

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

UNDER RADICAL POLITICAL REGIMES:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KERALA AND WEST BENGAL

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I hereby affirm that the research for this dissertation titled *Economic Growth and Social Opportunities under Radical Political Regimes: A Comparative Study of Kerala and West Bengal* being submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Applied Economics, was carried out entirely by me at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram.

Thiruvananthapuram

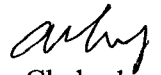
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Certified that this dissertation is the bona fide work of Sarmishtha Sen, and has not been considered for the award of any other degree by any other university.

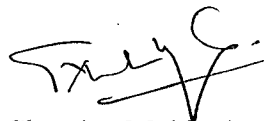
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Acknowledgements ...

In the CDS library, whenever I have consulted any dissertation, M.Phil. or Ph.D., unknowingly I made a point to read the 'acknowledgement' in each. In the process I gathered a few observations, or rather opinions regarding them: I would let them to influence my 'acknowledgement', I thought. First of all, the acknowledgements smelt of the sweating days of work—of confusion, re-search and then of sudden reflection. In most of the cases, it seemed to be the complacent ending of a day, full of struggles with pain, sorrow and happiness. I'm afraid, that I could also, wrongly, give the same impression in the garb of the standard phrases of acknowledgement. There is no doubt that I had my share of struggles. But, my research experience, being keenly observed by myself, does not afford any room for even such speculations that it is a satisfactory ending of the day. This sense of tremendous dissatisfaction which I carry with myself as time places me on the finishing line in the journey, along with my strangely placed struggles in the course of the research, to put it in the best and mildest way, are to be acknowledged at the beginning. In this context I can't but express my gratitude towards my supervisors Dr. K.P.Kannan & Dr. Achin Chakraborty, for imbibing a sense of direction at the beginning as well as at the end of my thesis writing. Theirs was the touch of an artist – subtle, but effective - making all the differences by a few fascinating strokes. While acknowledging their guidance I wish I could learn much more from them than what I have. Dr. Sarmila Banerjee, at the level of motivating me to CDS as another world that I'm not familiar with, would share the acknowledgement of my study in CDS.

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As I rush towards the train with changes on the way in the draft, Georgekutty kindly give form to all of them. He needs very special thanks for the same.

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ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITY UNDER RADICAL POLITICAL REGIMES:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KERALA AND WEST BENGAL

Abstract

This study seeks to compare the development experiences of two provincial states of India viz. Kerala and West Bengal, roughly for the period between 1977-78 and 1996-97. Similarity of political regimes in these two states is expected to cause similar pattern of economic and social development. The differential patterns of development achievements are sought in the change in the nature of government interventions indicating the development agenda of the regime over time. Achievement relating to reduction of poverty, education and health of the sections of the two states with low returns in participating in the growth process over the entire period of analysis, are compared for each of the states despite all the historically given initial difference in the development achievement.

The state, in this context, can be viewed as the site of interaction between conflicting and co-operating interests of different sections constituting the respective societies. The regimes ruling the state can be distinguished from each other according to the relative autonomy each demonstrates in the course of mediating those interests, in terms of furthering its long-term objectives, subject to the short term demands of maintaining economic, political and social stability. The similarities we find reflected in both the states, are in the distinct thrust in the formulation and implementation of the development policies on the improvement in the standard of living of the hitherto under privileged and deprived sections of the respective societies, such as rural poor including landless labourers, industrial workers in the urban areas as well as the SCs and STs.

West Bengal has been experiencing a continuous and high agricultural growth, compared to most of the other states in India, since the early 1980s. This has been accompanied by a significant decline in the incidence of poverty, especially in the rural areas. The industrial production in the state, also exhibited an improvement from the past growth performances in the sector, especially in the 1990s. But there has not been any significant change in the pattern of social sector development i.e., the level and distribution of the development achievements in education and health. Apparently, on the other side of the continuum is the state of Kerala that is known to have achieved high social sector development without a high level of economic growth or a matching improvement in it, relative to other Indian states.

