom, well-being and dignity of the individuals in all societies...'[76].

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[73] Morvaridi. Op. Cit..p.14.

[74].Brigitte I. Hamm. A Human Rights Approach to Development. *Human Rights Quarterly*. 23:4.2001 .p.1010

[75] Ibid.

[76] Stephen P. Marks. *The Right to Development: A Primer*. New Delhi. 2004. p.45.

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Within such a development thought, 'individual and social capabilities i.e. to the realization of human potential and to personal security and protection in realizing such potential'[77] were considered as crucial entitlements that the development process must be able to guarantee to all. This condition unveiled the intimate relationship that development shared with the idea of social justice. This new inroad into development thinking made the integration between the idea of social justice and development inevitable.

Social Justice as an Imperative

The book *Social Justice*, authored by Westel Willoughby in 1900 was one of the early conceptualizations on the idea of social justice. Willoughby opined that the just treatment of individuals is a question that social and economic institutions in the society are being subjected to in the era of popular sovereignty[78]. The scope of this kind critical appraisal expanded under the purview of social justice.

> Social justice requires the notion of a society made up of interdependent parts, with an institutional structure that affects the prospects of each individual member, that is capable of deliberate reform by an agency such as the state in the name of fairness.[79]

Social justice is about how the advantages and disadvantages are distributed to the individuals by a determinate set of social institutions. These institutions play a crucial role in ensuring individuals different life chances. The basic understanding of these social institutions is offered in John Rawls's conception of the 'basic structure of the society'.[80]This constituted the subject matter of social justice. According to Rawls social institutions:

> ...distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation. By major institutions I understand the political constitution and the principal economic and social arrangements...[that] taken together as one scheme...define men's rights and

[77] Hans-O Sano, Development and Human Rights: The Necessary, but Partial Integration of Human Rights and Development. *Human Rights Quaterly*. 2000.22:3.p.747.

[78] David Miller. *Principles of Social Justice*. Cambridge.1999. p.4.

[79] Ibid..p.4

[80] Ibid..p.6.

> duties and influence their lifetime prospects, what they can expect to be and
> how well they can hope to do... [81]

He enumerated two principles of justice that governed this structure; first, 'each person is to have the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for all and second, 'social and economic inequalities (i) are to be arranged so that they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantage and (ii) should be attached to offices open to all under the conditions of fair equality of opportunity'.[82] Rawls went on to add that any inequality in the distribution of 'primary goods' was admissible so far as it was in the benefit of the least advantaged. 'Primary goods' included income, wealth and a 'set of resources that everyone can be presumed to need, whatever their individual conception of the good life'.[83] This, as the 'difference principle' was posited as an essential requirement.

Thus, Rawls conception of justice was defined by the following need:

> All social primary goods-liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the
> social bases of self respect-are to be distributed equally unless an unequal
> distribution of any, or all, of these goods is to the advantage of the least
> favoured.[84]

The change in the institutional structure in favour of these demands reinforced the need for a state as a regulator and facilitator of the basic structure.

However, the idea of social justice that Rawls propounded through his theory of the 'basic structure of the society' came under critical scrutiny from several fronts.

Robert Nozick, for instance, was of the view that the kind of redistribution that Rawls justified was incompatible with idea of individual liberty. Nozick's idea of justice concerned itself with the process, the way in which material goods and other benefits were acquired:

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[81] Ibid.
[82] Gary Craig. Tania Burchardt and David Gordon, eds., *Social Justice and Public Policy: Seeking Fairness in Diverse Societies*. Cambridge. 2008. p.18.
[83] Ibid..p.4.
[84] Ibid...p.36.

> Distribution is just if everyone is entitled to the holdings they possess under the distribution. [85]

It was premised on preservation of property rights. According to Nozick, the ownership that an individual may establish over the material world through his property rights is driven by the understanding that:

> In a free society, diverse persons control different resources, and new holdings arise out of voluntary exchanges and actions of persons.[86]

Acquisition would be unjust if it were based on fraud, force or enslavement. In this context he opined that rectification of past injustices is important, if past acquisitions did not satisfy the conditions of justice.

However, Nozick's conception of justice could be considered inadequate. It did not explain what these past injustices constituted and the circumstances in which acquisition may be considered unjust. It could be pointed that his theory was based on an underlying presumption that the past has been just and acquisitions made were free and fair.

Both Rawls and Nozick, however, shared a common belief in free and open exchange which was not based on any form of discrimination or exclusion, a basic requirement of social justice.[87]

Iris Marion Young questioned Rawls idea of social justice on the grounds that it failed to tackle distribution from the perspective of 'elimination of institutionalised domination and oppression'.[88] Young contended that such a theory of social justice accorded greater attention to distribution rather than the process that produced these outcomes. She demanded therefore, that such a paradigm should undergo 'de-centring' since:

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[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.. p.39.
[88] Miller. Op. Cit... p.15.

...'institutional constraints' on 'self-determination' and 'self-development', rather than 'distribution' are taken as 'the starting point for a conception of social justice'[89]

Young clarified that a decision making process can be unjust despite its distributive consequences. She argued that 'social structure and the institutional context' determine the pattern of distribution and Rawls overlooked such 'social and power relations and the cultural meaning in which they are embedded'[90].

Young argues even if one has to say that all citizens have a right to participate in the decision making process, the experiences and views of some groups maybe suppressed for various reasons[91]. Responding to Amy Guttman's affirmation that the need that social and economic equality must be achieved before political equality, She opines:

> I cannot quarrel with the value of social and economic equality, but I think its achievement depends on increasing political equality as much as the achievement of political equality depends on increasing social and economic equality. If we are not to be forced to trace a utopian circle, we need to solve now the "paradox of democracy" by which social power makes some citizens more equal than others, and equality of citizenship makes some people more powerful citizens. That solution lies at least in part in providing institutionalised means for the explicit recognition and representation of oppressed groups[92].

Young stated that the distributional paradigm must be rectified by taking into its consideration the 'non-material social goods such as recognition and respect', which she attributed as the function of social and power relations[93] and how these maybe realised. She opines:

> Perhaps in some utopian future there will be a society without group oppression and disadvantage. We cannot develop political principles by starting with the assumption of a completely just society, however, but must begin from within the general historical and social conditions in which we exist. This means that we must develop participatory democratic theory not on the assumption of an undifferentiated humanity, but rather on the

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[89] Craig. Burchardt and Gordoneds.Op. Cit.. p.107.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Iris M.Young. Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal citizenship. *Ethics.* 99:2,1989. p. 258.

[92] Ibid..p.259.

[93] Craig. Burchardt and Gordon. eds.. Op. Cit..p. 107.

assumption that there are groups differences and that some groups are actually or potentially oppressed or disadvantages[94].

R.Lister and N. Fraser took this argument further to bring in the questions of sexuality, disability, gender and ethnicity as socially constructed differences that constituted the social structure and influenced the way in which benefits were distributed in the society and the recognition of the rightful recipients of these benefits was made.[95] Lister is of the view that:

> [t]The dynamic nature of social exclusion encourages a focus on processes and not just outcomes. In doing so, it provides due regard to agency, as well as structure, one or other of which can be lost sight of when attention is fixed, either benevolently or critically, on individual experience and behaviour. Thus, by encouraging the question 'who is excluding whom and how?' the concept draws attention to the role played by social and economic institutions and by political decisions in creating and reinforcing poverty and exclusion[96].

This strand of thought considered recognition, respect and redistribution as important components of social justice because it was the rejection of these ideas that acted as sources of social injustices, marginalisation and exclusion in the society.

One of the most egalitarian responses to Rawls theory of social justice was articulated by Amartya Sen.

Sen recognises that 'Rawls' original theory played a huge part in making us understand various aspects of the idea of justice . . . [i]lt has been about the most influential theory of justice in modern moral philosophy'.[97]However, Sen finds Rawls theory of justice problematic on several grounds.

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[94] Young. Op. Cit.. p.259.

[95] Craig. Burchardt and Gordon.eds..Op. Cit..p. 5.

[96] Ruth Lister. 'A politics of recognition and respect: Involving people with experience of poverty in decision-making that affects their lives' in J. Andersen. and B. Siim .eds.. *The politics of inclusion and empowerment.* New York. 2004.p. 117.

[97] Charles W. Mills. Re-Theorizing Justice: Some Comments on Amartya Sen's The Idea of Justice. *Indian Journal of Human development.* 5:1. 2011. p.147.

Sen accuses Rawls of premising his theory on a 'perfect idea of justice'[98]. He says that an idea of perfect justice is not required. The need is to remedy 'identifiable injustices'[99]:

> injustices in society such as slavery, the subjection of women, the lack of medical facilities in parts of Africa or Asia, the lack of universal healthcare in most countries of the world, including the United States, the tolerance of chronic hunger, for example, in India, and the extreme exploitation of labour can all be identified, targeted, and removed without any need to speculate at all as to what would be perfectly just social arrangements or what would be just institutions. It suffices to say that we can simply identity clear injustices and take steps to remove them[100].

He argues that a number of human deprivations are mutilating human existence such as poverty, illiteracy and gender discrimination. Sen suggests that most of these challenges demand immediate attention rather than the pursual of some ideal notion of justice.

> ...If the demands of justice have to give priority to the removal of manifest injustice, rather than concentrating on the long-distance search for the perfectly just society, then the prevention and alleviation of disability cannot but be fairly central in the enterprise of advancing justice...
>
> ...I would like to wish good luck to the builders of a transcendentally just set of institutions for the whole world, but for those who are ready to concentrate, at least for the moment, on reducing manifest injustices that so severely plague the world, the relevance of a 'merely' partial ranking for a theory of justice can actually be rather momentous...[101]

He uses this premise to question the universal traditions of Rawls's theory and promotes a pluralistic idea of justice. Underlining this point, Alejandro is of the view that:

> His[Sen's] concern is not, primarily, about an institutional framework to underpin justice. He is more concerned about a new moral sensibility among individuals whose identities are too varied to be subjugated by the moral horizons of nationalities and citizenship, and who may possess an expansive conception of justice[102].

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[98] James P. Sterba, What Sen Should Have Said to Rawls, *Indian Journal of Human development.* 5:1, 2011. p.135.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Sterba. Op.Cit.. p.135

[101] Roberto Alejandro.Towards a Hermeneutics of Justice: Refelctions on Amartya Sen's Philosophy. *Indian Journal of Human development.* 5:1. 2011.p. 104.

[102] Ibid..p.114.

Sen advanced a view that people create their own notions of justice. He argues that just outcomes, socially, will never be common to all cultures, societies and traditions.

Amartya Sen also draws a distinction between Rawls's *Transcendental Institutionalist* model with his own perspective based on *Realisation-focus Comparison.*[103] According to Sen, Rawls is concerned with defining a perfect set of social arrangements and institutions driven by the goals of justice. He opines that justice is not only expressed through institutions, but also non institutional facts of human and social interactions.[104] Rawls's theory does not take into consideration the actual behavioural patterns of the individuals while assuming that all would confirm to an ideal behaviour.[105]Rawls believes that once institutions are in place, these will be effective enough to tackle the complexities of social world. Sen is critical of Rawls presumption that there is no scope for justice beyond just institutions.