We examine whether there has been any change in both the level of the development achievements in both the states, with respect to the selected indicators, and in their distributions, spatially or across occupational groups, castes, gender during the period of analysis. In the next step we try to find an explanation of such a development pattern in the change in the nature of participation of some of these groups in the process of economic growth. We attempt to locate, specifically in the agricultural and industrial sector, each regime's role in its specific interventions in the sphere of economic growth that may have influenced such a change. Next, we attempt to explain the same by the change, if any, in the respective regime's interventions affecting public provisioning in education and health sectors that may have improved the access to these infrastructures and their utilisation by some of the above-mentioned sections. The choice of different constituent sections for the analysis in the sphere of economic growth and social sector development at the disaggregated level is dictated by the availability of relevant secondary data at the disaggregated level.

On the basis of both secondary data and review of secondary literature, thus, we try to narrate the uniformities, if any, in the way the left regimes in the two states have effectively attempted to influence the development process, while trying to specify the diverse patterns of development within those observed uniformities.

Agricultural growth has been more participatory than what it was earlier in the respective states. But in Kerala, the agricultural labourers, the relatively deprived sections, seem to have benefited more than their counterparts in West Bengal. Industrial growth has been more gainful in Kerala, especially in terms of the gains to the industrial workers of the unorganised sector with a few successful cases of industrial workers' co-operatives. In West Bengal, the evidences indicate that the gains have been mainly confined to the unionised labour from the organised sector. Even this sector has experienced increasing uncertainty in retaining whatever it has gained, as decline in the labour union's militancy (to make the state relatively more favourable to private industrial investment considered crucial for the industrial revival and greater employment generation) has been accompanied by rising incidences of lock-outs and retrenchments. Consequently, a huge section of the urban poor in West Bengal, mostly working in the unorganised sector, probably lacks sufficient purchasing power to utilise much of the educational and health infrastructure, concentrated in the urban areas in a skewed manner. But, for rural population in general, and, rural poor in particular, the absence of critical infrastructure in education and health and their effective working, even after almost two decades of continuous left rule in the state, seems to be a more dominant factor causing the lower achievements. Further, rural poor, especially the more deprived castes and women, lack the financial access to whatever limited social infrastructure is provided in the private sector. In Kerala, organised articulation through the social reforms movement of 1920s, Communist movement since 1930s and more importantly several large voluntary organisations working for the social development of the relatively deprived sections sustaining the earlier efforts, and an electorate—literate and conscious of their democratic rights, seem to have ensured higher and more evenly distributed and relatively well-working public provisioning. Thus, the better utilisation of those infrastructure and organisational effort to maintain the educational and health achievements, through their cumulative effect may ensure even better incremental achievements in these sectors than in West Bengal. However, the review of West Bengal experience suggests that improvement in public provisioning alone does not necessarily ensure improved achievements. Such an outcome requires intervention in the sphere of economic growth that increases the real earnings of the relatively deprived sections or other incentive schemes specifically targeted to the improvement in the economic benefits accruing to these sections.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This study seeks to analyse some broad patterns in the social and economic development of West Bengal relative to the same observed in the state of Kerala in the last two decades. Here, we concentrate on few aspects of development such as reduction of poverty, achievements relating to education and health, especially of the relatively deprived sections in the society, for the comparative assessment. The focus of the analysis is on the development effort of the apparently similarity of political regimes with radical approach towards development dominating the development agenda in both the states, which are expected to exhibit development performances, especially for the above-mentioned sections of the respective states. Explanation of evidences of differential developmental outcomes both in terms of their level and distribution, in the two states are sought through the examination of the developmental interventions of both the states. The detailed background on which the comparative evaluation is attempted is explained in the following sections.

1.1. Two Broad Aspects of Development Experience of West Bengal:

The social and economic development of West Bengal in the recent years are seen, by some researchers, in terms of the relative decline in her position among the major Indian states. At the time of independence, West Bengal was known as one of the most developed states, which had the highest per capita income among all the Indian states, followed immediately by Punjab whose per capita income was 16.6% less than that of the former. Per capita income of Maharashtra was lower than that of West Bengal by 26.3 percent. By 1960-61, Maharashtra and by 1970-71, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat, also, went ahead of West Bengal in terms of per capita income. This trend has continued for the later years as has been reflected in the fact that the per capita income of West Bengal became lower than that at the all India level during this period, contrary to the earlier experience (Basu, 1991). In addition, in terms of industrial output of a state and the same as a proportion of total output there, both considered to be important development indicators, the state's relative position came down among the Indian states during the period between 1951 and 1991. This was reflected in the declining share of the state in the industrial output of the entire economy that came down from 23 percent in 1960-61 to under 7 per cent by the end of the eighties (Sengupta, 1997) and to near 5 per cent

in 1995-96 (Government of West Bengal, 1999). In terms of educational development also, the state was known to have better position than many other Indian states at the time of independence (Bagchi, 1998). In 1951, West Bengal was the second among the major Indian states in terms of literacy, following only Kerala. But in 1991 we find that in addition to major states like Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamilnadu, some smaller states such as Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Goa and Tripura had overtaken the state in terms of literacy. Kerala, on the other hand, had always retained its highest position (ibid).

However, both Basu (op cit) and Bagchi (op cit) questioned the apparent state of 'development' in West Bengal at the time of independence. Their argument can be summarised as follows: "West Bengal started its journey as a constituent state of the Union of India with a highly vulnerable industrial structure ..." (Bagchi, op cit.), in addition to the inheritance of a more distorted agricultural structure than any other state, as a result of the British effort to convert Bengal as the main centre for British capital at the same time destructing efforts of the national capital (Basu, op cit.). Similarly, a preliminary look at the educational experiences prior to independence shows that much of the success was related to the urban areas of the state, with mostly upper caste elites participating in school and college education.

The other important theme of evaluation of economic and social development of the state centres on the recently recorded improvements in the agricultural growth and rural development experiences, the attempt to revive industrial growth in the state, and, decline in the incidence of income-poverty, especially in the rural areas of the state. However, an evaluation of these changes in the course of social and economic development in the state is essentially incomplete without consideration of the impact of the 'radical change in the course of its state-level politics' in the late seventies, followed by the 22 yearlong continuous rule of the Left Front government (LFG, hereafter) dominated by C.P.I. (M). The left parties 'have advocated class based politics and are publicly committed to improving the position...' of different deprived sections such as the poor in rural areas as a matter of priority, who came to power 'on the promise of vigorous agrarian and political reforms' (Gazdar and Sengupta, 1997). These authors also found a similar characterisation of the state in 1977-78 as that at the time of independence, when this regime inherited an economy with 'high population density, undeveloped agricultural potential and stagnation in the industry' as factors constraining the

economy. On such a background, as has been observed by a number of researchers, there was definite indication of the emergence and consolidation of a political front with ideological commitment to economic equity...’, which was expected to provide an opportunity to do away with the “political domination of propertied elites, with little or no interest in the poor interventions...” (ibid.). Through a combination of government interventions and organised mobilisation, this politics sought to break away from the existing pattern of development by making it more representative of the hitherto excluded sections’ interests. An analysis of the performance of the state in the spheres of social and economic development in the subsequent years might indicate the direction and extent of such change. Such a change, if it had occurred could be associated with the interventions of this regime, along with the influential left political culture already prevailing in the state since early 20th century.