Within this line of argument, Sen draws attention to the idea of democracy. According to Sen, democracy plays an important role in creating opportunities for the processes of justice to take shape. The extent to which these opportunities are utilized depends upon, what he refers to as the dynamics of moral arguments and value preferences. He takes the Indian case and argues that India's success in preventing famines cannot be compared to its role in eradicating illiteracy, malnutrition, gender inequality and such concerns. Sen argues that issues that can be easily politicized and where sympathies can take an immediate form are addressed effectively. The persistence of these problems is because of the absence of any forceful engagement that could compel the authorities to take adequate measures. These issues demand what he calls a 'fuller practice of democracy' in terms of an intense analysis of these concerns with the use of better communication and participation[106].

Sen asserts that democratic institutions and procedures are not mechanical devices; their utilization depends upon the values, preferences and priorities of the individuals

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[103] Mills. Op.Cit.. p.146-147.
[104] Ibid.. p.147.
[105] Valerian Rodrigues .Justice as the Lens: Interrogating Rawls through Sen and Ambedkar. *Indian Journal of Human development*. 5:1,156.
[106] Amartya Sen. Development as Freedom. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1999. p.154.

and how they wish to make use of the opportunities of participation to articulate these preferences.

Sen therefore underlines that 'achievement of social justice depends not only on institutional forms (including democratic rules and regulations), but also an effective practice'[107]. Social interactions and behaviours therefore, play a crucial role. He argues that Rawls neglects in crucial ways the role of human judgments on justice and injustice in shaping a society functions.

Furthermore, Amartya Sen puts forward the view that there are pluralities of conceptions of justice. He says that everyone must have the 'capability to do things that he or she has reason to value' and these according to him constitute the measures of justice. Sen opines '[t]The concept of capability is thus linked closely with the opportunity aspect of freedom, seen in terms of comprehensive opportunities, and not just focusing on what happens at culmination'[108]. Justice is, therefore, 'not a virtue so much of institutions but social outcomes. What actually happens to people is important. The focus, therefore, should be on avoidance of injustice rather than on the pursuit of justice. The capabilities that justice cherishes are not fixed but are an outcome of deliberative reasoning'[109].

These arguments invoke the significance of a notion of justice that pervades any form of discussion on an ideal society, whether one chooses to uphold its significance or deny it completely.

The purpose of the discussion is trace the basic components of the frame of analysis for the study. It essentially borrows from idea of social justice that embodies an arrangement of just institutions and practises of development driven towards the achievement of substantive outcomes.

The study locates this process of development within the RTD framework.

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[107] Ibid., p.159.
[108] Rodrigues .Op.Cit..p. 157.
[109] Ibid..p. 163

The Right to Development Approach:

The Right to Development is based on three important principles: first, there is an inalienable human right that is called the right to development; second, there is a particular process of economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized; and Third, the right to development is a human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy that particular process of development[110].

The RTD framework appeals to a process of development routed in the idea human rights and social justice. Development evolves, then, as a;

> ...comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from.[111]

Adopting human rights and social justice as a measure of development can have significant implications; first, such an interface between development human rights and social justice reorients the process of development. Through the inclusion of rights, it facilitated access to development as a process that guaranteed fundamental rights and freedom to all human beings.

> The language of rights has considerable mobilizing power; it reminds us that people have justified and urgent claims; rights confer agency and enable the individual person and groups in particular to articulate strong claims for their space[112]

Secondly, by empowering the society, it lays out new premises of accountability. It can offer the space to interrogate institutional frameworks of the society, benchmarked against the standards prescribed by the ideas of social justice and human rights and in doing so create conditions that can provide security and predictability to the individuals to pursue their objectives

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[110] Arjun Sengupta. 'On the Theory and Practice of the Right to Development' in *Human Rights Quarterly*. 24. 2002 p. 847.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Morvaridi. Op.Cit..p. 31.

The state is under the obligation to adopt necessary practices and build mechanisms that strengthens the commitment to achieve these rights for all.[113]

The Right to development could be recognised as an approach that seeks to secure social, economic, political and cultural rights by bringing the state and the society together through an elaborate framework of rights and duties, participation and accountability and mutually beneficial partnerships where the state acts as an agent of development rather than its enemy. This can produce sustainable processes of development that can enhance the perpetuation and preservation of these rights.

IV

Conclusion:

The Right to Development approach affirms the relevance and significance of the idea of development in human life. It may not represent an ideal form of development that can redress all the problems of the society, however, it does embody the commitment to resolve these issues in a way that serves the best interest of the society as a whole. The study attempts to locate the possibilities of the same.

Based on the inferences drawn from the discussion, the objective is to understand the extent to which these ideas can be translated into practice. The study will attempt to critically analyse the current patterns of development through a frame constituted on the basic premises of the RTD approach: non discrimination and preservation of human rights, participation and accountability (delineated in greater length in chp.1) in the context of the state of Chhattisgarh. The intention and the purpose behind the selection of the state will be established in Chapter 3.

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[113].Arjun Sengupta , Human Rights and Extreme Poverty. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 14:17. April 2010. p.87.

Chapter 3

Disentangling Chhattisgarh: A Backgrounder

> ...an economic powerhouse....a modern, progressive, egalitarian State-
> where every single citizen has a decent quality of life and poverty is a
> word consigned to the dictionary[1].

These lines describe the future of the state of Chhattisgarh. Etched across the glossy pages of a coffee table book, this extract usher's one through images capturing what it calls the state's 'supersonic growth'. The multistoried malls, multiplexes, over head bridges, broad roads, and an expanding urban population; outlining the capital city of Raipur today, testifies to this change. As one moves closer into the interiors of the district, a different image of the state is revealed. The broad roads of the city reduce to uneven muddy trails of dense forests that inhabit small villages of primitive communities. Lack of basic amenities and poor development infrastructure is a common characteristic of these forest villages. Feeling displaced and deprived, primitive tribal groups are struggling everyday against unemployment and poverty which is gradually forcing them onto the path of extinction. Evidently, these villages were untouched by what the state wished to believe was Chhattisgarh's fairy tale progress.

The chapter dwells into some of the reasons for this paradox through a critical inquiry into the working of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act enacted in 2005. The Act is considered a paradigm shift in development policy and practice by guaranteeing 100 days of employment to every rural household as a right. While promising security and sustainability to the rural poor, it remains to be seen in what ways the Act fulfils the basic requirements of a RTD model.

The discussion derives its theoretical frame from a process of development that fulfills the human right to social justice; which has been operationalised by breaking it down into the following components for the analytical purpose of the study:

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[1] Chhattisgarh, Trend Setting Marketing Services Pvt Ltd,p.35

- Non-discrimination, which includes fulfillment of all basic amenities of life without any discrimination based on class, caste, gender and such

- Participation and empowerment and,

- Accountability and Transparency.

Incorporating social justice into the constructs of development thinking and practice makes explicit the need to recognize these dimensions of social justice which may be undermined in a paradigm built on purely economistic goals. By drawing upon the components of the RTD approach, the study takes a structural view of the experiences of poverty and deprivation.

Considering the economic and non-economic experiences of poverty or in other words its multidimensional character, therefore, constitutes the basis of the following analysis.

The study is contexualised within the development experiences of Chhattisgarh. As an emerging economy, Chhattisgarh is still in a process carving out effective patterns of development and governance. To be able to analyse the way in which the state strikes a balance between the goals of growth and development, can assist the study to locate the relevance and significance of the basic components of the RTD in practise.

I

Land, People and Demography

Physical aspects of Chhattisgarh:

The state covers a total geographical area of 135,000 square kilometers. It is located between 17 to 23.7 degrees north latitude and 8.40 to 83.40 east latitude. Chhattisgarh experiences tropical, humid and sub humid climate.

The Mahanadi is the principle river of the state besides other major rivers like Sheonath, Hadeo, Mand, Eab, Pairi, Jonk, Kelo Udanti, Indrawati, Arpa and Maniyari.These provide the large network of surface water and constitute the primary source of irrigation in the region.

Almost 44% of the total region is covered with dense forests. Sal forests are found in abundance. Teak, sal, gum, bamboo, mahuwa and tedu patta are the principle forest produce of the state and a source of income for its tribal and forest village communities.

It also has a rich mineral resource base such as diamonds, iron ore, coal, granite, bauxite and such. Exploiting mineral wealth is a key source of economic growth and revenue for the state[2].

Chhattisgarh can be divided into: the Northern region, constituted by districts such as Korea, Surguja, Jashpur, Raigarh, and Korba; Central plains cover important districts like Raipur, Bilaspur, Janjgir-Champa, Kabirdham, Rajnandgaon, Durg, Dhamtari and Mahasamund. Raipur and Durg have the largest urban population in the state and the Southern region covers Kanker, Bastar and Dantewada districts It shares its borders with six states: Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh[3].

Origin:

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[2].Human Development Report, Chhattisgarh, 2005, p.7-11.
[3].Human Development Report, Chhattisgarh, 2005, p.9.

In ancient times this region was called 'Dakshin Kosala'. The name 'Chhattisgarh' came into use in the last few years and is not ancient. The word was popularized during the Maratha period and came into official use in 1795[4].

A British chronicler, J.B Beglar highlighted the significance of the name. He opined that the 'the real name is Chhattisghar and not Chhattisgarh. According to traditional beliefs, during the time of Jarasandha, thirty six families of dalits emigrated southwards from Jarasandha's kingdom and established themselves in country, which was later called Chhattisgarh'[5].

In the 10th century AD, Chhattisgarh came under the rule of the Haihaya dynasty. It governed the region till the 14th century. By 1741 the dynasty was overthrown by the Marathas. By 1758, Chhattisgarh came under complete control of the Marathas. Their governance patterns were ridden with unrest and misrule as the Marathas extensively looted and plundered the region and openly surrendered the interests of the region to the British. Poverty and deprivation forced the locals to resist the Marathas. One of the most intense conflicts took place between the Marathas and the Gond communties[6].

Chhattisgarh came under the British control in 1818. The colonial intrusion into the region provoked a number of tribal rebellions against the authority. The Halba rebellion was amongst the first documented rebellions against the British and the Marathas in Bastar[7].

In 1857, Vir Narain Singh, a zamindar from sonakhan led the first war of Independence against the British. Although he was suppressed by the British army, Singh became a symbol of Chhattisgarhi pride.

Prathak Chhattisgarh: Demands for a Separate State

[4] cg.gov.in/profile/corigin.htm, 20-07-2011.
[5] cg.gov.in/profile/corigin.htm, 20-07-2011
[6].S.C Bhatt, Gopal k. Bhargava (eds.), *Land and People of Indian States and Union Territories:Chhattisgarh*, New Delhi, 2005, p.17-18.
[7].Ibid.,pp.17-18.

The demand for a separate state of Chhattisgarh emerged during the 1920s. It voiced the need to preserve the region's distinct socio-cultural identity and challenged the persistent marginalization that the region experienced for years. Until a well-organised movement could emerge, most of these demands were raised in political party platforms, rallies and public meetings. One the earliest demands for separation were raised by the Raipur unit of the Congress.

In 1954, following the creation of the States Reorganisation Committee, these demands resurfaced. However, it was rejected on the grounds that the prosperity of the state could compensate for the poorer states of Madhya Pradesh[8]. It was only by the 1990s that the demand gained intensity, especially with the formation of Chhattisgarh Rajya Nirman Manch. It was led by late Chadulal Chadrakar. Rallies, strikes, bandhs and all kinds of public forums were organised under his leadership across the state. These demands were supported by both the Congress and the Bhartiya Janta Party(BJP)[9]. The demand for a separate state was adopted by both the parties in their election manifestos during the parliamentary elections in 1998 and 1999 and the Madhya Pradesh assembly elections in 1998.

The bill demanding a separate state for Chhattisgarh was unanimously passed in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. On the 1st of November, 2001, Chhattisgarh attained an independent status.