1.2. Possibility of Additional Insights from Adoption of a Case Study Approach of Comparison:

This evaluation becomes more insightful if done in a comparative perspective. The assessment of social and economic development, in this case is done, not vis-à-vis the avowed objectives of the regime ruling it, but relative to the performance in social and economic development of some other state, which has some basic similarities with the former. In this study we compare the social and economic development achievements of West Bengal, in terms of their effect on an average individual’s quality of life, with that in the state of Kerala, roughly for the period since 1977-78 till 1997-98. However, we concentrate on only a few selected areas, which are known to affect individual’s well-being. So in addition to comparing the achievements of the two states in alleviating income poverty, we consider achievements mainly in the sphere of health and education where Kerala is known to have made spectacular progress compared to not only other Indian states but also compared to even some of the relatively developed countries. A comparative analysis of the major interventions of the two states, initiated with the objective of reducing poverty, relating to both income and non-income aspects, specially for the relatively weak sections, such as land reforms, provisioning of relatively cheap public services in the sphere of education and health and so on, are done for the above-mentioned period of analysis to explain the differential development outcomes there.

The need for and advantage of adopting a comparative method in general, and the case-study oriented comparative approach, in particular, are elaborated briefly, in what follows here. Byres (1995) has distinguished two broad approaches of comparative method— one concerned with structural change in the course of economic development following the tradition of Simon Kuznets (Kuznets, 1956 and 1966 as cited in Byres, op cit.) identified as the variable-oriented approach (Ragin, 1987 as cited in Byres, op cit), which is illuminating in establishing uniform features of development, as illustrated by Chenery and Syrquin (1975) (as cited in Byres, op cit.). The second approach, while agreeing on the value of a systematic comparative work with the proponents of the first approach, is based on the comparison of carefully drawn case-studies.

The nature of such a study requires that the number of case-studies must be small and therefore each has to be chosen in a way so that the choice is “appropriate to the questions being addressed”, and each case study is “truly comparable” with the other, which keeps alive the comparativist’s “sensitivity to diversity and historical contingency” which is so crucial to widening of the range of possible hypotheses through comparison (Byres, op cit). Even within the paradigm of ‘world economy’, the issue of relative autonomy of a provincial state government, prevailing local class relations and its dynamics vis-à-vis world capitalism can be analysed considering the historical developments of class relations in specific societies as that will incorporate the diversity of local histories. A comparative study in this context is powerful in deconstructing theories that assume capitalism to develop according to a unidirectional, unilinear evolution. Thus, despite having serious practical limitations, this particular comparative approach may indicate causes that are originated beyond each case study by questioning the obvious historical explanations prevailing in a particular society, without losing attention to the specificity of each single case (Schendel 1991). In this specific case of inter-state comparative analysis within India, the choice has an advantage, as below the federal government of India, all the states or provincial governments are responsible to “play a significant role in the formulation and execution of agrarian policies”, (Kohli, 1987) policies regarding health and educational development and so on, of the respective states, within more or less similar social-structural conditions dictated by the constitutional and financial arrangements of the country (ibid.).

1.3 Reasons for Choosing Kerala and the Difference in the Focus of the Present Study:

There are two main reasons for choice of Kerala. First, regarding the development achievements of Kerala, especially those relating to the social sector, as is discussed in what follows, the state has been always ahead of West Bengal in terms of achievements in education and health, both in 1977-78 and 1997-98, marking the two end-points of the period of analysis. Notably, Kerala's performance has been better than that of West Bengal even in 1951 and 1961 and thus in 1957 when the first Communist government of the country came to power in this provincial state.

In 1951-60 Kerala had the lowest crude death rate (CDR, hereafter), which was true in 1997 also (see Table 1.3.1).

Table 1.3.1: Crude Death Rate in Rural and Urban Sectors.

	<i>Kerala</i>			<i>West Bengal</i>			<i>India</i>		
	R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	T
1951-60			16.0			21.0			23.0
1977	7.4	6.8	7.3	12.8	8.4	11.7	16.0	9.4	14.7
1978	7.1	6.7	7.0	12.6	8.3	11.6	15.3	9.4	14.2
1997	6.3	6.1	6.2	7.5	7.2	7.7	9.6	6.5	8.9

Source: 1) *Bhattacharya and Shastri (1976) as cited in Nag (1983).*

2) *India Sample Registration System, Office of Registrar General (1980).*

3) *India Sample Registration System, Office of Registrar General (1999).*

The CDR in West Bengal had an absolutely higher value as well as higher rural-urban differences than Kerala, except in 1997 when the latter became almost comparable in both the states. Both CDR and rural-urban difference in these two states were generally lower than the all-India average of the same. Similarly Kerala had the lowest infant mortality rate in all the periods in both rural and urban areas and for both males and females (see Table 1.3.2).

Table 1.3.2: Male and Female Infant Mortality Rate in Rural and Urban Areas.

	<i>Rural Kerala</i>			<i>Urban Kerala</i>			<i>Rural WB</i>			<i>Urban WB</i>			<i>India</i>		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	T	M	F
1964-65	64	46	55	32	64	46	85	78	81	74	56	65			
1982	34	29	32	24	24	24	98	87	93	55	49	52	105	114	65
1997	10	12	11	19	14	16	62	54	58	46	40	43	71	77	45

Source: *Sample Registration System Bulletin 1999, ORG.*

Here again both Kerala and West Bengal showed a better performance than the average Indian one. Contrary to all-India or West Bengal experience, rural areas in Kerala are seen to be at an advantage (specially rural males) in terms of increasingly lower infant mortality, and notably, in the relative scale urban males were seen to be quite disadvantaged within the state in this regard. For West Bengal both rural-urban and male-female difference did not reduce much over this time. This specific disadvantage relating to health for rural areas and for females is reflected in the life expectancy at birth, too (for gender difference in life expectancy, see Table 1.3.3).

Table 1.3.3: Life Expectancy at Birth for Males and Females, 1951-60, 1975-80, 1981-85, 1992-96

	<i>Kerala</i>		<i>West Bengal</i>		<i>India</i>	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1951-60	49.0	48.3	44.7	43.9	41.4	40.0
1975-80	60.8	63.0	NA	NA	52.5	52.1
1981-85	65.4	71.5	56.4	58.0	55.4	55.7
1992-96	70.2	75.8	61.8	63.1	60.1	61.4

Source: *Nag (1983), and Sample Registration System Bulletin 1999, ORG.*

Between 1951-60 and 1981-85 the direction of gender disparity in life expectancy was reversed in both the states. Since given equal treatment and other equalities of opportunities for men and women, an average woman is expected to live longer than an average man, this reversal of the direction of gender disparity shows the reduction in female disadvantage at survival. Again, both higher improvements in women's health status in Kerala and lower

relative advantage of urban areas over the rural ones than corresponding values in West Bengal are observed from the above table.

Similarly the achievement indicators relating to education, for example, the literacy rate in the rural and urban areas for males and females in both the states gets us the same picture (see Table 1.3.4).

Table 1.3.4: Percentage Literate by Sex, 1951, 1971, and 1991.

	<i>Male</i>			<i>Female</i>			<i>Total</i>		
	Kerala	WB	India	Kerala	WB	India	Kerala	WB	India
1951	50	34	25	32	12	8	40	24	17
1971	67	43	40	54	22	19	60	33	40
1991	94	68	64	86	47	39	92	68	61

Source: Census of India, Different Issues of Socio-cultural Tables.

For each group e.g. rural males, rural females and so on, the corresponding literacy rate is higher for Kerala, where the rural-urban or male-female differences are higher for West Bengal as in the earlier cases. Even the female literacy rate in Kerala, which is lower than the male literacy rate there, is higher than the male literacy rate in West Bengal which is far higher than the corresponding female literacy rate there. However, the indicator of the female enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment for West Bengal indicates a relatively better educational achievement in the state, especially between 1978 and 1995-96 (see Table 1.3.5), and the relatively high increase in the female enrolment rates has contributed to a non-declining total enrolment there.