There were several factors behind the formation of Chhattisgarh. Firstly, there was a growing recognition that the region had its own distinctiveness and socio-cultural identity and Prathak Chhattisgarh gave recognition to this identity. Secondly, it was increasingly felt that a new and independent state of Chhattisgarh could enable the region to develop out of its experiences of deprivation. It could have a dominant effect in terms of bringing the administration closer to the people so as to ensure that their needs and concerns were prioritised and effectively fulfilled. An independent

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[8].Ibid..p.19.
[9].Ibid.

state with a government could promise greater probability of growth and development in the region which was neglected for long[10].

A look at the income and livelihood patterns of Chhattisgarh, post separation, may reveal the extent to which this probability was actualized.

Income and Livelihood patterns: Population:

According to the 1991 census, the total population of Chhattisgarh within undivided Madhya Pradesh was 1.761 crores constituted by 37.1% Schedule Tribes and 22.3% Schedule Castes. In 2001, the total population was 20,833,803 crores. This was formed by 31.7% Schedule tribes and 11.6% Schedule castes Table 2. and 2.1 depict the distribution of the population of Chhattisgarh in 2001.

Table.2. Distribution of the population of Chhattisgarh.			
Population	Total	**Rural**	Urban
Male	10,474,218	**8,307,443**	2,166,775
Female	10,359,585	**8,340,613**	2,018,972
Total	20,833,803	**16,648,056**	4,185,747
Source: 2001 Census			

Table.2.1. Distribution of the Social Groups						
	Schedule Caste			Schedule Tribes		
	T	M	F	T	M	F
Total	2,418,722	1213194	1205528	6,616,596	3287334	3329262
Rural	**1,899,055**	**948720**	**950335**	**6,264,835**	**3106086**	**3158749**
Urban	519,667	264474	255193	351,761	181248	170513
Source:2001 Census*T-Total*M-Male*F=Female						

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[10].Sanjay Kumar, Creation of New States: Rationale and Implications, *Economic and Poitical Weekly*, 2002, pp. 3708-3709.

Over the last two decades the population of Chhattisgarh has increased to 25540196[11].

In 1991 the total rural population of Chhattisgarh was 28.1 %. This accounted to almost 79.7% in 2001. A large part of this rural population continues to depend on agriculture as the primary source of livelihood. Table 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 depict the participation and composition of the rural households in agriculture.

Table.2.2.Distribution of Workers and GSDP by Sectors in Chhattisgarh, 2004-05.[12]

Sector	Workers* (per cent)	GSDP (per cent)
Agriculture and allied		
Mining & quarrying	0.63	13.88
Sub total Primary	77.77	32.16
Manufacturing	4.93	20.00
Sub total secondary	9.27	30.18
Sub total Tertiary	12.96	37.65

Table 2.3. Percentage Share of Poor and All Rural Households by Social Group for Rural Chhattisgarh (2004-05)[13]

State	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All*
Poor Households					
Chhattisgarh	50.3	11.5	35.0	3.2	100.0
All-India	18.1	28.4	38.0	15.4	99.9
All Households					
Chhattisgarh	37.7	13.7	43.3	5.3	100.0
All-India	10.9	21.4	42.0	25.6	100.0

[11] Census 2011.
[12].Institute of Human development, *Food Security Atlas of Rural Chhattisgarh*,2008,p.15
[13].Ibid., p.13.

Table.2.4. Percentage Share of Poor and All Rural Households by Household Type
for Rural Chhattisgarh (2004-05)[14]

Region	Self-employed in non-agriculture	Agricultural labour	Other labour	Self-employed in agriculture	Others	Total
Poor Households						
Chhattisgarh	7.1	53.8	3.8	31.4	3.9	100.0
All-India	12.8	41.5	12.1	26.5	7.1	100.0
All Households						
Chhattisgarh	6.9	39.1	6.4	38.6	8.9	100.0
All-India	15.6	26.7	10.7	35.5	11.4	100.0

With a predominant section of its population dependent on agriculture, it is important to look at the sectoral composition of the Chhattisgarh's economy in order to understand the developmental experiences of the rural based communities. Figure.1. depicts the average annual growth rate of the different sectors.

Figure.1. Average Annual Growth of GSDP in Chhattisgarh, 1995-2005[15]
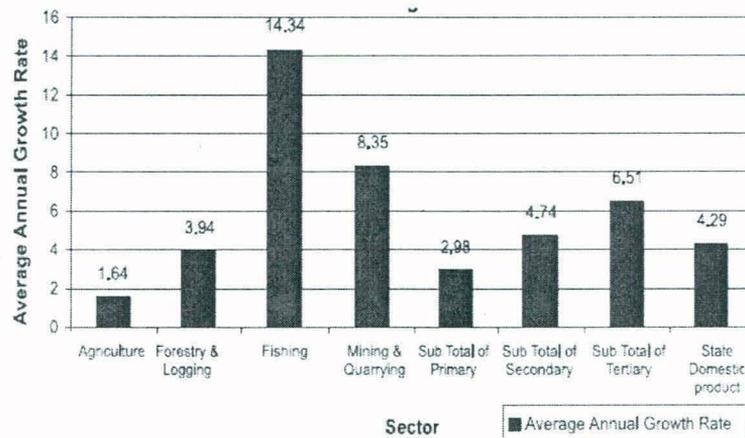
[14].Ibid.
[15].Ibid.,16.

The combined contribution of the secondary and tertiary sector to the NSDP accounted to almost 63% which is much higher than the primary sector that amounts to 35.37% [16].

The contribution of the primary sector like agriculture to the GSDP in the years 2004-05 was only around 14.43 % while that of the secondary sector including manufacturing and mining was almost 45%[17]. Agriculture had experienced a stagnant growth from 1994-2005 accounting to only 1.64% as compared to mining in the primary sector that experienced 8.35%. The secondary sector underwent an average annual growth rate of 4.74%, while the tertiary sector experienced a rate of 6.51%[18]. Table 1.6 depicts the GSDP shares of the different sectors of the economy.

Table.2.5.Percentage Share of GDSP by sub sector in Chhattisgarh at 1994-95 prices[19]

S.no	Sectors	Per cent GSDP Share		
		1993-94	1999-00	2004-05
1.	Agriculture	27.83	18.62	14.43
2.	Forestry & logging	2.84	2.82	2.74
3.	Fishing	0.44	0.95	1.12
4.	Mining & quarrying	9.22	12.04	13.88
	A. Sub Total of Primary	40.33	34.43	32.16
5	Manufacturing	19.78	18.21	20.00
	B. Sub Total of Secondary	30.23	30.35	30.18
	c. Sub Total of Tertiary	29.44	35.22	37.65

Over the years, the productivity of agriculture has consistently dropped. It goes to show that very little has been done to enhance the performance of the agricultural

[16].Ibid., p.15.
[17].Ibid.
[18].Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

sector which supports the livelihood needs of a large section of the region's population. The mining and manufacturing sectors on the other hand have performed far better in terms of contributing to the state economy.

Underlining these uneven patterns of development is the state's economic policy which is evidently, geared towards greater industrialization and capital formation. A critical analysis of the government's ongoing development policy practises substantiates this position.

II

A Critical Analysis of the Developmental Goals of State

A Rich Land of the Rich People:

Chhattisgarh is often promoted as the 'golden opportunity for investment'[20] by the administrators of the state. As a region endowed with abundant natural resources and rich mineral wealth, the state could have effectively pursued the development needs of the bulk of its population especially when almost 40% are living below the poverty line and a predominant section of the socially marginalised communities in region are being dragged into high levels of socio-economic vulnerabilities.

From the time of its creation, high levels of resource extraction were initiated across the region under the state's industrial policy. Acres of agricultural land were acquired for industrial purposes by the state. According to the findings of a local NGO, Ekta Parishad, more than 40000 acres of land has been acquired by the state since 2000-04. 60% of these lands were agriculturally rich and productive[21].

Only 10-15% of the Schedule Tribe and Schedule Caste communities have legal land entitlements today[22].This is because the land for the purpose of industrial enterprise was mostly acquired from poor tribals and backward communities of the region. They were entirely dependent on land for sustenance. Displaced and deprived, most of these communities have been pushed into the lower rungs of the society.

The land acquisition policy of the state has rendered the local economy unproductive. The state has forcibly acquired the productive assets of the poor without adequately compensating them. The promises to offer then work in the industries remained

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[20].Ramesh Chandra Sharma and Sheeba Choudary, 'Compulsory Land Acquisition in Chhattisgarh' in Sakarama Somayaji and Smrithi Talwar, *Development-Induced Displacement, Rehabilitation and Resettlement: Current Issues and Challenges.*New York,2011,p.124.

[21] Ibid.,p.129.

[22] Ibid.. p.124.

unfulfilled. The state was rather inclined towards encouraging private companies and firms to acquire these productive agricultural lands at highly subsidized rates[23].

The skewed development policy of the state has not escaped strong local challenges. Civil society has openly protested the industrial policy of the state on behalf of the communities. Under the pressure of these oppositions, the state instituted the Land Dispute Board in 2004 to resolve contested land acquisitions. However, this could not greatly alter the decisions of the state.

While the implications of the state's industrial policy continues to raise concerns, the government's forest policy has enhanced the severity of the situation. In 2004, the government adopted the decision to convert the forests into reserved sanctuaries[24]. This was pursued with the objective of promoting tourism in the region. The decision continues to displace large sections of the primitive tribal communities and forest dwellers. Almost 17 lakh acres of forest land has been converted into wildlife sanctuaries[25].

The costs borne to sustain this kind of growth, however, were much higher than its profits. The fallouts of the state's claims to secure greater prosperity to its citizens through its development policies were apparent in the form of the degrading impact that it has had on the livelihoods of the local communities. The following section will explore these implications by highlighting the performance of the state based on human development indicators.

The Poverty of Human Development:

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Joseph Marianus Kujur, 'The Context of Tribes in Central India' in Sakarama Somayaji and Smrithi Talwar. *Developmen-Induced Displacement, Rehabilitation and Resettlement:Current Issues and Challenges.*New York,2011,p. 143-144.

[25] Ibid.

Chapter 12 of the Economic Survey for the year 2010-11 begins with the following statement;

> The ultimate objective of development planning is human development or increased social welfare and well-being of the people. Increased social welfare of the people requires a more equitable distribution of development benefits along with better living environment. Development process therefore needs to continuously strive for broad-based improvement in the standard of living and quality of life of the people through an inclusive development strategy that focuses on both income and non income dimensions[26].

Against this view of development, the section reviews the socio-economic performance of Chhattisgarh based on the following indicators:

Literacy rate:

According to the 2001 census data, the literacy rate of chhattisgarh was at 64.7%, less than the national average of 65.4%. The male literacy level was 77.38 and the female literacy level was around 51.85%. An assesment of the literacy and illeteracy amongst the socially marginalised sections like women, ST and SC can throw light on the disparities that exist within and amongst communites.

Table .2.6. Total Illiterate population			
	Total	Male	Female
Total	9660654	3762823	5817831
Rural	8371490	3260284	5111206
Urban	1289164	502339	786625
Source:2001 census			

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[26] Human Development, Equity and Environment, Economic Survey 2010-11, http://indiabudget.nic.in, 6.7.2011.