Table 1.3.5 Female Enrolment as a Percentage of All Enrolment, by Class Level, 1960-61, 1978 and 1995-96.

	<i>1960-61</i>			<i>1978</i>			<i>1995-96</i>		
	Kerala	WB	India	Kerala	WB	India	Kerala	WB	India
Class I-IV	46.8	35.9	NA	48.3	42.0	38.6	96.7	99.3	100.1
VI-VII	44.5	28.1	NA	46.9	39.1	32.8	86.5	100.2	97.75
IX & up	42.1	24.6	NA	48.0	34.1	29.1	115.6	102.4	102.6

Source: Nag (1983), NSS 52nd round report on "Attending an educational institutions in India: Its level, nature and cost". October 1998.

Kerala also recorded a significant improvement in the same indicator over almost the same period. However the ratio tilts more in favour of female enrolment, the higher the level of education, and this has been more so in Kerala.

So whether we look at the social sector achievements of both the states in terms of stock indicators such as life expectancy and literacy rates or in terms of flow indicators such as infant mortality rates, enrolment etc., Kerala seems to be in a better position both at the beginning and the end of the considered period of analysis. This is not only true at the absolute level of achievements but also in terms of the spread of the achievements spatially, across genders and across social groups, with few exceptions (Kannan, 1995; Franke & Chasin, 1994). So this differential development achievements form the basis of asking why Kerala has succeeded in social sector development whereas West Bengal experience is “more mixed, including some remarkable achievements and some conspicuous failures” (Dreze & Sen, 1997).

There have been attempts to explain specific dimensions of Kerala’s better social sector development relative to that of West Bengal. Moni Nag (1983, 1989) has explored the causes of mortality differentials between these two societies, the two most densely populated states in India enjoying comparable standards of living on many factors such as environment, nutrition, income, industrialisation, urbanisation, health facilities etc., as well as sharing “historical traditions of emphasis on education and a leftist political orientation which might be expected to lead to similarities in life style” (Nag, 1983). He conducted an analysis of socio-economic and cultural factors supposedly correlated with mortality levels, and overall standard of living, and attempted to trace back the developments till 1977-78, into the historically specified differential development experiences of these two societies. He concluded from the analysis that the involvement of higher proportion of the general population in both educational and political traditions of the state and consequently their awareness of an individual’s democratic rights in a civil society might account for their greater demand for better health care and other public services. The higher utilisation of these services, which are known to be better provided in Kerala than in West Bengal, in its turn, could explain the better health status enjoyed by an average individual in Kerala than one in West Bengal.

But the above analysis referred to the period prior to the inception of the left front rule in West Bengal in 1977-78, after which they won another five consecutive assembly elections by safe, though declining margins. Through the revitalization of the local government Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs hereafter) by institutionalising and regularising electoral processes in the hitherto neglected rural areas, following the coming to power by the left, greater popular participation directly in the process of planning was sought for. Gazdar and Sengupta (op cit.) argued that though rural empowerment goes well beyond participation in election, but a “consequence of the agrarian struggles and mass-mobilization of some of the poorest people for their economic rights has been the raising of political awareness”, so much so that the poor becomes “assertive and vigilant participants in local democracy” (ibid.).

This brings us back to the second type of justification for choosing Kerala, for the purpose of comparison, the state where, as mentioned before, the first Communist Government in India was established and the state is dominated by the similar political power as West Bengal. During the entire period of analysis, Kerala had communist-led government rule only for the years 1980 to 1981, 1987 to 1991 and since 1996 (in addition to the significant years of 1957-59 and 1967-69), it is well recognised that the politics and government’s policy-making etc. are generally dominated by the left dominated political culture associated with the left regime (Ramachandran, 1997, Rammohan, 1991). This goes beyond the formal left rule back to the pre-independence period since when it started influencing political and development thought in both the states. Political culture here is used in the sense of something that is able to affect political and government structure and performance and can itself be affected by the ‘contemporary political, economic and social structures, as well as by the historical and cultural inheritance of the past’ (Samudavanija, 1990). Despite all the progress made by health and educational policies in nineteenth century Kerala, spread of mass literacy specially among rural workers and women, was brought about by ‘public action for literacy on a societal level’ as a part of the mass political movement organised by the communist, in the government from outside. This, in its turn, led to better health status through better utilisation of health infrastructure without matching high improvement in the Indian standard (Ramachandran, op cit.; Nag 1983, 1989). Since mass political movements influenced by the left political culture were suggested to be an important source of change, similarity of political culture in both the states can play a pivotal role around which the explanation of the similarities and differences in their development dynamics can be sought. Thus the theme