Table.2.7. Total ST population of Literate and Illiterate[27]					
	Total		Male		Female	
	L	IL	L	IL	L	IL
T	2826686	3789910	1750602	1536732	1076084	2253178
R	2612074	3652761	1622421	1483665	989653	2169096
U	214612	137149	128181	53067	86431	84082
Source:2001 Census						

Table.2.8. Total SC population of Literate and Illiterate[28]					
	Total		Male		Female	
	L	IL	L	IL	L	IL
T	1268889	1149833	780852	432342	488037	717491
R	967419	931636	599749	348971	367670	582665
U	301470	218197	181103	83371	120367	134826
Source: 2001 Census						

Based on these figures one can say that there exists a wide gap between male and female literacy. Illetracy amonst women especially rural women, is predominant. Secondly, the rate of illetracy amongst the STs is much greater than the SCs. The analysis reveals wide disparities in literacy levels and this raises serious concerns when viewed from a gender and caste based perspective.

The literacy rates have increased over the years. As per the 2011 census, the total literacy rate of the region has increased to 71.04%. The male literacy rate is almost 81.40 %, while the literacy rates amongst women is 60.59%. While literacy levels have improved considerable, the disparities between male and female literacy rates persists.

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[27] *T-Total*R-Rural*U-Urban*L-Literate*IL-Illiterate: 2001 Census
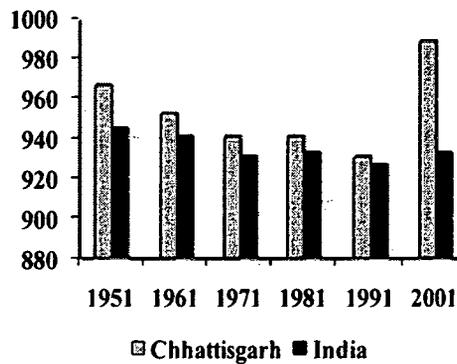[28] *T-Total*R-Rural*U-Urban*L-Literate*IL-Illiterate: 2001 Census

Health:

Sex ratio:

Chhattisgarh fairs better than the national average in terms of maintaining a high sex ratio. Figure.1.2. traces its overall performance till 2001.

Figure.1.1. Sex Ratio based on 2001 Census Data

The state had recorded a sex ratio as high as 989 against an all India average of 933 according to the 2001 census. The sex ratio has increased to 991 according to the 2011.

Based on the Sample Registration System 2009, Table.1.8 depicts the infant mortality rates of Chhattisgarh and the country as a whole.

Table.2.9 Infant mortality rates of Chhattisgarh					
	Total		Rural		Urban	
	I	CG	I	CG	I	CG
Total	50	54	55	55	34	47
Male	49	50	54	51	32	43
Female	53	57	56	58	35	50
Source:SRS 2009						

Chhattisgarh records an infant mortality rate greater than the national average. Rural infant mortality rates are much higher than the urban and all India levels especially female infant mortality. According to the National Family Health Survey 2005-06,

following Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh experienced an under-five mortality rate of 90 per thousand live births[29].

Maternal Mortality Rate of the region is also a cause of concern. According to the Sample Registration System of 2004-2006, Chhattisgarh has recorded a figure of 335 per 100,000 live births against a national rate of 254.

The NFHS III for 2005-06 also highlights the nutritional status of the children of Chhattisgarh. It records that almost 54.6% of the children below the age of three in rural Chhattisgarh are underweight. 47.9% of the children below three experience stunted growth against the national average of 40.7%. These figures reflect the high levels on child malnourishment in the region.

This brief overview of the health and nutritional status of Chhattisgarh brings to light the socio-economic status of the masses especially when its findings are analyzed against the previous discussions. The region has a high population of STs depended on agriculture as their basic means of livelihood. Given the poor health and nutrition levels, it makes sense to say that this particular section of the population is worst off in terms of its socio-economic condition and a closer attention must be accorded their basic need for food and nutrition.

These poor development statistics centrally captures the performance of the state in fulfilling its commitment towards the wellbeing of its citizens especially the socially marginalised. Based on the findings of the 61st round of National Sample Survey, figure.1.3[30] estimates the poverty rate amongst the social groups in Chhattisgarh measured against the national average. The incidence of poverty amongst the STs is higher than other social groups.

Figure1.2. Estimate of Poverty Amongst Social Groups in Chhattisgarh (2004-05)[31]

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[29] Institute of Human Development. *Food Security Atlas of Rural Chhattisgarh*, New Delhi, 2008. p.16.
[30] Ibid.,p.10.
[31] Ibid.

57

60
54.8
50
44.7
40
40.8
37.1
32 34.1
30 25.8 28.3 28.1
20 17.5
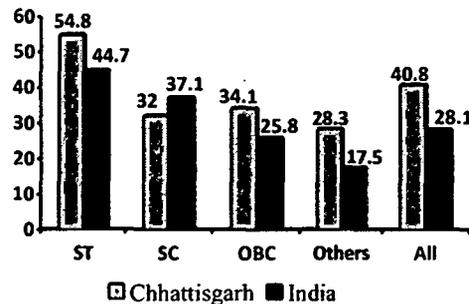10
0
ST   SC   OBC   Others   All
◻ Chhattisgarh ◼ India

Figure1.3 depicts the inadequacies of the development policies and preferences of the state of Chhattisgarh. Clearly, the needs of the poor and marginalised sections of the society do not appear in the state's development agenda. These conditions have intensified the experiences of powerlessness and exclusion in defending their rights and entitlements, for the poor.

Patterns of Claim-making:

Forms of social marginalisation and deprivation partially capture the inadequacies of the development patterns of the state of Chhattisgarh. A brief engagement with the patterns of claim making and participation in the region exposes the deep seated distortions of the practises of development.

The decision making processes of the state are sustained on high levels of unaccountability and absence of transparency. Very little is done on the part of the state to create conditions for enhanced participation of the local communities in the decision making processes.

As per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, rural villages were devolved the power to make decisions that affected their life. Self governing bodies like the gram panchayat played a crucial role in the decision-making process. These were constituted by people who were elected by the villagers themselves and were completely responsible for the governance and development of the region. The primary role of the state was

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to accelerate the processes of maximum devolution of power to the local institutions and capacitate them as self reliant units.

However, it has been difficult to identify gram panchayats operating as self governing institutions especially on the issues that relate to implementation of the state's land and forest policy.

For example, the Panchayat (Extension to Schedule Areas) Act, 1996, allocated the power to the gram panchayat to control decisions of land transfer or acquisition with the gram sabha and the local governing bodies. The gram panchayat had to be consulted for decisions related to acquisition and transfer of land for development projects, industrial enterprises, resettlement or rehabilitation. However, in practise the decisions of the panchayat are completely bypassed. Instances of bribery, manipulation and forgery dominate the processes of acquiring consent from the gram panchayat[32].

The tribal needs are directly connected to the issues of land, natural resources and livelihood. Decisions concerning the control and governance of these needs impact their lives greatly. Evidently, the state remains reluctant to accommodate these concerns especially when its economic interests are on stake. With limited avenues for the articulation of their needs and concerns, the demands of the local communities have taken violent forms of expression.

Experiences of low agricultural productivity, inadequacy of basic infrastructure, food and employment insecurities poverty and their devastating impact on the large population of schedule tribe and schedule caste communities have created unprecedented conditions of rural distress. These conditions have given rise to violent protests intensifying the development woes of the state. The Naxal and Maoist

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[32] Ranjita Mohanti, ' Rights, Citizenship and State Accountability: Contentious Claims of Industry over tribal Land' in Mohini Kak, *Citizen Participation and Democratic Governance: In Our Hands*, ND: Concept Publishing Company,2007.pp.52-60.

movements are manifestations of the frustrations with the state's failure to make itself accountable and responsible to the people. The movement has reached a war like situation in Chhattisgarh. These groups are highly active in the poor and backward regions. They challenge the state and its authorities on issues related to land rights, wages, employment, exclusion and most importantly the denial of social and economic justice[33]. The government views this as a law and order problem that needs to be met with a heavy hand. By relegating these concerns as a law and order issue, the government chooses to ignore the structural contexts that gave rise to such violent anti-state struggles.

Chhattisgarh was created with the vision that an independent identity would capacitate the state to serve the interest of its people in an effective way. The challenges that confront the socio-economic and political foundations of the state are grave and pose as obstacles towards the realization of this vision. This necessitates the need to reconstitute the goals of the development process in ways that can achieve inclusive and socially just outcomes.

The study derives from the RTD approach (delineated in length in Chp.2) , the essential requirements of an inclusive process of development. The objective is to understand the extent to which the State's developmental programme fulfils these conditions. In doing so, the analysis attempts to elevate the gaps and weaknesses within the processes and practises of development in Chhattisgarh and explores the possibilities for improvement. The study employs MNREGA as the basic frame of analysis.

Locating MNREGA within the RTD approach:

[33] Kaustav Banerjee and Partha Saha, The NREGA, the Maoists and the Developmental Woes of the Indian State, Economic and Political Weekly,45:28,2010. pp.42-43.

The Act marked a shift from traditional approaches towards poverty alleviation which primarily stressed on the allocation and redistribution of resources. The significance of the MNREGA has been invoked on several grounds.

Indira Hirway classifies the poor into two categories. The first category includes the destitute who may be old and disabled and require social assistance; and, the second category comprised of the section of un/underemployed and the working poor who need remunerative employment. Hirway draws attention to the peculiar characteristics of the second category of poor; they have no or low assets; have poor resilience; are unwilling or incapable of taking up self-employment; and, labour is their only asset. They are highly vulnerable to risks and only a provision of minimum income through productive employment can rescue them from being pushed into extreme deprivation[34].

Nations have adopted several models of employment generation schemes. Hirway illuminates four major models of employment adopted by national governments to provide income to the poor:

- The Communitarian model: This model was adopted by China. The workers were under an obligation to cater to the needs of the community and in turn were guaranteed a minimum standard of living.

- The Right to Income model: This was adopted in the Netherlands during the 1930s. Herein the unemployed or the underemployed had a right to a minimum income from the state. They had to work in return whenever work was made available to them.

- The Right to Work model: The workers had the right to demand work from the state for wages. This was adopted in Maharashtra.

- Wage Employment model: Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and the Sampurna Gram Vikas Yojana are examples of this model of employment. The government of India provided wage employment on public works to the poor without any

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[34] Indira, Hirway, Providing Employment Guarantee in India: Some Critical Issues in *Economic and Political Weekly*. (Nov. 27 - Dec. 3, 2004), 39: 48 p. 5117.

kind of guarantee. The poor were expected to earn additional income through this employment.

In the context of India, the first model of employment was not feasible politically and the second model of the Right to Income was financially unsustainable. The government of India has mainly adopted Wage employment models with the goal of securing adequate livelihoods to the rural poor.

Over the past three decades of the implementation of these schemes, most have proved to be unsuccessful in crucial ways:[35] firstly, they created limited jobs which failed to address the huge demand for employment in rural villages. Secondly, the jobs generated were casual and on temporary basis. These merely acted as supplementary sources of employment in times of crisis. Thirdly, these were unable to create and maintain durable assets and most importantly they created employment that was not sustainable and failed to capacitate the poor to rise above the poverty line[36].

In view of these weaknesses, securing sustainable solutions is being considered the most effective response to the stubborn persistence of poverty in many parts of the developing world. In recent years, such an approach has influenced the basic design of employment generation policies significantly. This understanding forces us to draw attention to the cardinal components of the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 in India. The Act can be viewed as a landmark amidst numerous government led strategies of poverty alleviation specifically those favouring employment generation as a way out.

Kaustav Banerjee and Partha Saha were of the view that MNREGA, unlike the other poverty alleviation schemes, was based on the twin planks of democratic decentralization and sustainable community development[37]. It was developed to

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[35] Ibid., p. 5117-5118.

[36] Hirway, Op. Cit., p.5118.

[37] Kaustav Banerjee and Partha Saha, The NREGA, the Maoists and the Developmental Woes of the Indian State. *Economic and Political Weekly*.45:28,2010, p. 43.

achieve these goals through the creation of productive income oppurtunities and asset creation. Banerjee and Saha were of the view that income earned through MNREGA could secure large section of rural India minimum levels of food grain consumption. In the long run, through the creation of durable assets, it could enhance agricultural productivity.

The Act could be located within a new development paradigm that upheld the goals of employment, entitlement and empowerment[38].Arvind Virmani is of the view that this new development paradigm takes a 'clear and non- ideological recognition of the strengths and the weaknesses of the state and the people'[39]. 'A democratic society', he opines 'has enormous potential for entrepreneurship, innovation and creative development. The people, their diverse forms of activity and association such as companies, cooperatives, societies, trusts and other NGOs must be allowed and encouraged to play their due role'[40]. Virmani refers to 'Vision:E3'[41] i.e. a process of economic development based on productive and regular employment oppurtunities to the poor. It must be able to 'entitle' them a basic level of social security and 'empower' them through education and information.

MNREGA was introduced across the districts of Chhattisgarh in the period of 2007-2008. Unlike other poverty alleviating and employment generating schemes in the past, MNREGA embodied in itself a framework of rights for the rural population. By guaranteeing 100 days of unskilled manual work in a financial year, every rural household had a legal entitlement to demand-led productive income opportunities and asset creation. In all, the Act aimed at creating conditions that secured sustainable livelihoods for the rural masses through the right to employment.

This political assertion of work as a right marked a shift that no longer considered the access to employment as a welfare policy but rather, a legal claim of the right-holder and the duty of the government. This can have some important implications: first, it is

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[38] Arvind Virmani, A New Development Paradigm: Employment, Entitlement and Empowerment, *Economic and Political Weekly*,2002,p.2151
[39] Ibid.,.2145
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

the demand for work by the poor and not the supply of work by the officials that determines the execution of the programme. It shifts the power into the hands of the powerless through the guarantee of work as a right; secondly, the nature of employment can create conditions for productive asset creation which can be owned and maintained by the poor themselves. The adoption of goals like ecological regeneration and infrastructure development through these employment activities, within the backward areas, can rebuild the village economy and have a positive impact on the quality of life of the poor. Lastly, a programme oriented towards these goals can encourage the poor to organize themselves in a way that strengthens their bargaining power to demand their rights for a improved standard of living, wages, social security, adequate working conditions and such; collectively.

Conclusion:

Taking into consideration these implications one can say that the element of the Act as a guarantee can not only ensure that the income and benefits of the programme reaches the poor, at the same time it can cater to their overall development.

The framework within which these arguments are located is one which integrates the process of framing adequate policies with the assertion of their democratic rights by the people themselves to ensure the effective implementation and fulfillment of the goals of the policy.

The study attempts to analyse the current practices of MNREGA against the above enumerated conditions and uses the findings to ascertain the extent to which it fulfils the components of a RTD framework

Chapter 4

Understanding Development as a Guarantee: A Study of MNREGA as an Alternative to Rural Poverty

> What freedom has our subsistence farmer? He scratches a bare living from the soil provided the rains do not fail; his children work at his side without schooling, medical care, or even good feeding. Certainly he has freedom to vote and to speak as he wishes. But these freedoms are much less real to him than his freedom to be exploited. Only as his poverty is reduced will his existing political freedom become properly meaningful and his right to human dignity become a fact of human dignity.[1]

I

A People's Act or An Employment Scheme:

The gradual erosion of rural livelihoods has reinforced conditions of poverty, deprivation and marginalization as the characteristic features of rural India. MNREGA was a response to a collapsing village economy. Amidst the inadequacies of numerous poverty alleviation schemes initiated to salvage the situation, the act had a two-fold objective to fulfil: contributing to the village economy in a sustained manner and restricting the rising levels of poverty in the long run.

MNREGA has certain key dimensions and processes which are interdependent and have implications on its performance. These have been incorporated under four subheadings: Guarantee, Entitlements, Planning and Decision-making and Accountability. The following section will attempt to locate these dimensions within a RTD framework which upholds a view that a development process:

> ... ought to respect the dignity and individual autonomy of all those whom it claims to help, including the poorest and the most excluded, including minorities and other vulnerable groups. often discriminated against: it ought to create opportunities for their participation – opportunities that are not

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[1] Howard. Rhoda, The Full Belly Thesis-Should Economic Rights Take Priority Over Civil and Political Rights, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 5:4,1983, p.467.

dependent on the whim of a benevolent outsider, but rooted in institutions and procedures.[2]

Guarantee:

Most of the respondents learned about MNREGA through the village panchayat. No formal application for work was made by the villagers. When inquired about the process through which they received work, a villager in Badegobra says, 'We have never applied for work...the sarpanch informed us...he noted our names on a sheet...after 6-7 months we must have received a few days of employment.[3]

Evidently, the villagers had no information about the official procedure of filing an oral or a written application for work.

In most cases, official guidelines were not observed. Moreover, there was lack of transparency in the way which these provisions were being executed For instance, most of the respondents had job cards without any record of a formal application for work by them. While, as per the provisions of the Act, job cards are to be issued only when an application for work was made. A woman from Chindabhata says, 'we do not know about these things [applications]... we just do what the sarpanch tells us...'[4]

Yet another requirement of the Act was the maintenance of muster rolls. Muster rolls play an important role in ensuring transparency in the process. The women from Chindabhata claimed that 'We have never been supervised at the worksite. The MET (supervisor or incharge) writes our names once we complete the total days of work...'[5]. The details of the work done by each villager was entered in the muster roll only after the completion of the project and was not undertaken on a regular basis. This was revealed during the discussions in villages like Bhaisamuda, Tawarbhara, Jhalkhamhar and Pathari. A villager from Pathari says 'when the work is completed...our job cards are collected by the panchayat together...the sachiv fills all the information'[6]. Many have never seen the muster roll and were not aware about the significance of these records.

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[2] Peter Ulvin, From the Right to Development to the Right to a Right based Approach: How Human Rights entered Development. *Development in Practice*, 17:4-5,2007,p.603

[3] Group discussions in Badegobra. Mainpur on 23-04-2011.

[4] Group discussions in Chindabhata, Gariaband on the 18-04-2011

[5] Group discussions in Chindabhata, Gariaband on the 18-04-2011

[6] Group discussions in Pathari. Mainpur on the 22-04-2011

The evidences indicate that very little is done in terms of disseminating information about the provisions of the Act. MNREGA was perceived by the poor as a scheme through which the villagers could 'receive' work. This was a complete negation of its significance as a legal entitlement. The absence of any form of political assertion of work as a right could be attributed to the lack of awareness and information about the provisions of the Act.

The ignorance about their basic rights and the duties of the government agencies responsible for the preservation of these rights had severe implications such as the problem of delayed work and payments.

A villager from Pathari shared that he has not received work for over six months, '...I have never applied...the *sachiv* informs the village when work is available...[7]. In Badegobra and Bhaisamuda, the villagers are still waiting to receive work.

'We do not want to work without money. It has been two years since I got my payment...'[8] says a man in his 70s from Bhaisamuda. He lives in a semi-permanent dilapidated hut with his young son and daughter-in law. His son had left for the forest in the wee hours of the day to collect *mahuwa*, an important source of income for the tribals. He says that if it was not for the forests, it would be difficult to survive, 'in the past two years I have received less than 50 days of employment...while several others in the village are waiting to receive work...[9]. In the absence of any regular source of work and payments, the tribals in the village continue to generate most of their income from the collection and sale of non-timber forest produce.

Some villagers argued that even if they could avail employment, it was inadequate to meet their needs. They would have rather preferred to remain unemployed. As per the provisions of the Act, 100 days of work is guaranteed to every rural household. In Tawarbhara, a woman *panch* opines:'100 days is not enough...this may be fine for a family with two adult members because each can then receive at least 50 days of employment but what about the families with more than 5 or 6 adult members?...how will they meet their needs and that of their children with less than 10-15 days of work

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[7] Group discussions in Pathari, Mainpur on the 22-04-2011.
[8] Group discussions in Bhaisamuda, Gariaband on the 16-04-2011.
  Except for a few respondents who could converse in Hindi, the villagers only spoke in their native language. The researcher was therefore, dependent on the representative of the local NGO during the discussions and through the documentation of the statements.
  The statements used in the analysis are translations.
[9] Group discussions in Bhaisamuda, Gariaband on the 16-04-2011

in an entire year?'[10]Similarly, a villager from Pathari shares, 'My sons and I live together... each of us can get only 20 days of work in the entire year...how will we fill our stomach if we have to just depend on the scheme...'[11].

The availability of work across these villages was delayed for a duration that extended beyond six months to over a year. The women from Tawarbhara shared that this kind of irregularity affected their lives greatly. The difficulty in meeting their basic needs has forced the men in the village to take up menial jobs in Gariaband, outside the village. A woman, during the discussion pointes that, 'our basic need is food...we struggle to arrange that everyday...this is most important...we wanted to work today...but they(officials) don't let us work on Sundays saying it's a holiday...we do not want holidays...we need to work otherwise our children will go hungry...'[12].Another women jokes about this, '*kaam nahi dete hai...paisa nahi dete magar itvaar ko chhutti dete hai...*'(they don't give us work on time...neither do they pay us on time...but give us a holiday every Sunday without fail)[13].

These factors, together, intensified the experiences of poverty and marginalization for these villages. In Jhaalkhamhar, a woman shares that if payments could be made on time 'I will like to pay off my loans...because of delayed payments we have to always borrow money to buy food...'[14] In Pathari, one says, 'we receive payments after 6 months...sometimes more...we cannot wait for these payments...the rice we get from the [ration]cards is not enough, it doesn't even last for a week...'[15] Benipuri notes that indebtedness, amongst other problems, has escalated in recent years. One of the main reasons for excessive borrowing amongst the villagers, according to him, is to fulfil the basic requirement of food. The persistence of indebtedness has pushed these communities further into deprivation[16].

One can assess the extent to which the working of what is meant to be a 'people's Act' is divorced from the realities of rural life. The poor are left with nothing but an empty set of administrative procedures and processes. A woman from Chindabhata

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[10]Group in Tawarbahara, Gariaband on the 17-04-2011.
[11]Group discussions in Pathari, Mainpur on the 22-04-2011.
[12]Group discussions in Tawarbhara, Gariaband on the 17-04-2011.
[13]Group discussions in Tawarbhara, Gariaband on the 17-04-2011
[14]Based on the group discussions in Jhalkhamhar, Gariaband on the 16-04-2011.
[15]Based on the group discussions in Pathari, Mainpur on the 22-04-2011.
[16] Stated during the discussion in Jhaalkhamhar, Gariaband on the 16-04-2011.

shared the concept of 'chinha' or symbols. By invoking its significance in her life, she captured in a few sentences the deprivation that engulfs rural India;

> '...earlier, we were quite self sufficient. The forests were our own and our lands reaped in abundance...our needs were more than fulfilled. We decorated our homes and bought new utensils...we invested our money in jewellry like gold and silver, which were chinhas of our wellbeing...but today we struggle to even arrange for a meal in a day...in times of crisis I used my savings to meet our needs...I have sold it all... it is no longer the same' [17]

Guaranteeing the right to work should be no less than providing adequate wages and a decent work that enables the individual to meet a minimum standard of living. The experiences of rural Chhattisgarh, however, show that MNREGA is far from fulfiling these requirements. Lack of awareness and means to access adequate information fails the Act and the potential role that it can play as a tool of development. The following section highlights these inadequacies.

Entitlements:

Besides the guarantee of work, the Act also embodies basic entitlements aimed at capacitating the poor not only economically but also in other aspects of life. The provisions of social security and the goal of productive asset creation meet, both, the short term needs of the poor and the long terms goals of creating self reliant village economies.

Productive asset creation:

One of the main objectives of the Act is to guarantee greater sustainability to the poor through their active involvement in productive asset creation. The villages covered during the research had been involved in several projects pursued under MNREGA. These were primarily based on ecological regeneration and infrastructure development such as afforestation, land leveling, construction of roads and ponds. The extent to which this kind of work benefited the poor besides making them economically independent is revealed through this discussion.

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[17] Based on the group discussions in Chindabhata, Gariaband on the 18-04-2011.

Given the rugged topography of forest villages like Bhaisamuda, activities related to infrastructure development was minimally pursued in the region. Most of the work undertaken in the village through MNREGA was generated by the forest department. In terms of catering to their needs, the villagers felt that working under the forest department was better than the panchayat. A villager shares, '...the panchayat does not create much work for us...the *sarpanch* asks us to go to the other village to work...that is why we have stopped work...the forest department is good...we mostly work in the nursery or take up land levelling...it is better than the panchayat...it pays us more and on time...but this work is not regular...'[18]. In response to the question on how this work helps the community, he says, '...it runs our household...We just want work and our payments on time...whether we work for the panchayat or for the forest department'.

In terms of ownership of assets, the field observations revealed that except for a hand pump not much work had been undertaken in the village to improve the living conditions of the tribals. Evidently, there was limited focus on the works that could strengthen the asset base of these communities. One could say the same in the case of Badegobra. The pictures[19] below are of a '*gothan*' or a rest a place for cattle, built under MNREGA in the village. The villagers shared that this gothan was of no use to the community.

A villager opines: 'We need a better system of roads in our village instead...during rainfall most of these trails remain submerged in water for days...several times we got stuck in the forests because the way into the village was blocked due to heavy rains'[20]

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[18] Group discussions in Bhaisamuda, Gariaband on the 16-04-2011
[19] The picture was taken in Badegobra, Mainpur on 21-04-2011.
[20] Group discussions in Badegobra, Mainpur on 21-04-2011.

The panchayats have not able to create enough work for the villagers. Even if they did, it failed to meet local needs and requirements.

Benipuri was of the view that the panchayats are allocated funds that are not enough to fulfil all local requirements or pursue work that assisted the communities. Government departments receive much more money, according to him. They prefer to allot contracts to *thekedaars* or local contractors who hire workers from outside the village because the work that is taken up by them is mostly skill based.

Social Security:

Workers, under the Act, are entitled to a minimum package of social security in the form of allowances, amenities and other facilities.

As per the Act, in an event of a delay in the availability of work and payment of wages, the worker is entitled to compensation. Benipuri drew attention to the fact that not a single case of compensation has been made in Chhattisgarh. He opines, 'this is startling!...while most of us would like to believe that this may be because every single villager has been guaranteed work and payments without delay... the truth is that this is nothing but an indication of the violation of their basic right to work...' [21] The villagers have no record of application for work; hence filing for compensation in case of a delay is out of question.

The villagers had no awareness about this provision or concerning social security in case of death, injury, maternity and old age provided under the Act.

MNREGA also enlists provisions for the arrangement of certain facilities at the worksite. A visit to a worksite in Badegobra proved that social security guidelines are poorly implemented. In the picture[22] below, the villagers are digging a pond. This work was started a day before the field visit.

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[21] Discussions with Benipuri, a local activist and member of Kajj Samiti and representatives of Nadi Ghati Morcha in Raipur on 14-04-2011.
[22] The picture was taken in Badegobra, Mainpur on 21-04-201.

The worksite had no basic facilities such as drinking water, crèche or shade for periods of rest. Discussions in other villages revealed the same scenario. Women in Tawarbhara and Jhaalkhamhar shared that they arranged most of these requirements on their own.

Planning and decision making:

The villagers raised most of their concerns in the *gram sabha*. However, they felt that their involvement in the *sabha* did not have much of an impact in the way MNREGA needed to be implemented or on how their needs were addressed. The women of Chindabhata complain, 'We have raised our problems several times in the *gram sabha*[but to no avail]…the *sarpanch* and the *sachiv* take all the decisions'[23]. In Tawarbhara, a woman shares, 'the *sarpanch* is corrupt…I collected ten women from the village…we contributed money to buy paper and wrote our demands…to give us work and pay our old wages…when we gave it to him he did not even look at it…and told us to go home…'. Interactions with the women *panch* helped in understanding the decision-making process better. One of them said, 'we do not get a chance to speak in decision-making…we are not even consulted…the men take all the decisions

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[23] Group discussions in Chindabhata, Gariaband on the 18-04-2011

and we agree...we know the needs of the village better...if I could I would like to improve a lot of things in the village'[24].

In Pathari, the men were furious at the *sarpanch*. 'He can never enter our village'. The villagers shared that in the past 15 years, not a single gram sabha was held in Pathari. The *sarpanch* holds these meetings only in his village. They said it was difficult for all the villagers to travel so far to attend the meetings. The *Panch* would generally attend the *gram sabha* on their behalf. He says, 'I have raised the concerns of my village several times in front of him [*sarpanch*]...regarding the delay in work...our payments....we wanted new wells and ponds to be constructed in the village...but he always prioritizes the needs of his own village...they never listen to me in the *gram sabha*...that is why I do not want to go there anymore'. It was revealed that the *sarpanch* has remained in power for the last 15 years by swapping the position with his wife every election.

The *sachiv* from Jhaalkhamhar explains, 'we fear for our lives here...a lot of pressure is on us...the authorities pressurize us and so do the people...'. According to him, the panchayat has always tried to ensure that the villagers benefit the most. Following the implementation of MNREGA, their quality of life has improved a lot, he opines. The villagers earn throughout the year and make a lot of money. He admits that delayed payments are a major concern. According to the *sachiv*, if the distribution of the wages had been in the *panchayat's* control, this problem would have never arisen. The Post offices completely control the process. He points that, the post offices are understaffed and ill-equipped to deal with transactions that are less than rupees 50000, now they have to deal with lakhs of rupees. This is the major cause for delay[25].

Based on these discussions, it seemed as though the villagers treated the village panchayat as a separate institution and not a part of their own. Its interests and decisions often collided with that of the village. Respondents, across the villages shared that the work pursued under MNREGA was primarily decided by the *sarpanch* and the *sachiv*, the villagers were merely informed.

The panchayats lacked the capacity to evolve as institutions of self governance and local development. They were weak and dominated by sectional interests. As an institution of local governance, the panchayats in these villages remained

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[24] Group discussions in Jhaalkhamhar, Gariaband on the 16-04-2011.
[25] Discussions with the *sachiv* of Jhaalkhamhar, Gariaband on the 16-04-2011

undeveloped in terms of its potential to create an enterprising and active environment for the poor.

Accountability and Transparency:

The above discussions summarise to a great extent the absence of adequate levels of transparency and accountability in the working of the Act. The villagers have little or no awareness about the provisions of the Act, their rights and entitlements.

The experiences of Tawarbhara and other villages reflect the reluctance on the part of authorities to make themselves accountable. In Tawarbhara, a woman points, *'godi khudwatein hai...kabhi 10x10...toh kabhi 14x14...kaam zyada karwatein hain magar paisa nahi detein...'* *(they make us dig a godi*[a measuring system for ponds]...sometimes 10x10 and on other days 14x14...they make us work more but never give us money)*[26]. There was a lot confusion and related anger amongst these women over the measurement of the *godi*. A few believed that they were being cheated. According to the official guidelines, each *godi* measures 10 x10 and 1 foot deep. However, in most cases the villagers were told to dig a *godi* that measured 14x14. Upon inquiring as to why the villagers were made to dig more than what was officially determined, a senior engineer says, '...this change was made by the collector way back... Since the payments have increased so will the work...they [villagers] always find excuses not to work...as they say 'raghukul reet sada chali aahi, kaam karein kum par rakam poori chahi (it is an old tradition...less work but full pay)'[27].

When questioned on the basis of deciding this measurement he says, 'this is based on the collector's discretion...all we have to do is implement.'[28]

No step was taken by government authorities to inform the villagers about such a change. It was imposed upon them in a way that has left most of them, livid. In Pathari, the villagers experienced the same confusion. When the issue was raised during the discussion, a villager reacts angrily, 'we work all day to dig the *godi*...when the officials come to check, they measure incorrectly and deduct our wages...'. A woman, who was also a former *panch* of Pathari, points, 'this is the fault

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[26] Group discussions in Tawarbahara, Gariaband on the 17-04-2011.
[27] Interview with a senior engineer in Gariaband, 19-04-2011.
[28] Inquiry made from the Janpath office, Gariaband on 19-04-2011.

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of both the villagers and the authorities...the villager sometimes dig less than the required measurement but expect full payment. However, they cannot be blamed completely...they are not informed about the work and its requirements...they do not know what they need to complete...the *sarpanch* informs about the availability of work and the villagers start working without any guidance...'

The villagers have no information about the actual measurements and the requirements of work and evaluations of the work by government officials remain undisclosed to them.

Non-transparency and corruption were thriving at several other levels. A woman from Chindabhata shared that villagers end up paying the post-masters anything between Rs50- Rs100 to withdraw their wages. It is to note that this rate amounts to almost same as the basic minimum wage that villagers receive under the Act[29].

In Pathari, the villagers complain that since the introduction of MNREGA in their village, their bank accounts have not been opened. A young man shares, '...they always give us excuses...if we could pay 500 rupees to them...opening our accounts would have been less difficult...'[30].

Evidences from the research have revealed the weaknesses of MNREGA to adequately respond to the needs of the poor. The only alternative that the villagers had, to meet their daily requirements, was the PDS.

The effectiveness of the PDS in Chhattisgarh is often attributed to political factors rather than any commitment to poverty alleviation. The president of a local NGO, Nadi Ghati Morcha remarks, 'why will the government bother? MNREGA is a centrally sponsored scheme, the government of Chhattisgarh will never want this to do well...the state's PDS works way better than the scheme'.[31]

The villagers were able to access 35kg rice for Rs.2 in a month. A villager from Bhaisamuda says, ' *kaam nahi hai...toh ration se ghar chal jata hai...magar parivaar ke lie yeh bhi kum padta hai...*(there is no work...so we manage the household with the ration[PDS]...but for the whole family this does not suffice).[32]

[29] Group discussions in Chindabhata. Gariaband on the 18-04-2011
[30] Group discussions in Pathari. Mainpur on the 22-04-2011
[31] Based on an interview on the 14-04-2011 with the NGO Nadi Ghati Morcha in Raipur.
[32] Group discussions in Bhaisamuda. Gariaband on the 16-04-2011

However, discrepancies in the distribution of adequate amounts of rice were apparent. A woman from Tawarbhara complained 'nowadays they give us 25kgs of rice and 10 kgs of wheat...we do not eat wheat but they still force us to buy it...this only increases our expenditure...we sell the wheat in the market for 10 rupees and spend almost 17-18 rupees to buy rice again...'.[33] In Badegobra, a villager pointes 'they have cut down on the quantity of the rice we eat and distribute us a different variety of rice which we cannot consume...many of us have fallen sick after eating this...'.[34]

For a wage employment programme to result in poverty reduction, it is necessary that the programme is also backed by a good public distribution system (PDS) which can ensure the workers, steady access to food grains. The interactions with the villagers reveal that these necessities remain unrealized to a great extent.

With such high levels of non-transparency, unaccountability and unawareness overshadowing the implementation processes of poverty alleviating programmes including MNREGA; can we still say that the working of Act is driven by the demands of the people?

The villagers often compared MNREGA and PDS with the 'Jogi-Dabri' project. Jogi Dabri project is a groundwater recharging project initiated by the Congress government lead by Ajit Jogi as the chief minister. This was based on the concept of providing food for work. A number of NGOs including KAJJ *samiti* are assisting villagers on the lines of the food for work strategy. A comparison amongst the three projects can perhaps underline the factors that make the 'Jogi-Dabri' project serve the interests of the villagers better.

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[33]Based on the group discussions in Tawarbahara. Gariaband on the 17-04-2011.
[34] Based on the group discussions in Badegobra. Mainpur on the 21-04-2011.

Indicators	PDS	MNREGA	JOGI DABRI
Guarantee	It entitles individuals below the poverty line to food grains.	It guarantees 100 days of employment to a rural household as a right.	Guarantee of work and food was not based on any category or limited in duration. They could get work whenever they needed
Security	It has ensured food security to a certain extent.	Delayed work and payments forces the poor to either depend on the collection and sale of forest produce for income or the PDS.	It guaranteed work and entitled the villagers to 6 kgs of rice and a minimum wage of 8-10 rupees upon the completion of work. Villagers could save money and store food grains in plenty.
Accountability	Adequate quantity of rice was not distributed. The villagers had to purchase extra rice from the market.	Absence of transparency, accountability and continued denial of the right to work	Villagers shared that they were never denied their entitlements to work and food.

The table is based on the information that villagers revealed about the 'Jogi Dabri' project. A woman from Tawarbhara opines that ' MNREGA should work like Jogi Dabri...we would have preferred if we could receive rice, dal and oil instead of wages...'.[35] In Pathari and Badegobra, the men felt that wages should be given along with food[36]. MNREGA has evidently fallen short on several dimensions.

II

MNREGA: An Unfulfiled Endeavour:

> ...enlarging the range of people's choices—increasing their opportunities for education, health care, income and employment, and covering the full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to economic and political freedoms.[37]

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[35] Based on the group discussions in Tawarbahara, Gariaband on the 17-04-2011
[36] Group discussions in Badegobra on the 21-04-2011and Pathari, Mainpur on the 22-04-2011
[37]Brigitte 1, Hamm, A Human Rights Approach to Development. *Human Rights Quarterly*, , 23:4,2001,p.1010.

Participation in work, meant access to such a 'sound physical environment' which manifested itself in form of the fulfilment of the basic needs and aspirations of the villagers which included income, education of children, freedom from indebtedness, poverty and hunger. And most of these continue to remain unrealised.

Juxtaposing the evidences derived from the field study with the indicators of the RTD approach, one can say that MNREGA has proven to be an unfulfilled endeavour.

MNREGA has been unable to fully integrate a framework of rights and the practices of development. This kind of integration depended upon the creation of greater entitlements to basic standards of life and processes of empowerment of the poor to demand these rights. The state has failed to fulfil both these requirements through the Act. It has been unable to create 'power-laden contexts'[38] in which such interventions could materialize.

The consequences of the implementation of the Act reflected that government's treatment of poverty was more of an 'apolitical act of "filling in".[39]Glyn Williams, et al capture this sentiment and opine that anti-poverty policies of the government tended to 'see the category of the "the poor" as something to be incrementally reduced through economic growth or direct intervention'.[40] The focus of the government is more on the amount of money being spent on the poor without understanding whether this kind of investment actually benefits them. Its management of poverty fails to recognize 'the historical and geographical specificity of power relationships producing it[41]'. In doing so, it ignored the multidimensional and contextual character of poverty. A social activist working on forest rights opined that the understanding behind MNREGA needs to take a holistic perspective of gender, citizenship, labour,

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[38]William, Glyn, et.al, 'Performing Participatory Citizenship - Politcs and Power in Kerala's *Kudumbashree* Programme', Draft paper presented at the Draft paper presented at the *Workshop on Rethinking India's Local Governance: Poverty, Participation and Political Society*, organised by the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, in collaboration with The University of Sheffield, UK; Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta; Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on 22 October 2010, p.2.

[39] William, Glyn, et.al, 'The Politics of Defining and Alleviating Poverty: State Strategies and their Impacts on Rural Kerala' Draft paper presented at the *Workshop on Rethinking India's Local Governance: Poverty, Participation and Political Society*, organised by the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, in collaboration with The University of Sheffield, UK; Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta; Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on 22 October 2010p.7.

[40] Ibid., p.2.

[41] Ibid.

caste, class and such factors, only then can the act meet its goals. This limited understanding leads to the 'individualization of poverty';

> ...it reinforces the idea of 'the poor' as a separate group in need of specific intervention to address pathologies/abnormalities that *are specific to them* as people who lack skills, capital, awareness, or other 'normal' qualities. This can turn the responsibility for poverty alleviation back onto poor households/individuals-they have to make good their own 'abnormalities'....[42]

Individualization of poverty only intensifies the deprivation and marginalization suffered by the poor.

Based on this view one can say that MNREGA and other development policies find it difficult to penetrate into these conditions because any commitment to reduce poverty warrants not only a proper understanding of the needs and the aspirations of the poor, it also requires that the agenda of development policy should be derived from the experiences which were intrinsically shaped by the social, economic, political and cultural context of the neglected communities. While the state fails to build the proper channels for the representation of these contexts, the civil society has stepped in to play a crucial role.

III

Recovering the voices of the local:

One of the primary assumptions behind the introduction of MNREGA was the understanding that its effective working can enhance the bargaining power of the poor to demand their rights collectively. Evidences from the field revealed the contrary. It was rather the failures of the Act that has provoked a sense of organization amongst the marginalized.

As a social activist, Benipuri Goswami has been working for the rights of the tribals in Gariaband and Mainpur for the last 5 years. During the conference with the governor of Chhattisgarh, he remained silent unlike his other colleagues who were vociferously arguing for the rights of the poor. He says, *'dekhiye...in sab baatoan ka koi faida nahi hai...sarkar ka irada tayy hai...(* The government has decided what it

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[42] Ibid.

needs to do...there is no use of these discussions)[43]. In his speech to the NGOs, Shekhar Dutt, the governor of Chhattisgarh asserted that the goal of the state is to convert 'every individual and every household into a good consumer and a good producer' and it was only through greater industrialization that this was to be achieved. The era of agriculture has passed, Chhattisgarh needs to industrialize, pointed Dutt.

Benipuri explains why he never spoke in the conference, *'koi garibi ke baarein thoda bol de toh naxali kahlata hai...mujhe kuch kehkar samne nahi aana hai...mera kaam mushkil padd jaega...hume bahut kuch karna hai, akele* (...anyone who speaks for the poor here is called a naxal sympathizer... I do not want to come out in the open and talk about what I do...my work will face a lot of difficulty...We have a lot to achieve, alone...) [44]

Benipuri devoted almost a month to organize the villagers for the *Mahila Sammelan* held in Gariaband on the 20th of April. He says, *'ye itne anjaan hai ki inko yeh bhi nahi pata ki samasya kya hai...* (they[villagers] are so unaware that they do not even know what the problem is sometimes...'. In another instance Benipuri opines, *'bahut saare aisa hai jo kaam aur paise ke lie ek saal se intezaar kar rahe hai...aur inhe lagta hai ki inko karna padega'* (...a number of them have been waiting for over a year for work and payments...and they think they have to...)[45]. He continues, *'gaon wale jaantein hai..ki kaam milna hai..paisa milna hai...magar kaise milega, yeh nahi pata'*(villagers know they need to get work...they need to get payments...but how should they get this ...they do not know).[46]

Benipuri believes that it is important to organize these villagers. He says that the Act is bureaucratic and its working is completely in the control of bureaucratic officials. They develop processes and procedures that do not represent the interests of the people but only bureaucratic conveniences. For the villagers, he opines, MNREGA is yet another government scheme, and this time, allocating work. The Act has the potential but very little is done to mobilize the poor as citizens entitled to certain rights.

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[43] Discussions with Benipuri during the conferance with the Governor of Chhattisgarh held in Tilda on 26.04.2011

[44] Discussions with Benipuri during the conferance with the Governor of Chhattisgarh held in Tilda on 26.04.2011.

[45] Discussions with Benipuri at the Mahila Sammelan in Gariaband,20-04-2011

[46] Discussions with Benipuri at the Mahila Sammelan in Gariaband,20-04-2011

Benipuri and the members of his organization *Khoj Avem Jan Jagriti Samiti* have organized numerous gatherings to build awareness amongst the villagers. His involvement reflects in the relationship that he shares with the rural communities. Benipuri says that the poor may not know anything about the provisions of the Act, however, they do realize that this unawareness is a problem. This is the reason why, he says, the villagers support his work.

The villagers are struggling each day to meet their daily needs, however, their large presence at the gathering indicated that their rights and its fulfilment were important to them. Some villages had hired private vans and auto rickshaws to reach the event. A woman at the event says, ' I have come from Mainpur....I have not got my wages for over six months...Beni brother told us that officials will also attend the event...I can ask them directly...'.[47] Another woman from Daspur says, ' I have come here to share my problems...'.[48]

The *Mahila Sammelan* was attended by more than 300 women and men from across the villages of Raipur district. Benipuri says, *'hum to 400 logo ki umeed kar rahe the...agar paani nahi girta toh aur ate...'*(We were expecting 400 people, if it had not rained some more would have come)[49]. The event was organized opposite the office of the SDM. Benipuri opines, ' *SDM ko bhi pata chale ...bahut badi samaya hai'*(the SDM should know that there is a problem)[50].

The SDM and the chief officer of Gariaband were also invited for the event. However, the *sammelan* clashed with the 'Gram Swaraj Abhiyan', a campaign organized by chief minister Raman Singh to visit villages and hear their grievances personally. Newspaper reports[51] suggested that several villages protested against the campaign on the grounds that promises made to them in the past were never fulfiled. Most of the officials were, however, occupied with the campaign and did not attend the *sammelan*.

When asked about his reasons for expecting more than 400 women at the event, Benipuri says that the *sammelan* offers these women a space that they can own in terms of fearlessly articulating their views and opinions and this means a lot to them.

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[47] Discussions at the Mahila Sammelan in Gariaband,20-04-2011
[48] Discussions at the Mahila Sammelan in Gariaband,20-04-2011.
[49] Discussions with Benipuri at the *Mahila Sammelan* in Garaiband, 20-04-2011
[50] Discussions with Benipuri at the *Mahila Sammelan* in Garaiband, 20-04-2011
[51] Nai Duniya. Dated:20-04-2011,p.1.

He opines that this space gives them an opportunity to organize themselves as a community and empowers them to demand their rights.

Benipuri insisted that the *sammelan* was more than just a platform to voice complaints and find solutions. His motive was to organise the villagers as a group. For him, this platform gave recognition and representation to the poor as a group and encouraged them to reinforce their rights as a community. The impact of this kind of mobilization on the villagers was clearly visible.

The women, who came forward to speak, protested the denial of their rights. One tribal woman held herself and the community responsible for this treatment. 'It is because of our ignorance...we don't go and ask what our rights are...they will continue to fool us'[52] she said. Another woman from Tawarbahra speaking on the delay in the payment of wages said, 'Nobody (officials) has to pay (wages) from their own pockets, it is our right and the government has entitled us to this right'.[53]

What Benipuri attempted to create is a means to provide these women and many others, access to a language of rights that empowered them to express their aspirations. It helped the poor set their own standards against which they were able to hold the government and its agencies accountable and responsible. He says, ' *Hum aisa karke yeh nahi batlana chahatein ki hum MNREGA ke khilaaf hai...ya phir hume sarkar ki zarurat nahi...hum bas itna chahtein hai ke in logo ki baatein suni jaye...hume ek saath badna hoga...* '(through this event we do not wish to suggest that we oppose MNREGA or we do not need the government...all we want is that their voices be heard...we have to move forward together). He continues, *'MNREGA, PDS aur anya yojnao ki zarurat garibo ko hai...magar yeh niteeya asthayi hai...jab tak, garib kisano ya adivasiyo, ya phir mahilaon ke lie banayi gai neetiya, inke vicharo aur zarurato ko prathamikta nahi degi tab tak inka safal hona sambhav nahi hai... '* (MNREGA, PDS and other schemes are important for the poor, however, these are temporary... until the schemes for the poor farmers or the tribals or women do not prioritise the needs of these communities, they cannot succeed)[54].

These spaces that civil society has created for the poor, capacitates them to consolidate their identities as citizens entitled to certain rights and privileges and not

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[52] Discussions at the *Mahila Sammelan* in Gariaband,20-04-2011.

[53] Group discussions at the *Mahila Sammelan* in Garaiband, 20-04-2011.

[54] Discussions with Benipuri at the *Mahila Sammelan* in Garaiband, 20-04-2011.

as beneficiaries of a scheme. It empowered them to claim ownership over a process of development through the recognition and prioritization of their needs and most importantly their voices. As long as the state fails to make itself accountable and responsible to the people, any direction that it chooses to take towards their wellbeing and welfare, will eventually reach a dead end.

IV

Conclusion:

Upon contextualizing MNREGA within the developmental practices of the state, it was found that the poor were constantly negotiating between their identities as rights bearing citizens and as beneficiaries of a welfare policy for greater livelihood security in the absence of other alternatives. This kind of negotiation was determined by various political, economic, social and cultural factors.

The recognition of the language of rights which is built into the Act would mean changing existing power relations. The state has to respect the poor as rights bearing citizens and in doing so make itself much more accountable and responsive to their needs.

The study revealed that the state remains reluctant to embrace such a framework of rights. This is a dominant reason behind the operation of MNREGA as a poverty alleviating scheme rather that an Act defining a set of inalienable rights. However, this does not remain unchallenged. With the help of the civil society, the poor are gradually becoming aware about their rights and the duties of the state.

The analysis of Act unwinds the complexities of development thinking and practice. Evidently, there are gaps in both the theory and practice of development which limits government interventions like MNREGA to evolve as an effective strategy of poverty alleviation.

The extent to which MNREGA can fulfill the conditions of a RTD approach then, depends upon the commitment of the state towards the realization of the goals of social justice and human rights and the vociferousness of the demands of the poor and their insistence to be heard.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The study by appealing to the basic components of the Right to Development (RTD) framework, argued for a development approach rooted in the emancipatory politics of social justice. Herein, social justice is viewed as a 'condition that paves the way for all human beings to access equal and inalienable rights'[1] and can create conditions for the sustenance of a just and stable society that caters to an overall improvement. With such an approach, the study evaluates the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, aimed at eradicating poverty and enhancing rural capacities to build self sustaining rural economies.

The study is based on the use of qualitative methods entailing extensive use of group discussions with villagers, interviews with government officials and NGOs and direct observations. The field study was conducted in the scheduled areas of Gariaband (90 Kms from Raipur) and Mainpur (130 Kms from Raipur). The persons sampled for the study were mainly agricultural labourers and cultivators belonging to the socially deprived communities of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes.

The study dwells into some of the reasons for the paradox of rural poverty amidst the working of the MNREGA.It critically analyses the key dimensions of the Act which were incorporated under four subheadings; Guarantee, Entitlements, Planning and decision-making and Accountability and transparency.

In terms of guarantee, the absence of any form of political assertion of work as a right could be attributed to the lack of awareness and information about the provisions of the Act. On the front of entitlements, there was limited focus on the works that could strengthen the asset base of these communities. Similarly, on social security front of the act, workers were not aware of their entitlements to minimum package of social security in the form of allowances, amenities and other facilities like compensation in

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[1]Behrooz Morvaridi, *Social Justice and Development*. New York, 2008, p.184.

an event of a delay in the availability of work and payment of wages. In terms of planning and decision making, the deliberation in *gram sabha* did not have much of an impact in the way MNREGA needed to be implemented or on how their needs were addressed.

High levels of non transparency, unaccountability and unawareness permeating the processes of execution and implementation of the Act defeated the underlying essence of MNREGA as a people's Act.

The comparison of MNREGA with PDS and 'Jogi-Dabri' project, given in the field work chapter, shows how participation in work, meant access to such a 'sound physical environment' which manifested itself in form of the fulfillment of the basic needs and aspirations of the villagers which included income, education of children, freedom from indebtedness, poverty and hunger. Most of these remained unfulfilled through MNREGA.

Juxtaposing the evidences derived from the field study with the indicators of the RTD approach, one can say that MNREGA has proven to be an unfulfilled goal. It has been unable to fully integrate a framework of rights and the practices of development that is upheld by the RTD framework. The development agenda of the state failed to integrate itself with the needs and aspirations of the poor.

Another primary assumption behind the introduction of MNREGA was the understanding that its effective working can enhance the bargaining power of the poor to demand their rights collectively. Evidences from the field revealed the contrary. It was rather the failures of the Act that has provoked a sense of organization amongst the marginalized.

These spaces that civil society has created for the poor, capacitates them to consolidate their identities as citizens entitled to certain rights and privileges. It empowered them to claim ownership over a process of development through the recognition and prioritization of their needs and most importantly their voices. The recognition of the language of rights which is built into the Act would mean changing existing power relations. The state has to respect the poor as rights bearing citizens and in doing so make it much more accountable and responsive to their needs.

The study revealed that the state remains reluctant to embrace such a framework of rights. This is a dominant reason behind the operation of MNREGA as a poverty alleviating scheme rather that an Act embodying a an set of basic human rights.

The analysis of Act unwinds the complexities of development thinking and practice. Evidently, there are gaps in both the theory and practice of development which limits government interventions like MNREGA to evolve as an effective strategy of poverty alleviation.

With over 70% of the poor living in rural areas, rural poverty continues to remain one of the predominant concerns of development practitioners and policy makers in India. A number of programmes have been initiated by the government to address the pervading problem of poverty. Over the years policy makers have increasingly explored the option of reducing rural poverty through the promise of productive employment. However, often led by a minimalist strategy of providing protective 'safety nets' to the poor, most of these policy interventions proved to be insufficient in terms of coping with the intensity of large scale rural stagnation and deprivation.

The search for a viable alternative then, prompted an in depth analysis of the fundamental premises of development theory.

Poverty and deprivation have been viewed as manifestations of a limited notion of development that was driven towards narrow economistic ends. These arguments have been conceptually located in the critiques and challenges of the Western notion of development which upheld the idea that material advancement was the only route to human emancipation.

Contextualizing MNREGA within the experiences of rural Chhattisgarh has raised critical questions about the meaning and nature of the dominant practices of development thinking. Based on the analysis, one is forced to ask whether the RTD approach creates a space for seeing, thinking and valuing development differently.

MNREGA represents an institutional framework that links the goals of poverty alleviation with participatory citizenship. The Act foundationally appealed to some of

the basic premises of the RTD approach in terms of securing to the poor the right to work. Through these entitlements they could participate in their own development. Work, here, manifested itself as a process through which the poor could fulfil the basic requirements of life; and in doing so, enhance their human dignity and individual autonomy.

However, the implementation of Act was based on a few assumptions:

- There existed an effective and efficient system of administration.

- The poor were aware and would demand their rights and hold the agencies responsible towards them accountable.

- Local self governing institutions like the gram sabha and the panchayat will work in the best interest of the villagers.

In rural Chhattisgarh, local conditions were underdeveloped to support these prerequisites to the effective working of the Act. The poor lacked awareness about their rights and entitlements and local self governing institutions proved to be weak. Such a system of governance was overseen by an indifferent and unaccountable government administration. While an institutional design has been erected for the alleviation of the poor; the contexts within which these interventions are to take place were weak and stratified because of high levels of unawareness, non participation, non transparency and unaccountability. Little is done to build power-laden spaces that can strengthen the relationship between these interventions with effective patterns of participation.

The Act envisages active citizenship. Evidemtly, the state has failed to build appropriate behavioural roles and patterns within its apparatus or amongst its citizens to realise these goals.

The study holds the view there is need to build synergetic relationships between the state and the society. The pursuit of development is then, located within the norms of

cooperation, networks of engagement and developmentally effective relations between the public institutions and the citizens[2].

It is not about viewing the government as providing inputs and resources through its agencies and agents and leaving it upon the citizens to fulfil the rest. This depends upon making the state apparatus a part of the community in which they operate. Both the state and the society engage in a mutually beneficial relationship. Active involvement of the state can mobilise the citizens and they in turn can enhance the efficacy of the state apparatus[3].

RTD as a framework offered a platform to reconsider the goals and processes of development from a perspective that was situated within the domain of social justice and human rights. Development was then:

> ...defined as the ability to choose...the core of all development came from below—from the choices made by development's actors themselves.[4]

Current practices of development revealed that there has been very little engagement with the local experiences at a fundamental or conceptual level. There has been more of a negotiation with the needs of the poor and adjusting them into already existing patterns of development, rather than enforcing a different theory of development. The recognition of local ways of life only facilitated the accommodation of new solutions to the problems of the development, not of a new idea of development. Inclusion of local voices, needs and aspirations and its empowerment is only possible through their ownership of the processes of development.

It is here, that one can draw on the broad institutional approaches to development. It aims at reconfiguring the old traditions of development practices. The approach is to

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[2]Peter Evans, Government Action, Social Capital and Development: Reviewing the Evidence on Synergy, *World Development*, 1996, 24:6, p.1119.

[3]Ibid., p.1119-1132.

[4]H-O Sano, Development and Human Rights: The Necessary, but Partial Integration of Human Rights and Development, *Human Rights Quaterly*.2000,22:3,p.740.

be based on norms of trust, mutual reciprocity and networks of interactions. This can produce mechanisms that can be developmentally rewarding and fruitful.

The discussion concludes itself by invoking yet another aspiration for a good change, exploring in the process new frames, dimensions and processes that can make the idea of good change achievable. This analytical endeavour does not embody a stance that seeks to establish a final solution to the problem of development. By drawing upon the different schemes of the idea, the analysis only aims at elevating a path of improvements where no one idea of development could be completely rejected or idealised. Each had an overbearing on the other and produced in the process a much more nuanced concept of development that could serve the needs of the marginalised effectively.

The results of the study ascertain that the process of development does not withdraw itself, it only improves based on it failures. This answers the question that was raised in the beginning of the analysis. Societies can become much more inclusive and democratic even if a perfect one remains unachievable. This is because development has no end, its achievement lies in the way it redefines and recreates itself to become better. The search for a perfect end however, continues.

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