around which this analysis is planned differs from that of Nag's study. Here the objective is to analyse the impact of the similar radical political regime on the social and economic development achievements over the entire period of analysis, despite all the historically given initial difference in the development achievements.

A widespread recognition of the legitimacy of state intervention in initiating as well as sustaining efforts toward achieving development justifies a study in the state's role in achieving specific developments. However, according to many studies in comparative politics, a distinction is to be made between state and regime, regime being a more outer concept fit into the state, an entity with a more rigid basic character, so that 'regimes can come and go but the basic state type does not alter easily' (Kohli, op cit.). Within the broad structure of a developmental state like India, with private ownership of means of production, regimes vary as their relative autonomy varies, where relative autonomy is measured as a regime's ability to keep their governance free from the influence of propertied class and other powerful interests and act deliberately to promote certain sections instead of certain others through required interventions. The question of change of regime, thus, is inextricably linked up with the probable change in the pattern of allocation and utilisation of resources in favour of certain classes as change in relative autonomy indicates a possibility of a change in the control over resources itself, change in the policy formulation and performance of the state in relation to improvement in the level of development achievements, while making them more equitable than otherwise. This link has been highlighted in Kohli's (op cit.) study where he analysed the state of poverty in three Indian provincial states ruled by three different regimes, West Bengal ruled by the Communist party of India (Marxist) being one of them. He concluded that left-of-centre regimes like that in West Bengal enjoy a higher relative autonomy and thus are much more effective in undertaking redistributive measures than other regimes as the former proved to have a better experience in terms of alleviation of rural poverty in the state. But when it comes to a comparison between the development experiences of West Bengal and Kerala, the states dominated by the politics of the similar type of regimes such a high difference in social sector development seems puzzling and needs explanation. Here we notice that despite the slight advantage that West Bengal had over Kerala in terms of economic growth, as has been observed by Nag (1983) for the period till late 1970s and reflected in the CSO data on SDP for the 1980s also, the reduction of income poverty in

Kerala has been more significant than that in West Bengal and specially, in a more even pattern than what the latter experienced (discussed in Section 2.3 of this study).

Here, at the starting point of the analysis, the implicit position held is that in a state with private ownership of poverty, redistributive measures can make a dent on poverty. But it is to be noted that there exists alternative arguments claiming that poverty is not an accidental outcome of a state system, rather a structural characteristic of the very system (Schendel, op cit.). Thus, according to them, it does not automatically follow that poverty will disappear completely, neither with time or through higher growth on the one hand nor through supported policies which lay emphasis on redistributive measures without stressing the need for alteration of the production structure, as poverty is integrated with the very production structure and the system of accumulation in the society under consideration.

1.4 Arrangement of the Chapters:

There is an indication of a significant and continuous reduction in poverty in both the states, especially after 1977-78, with a higher rate of decline experienced by Kerala, for most of the years for which estimates are available, as a detailed examination demonstrates. The recently experienced fast growth in the agricultural sector in West Bengal, continuing for more than a decade, without worsening the income distribution pattern (Lieten, 1992, 1995, 1996, for example), is known to have improved the monthly per capita consumption expenditure in the rural areas (Gazdar and Sengupta, 1999). But the absence of significant social sector development in the state accompanying this improvement is puzzling. At aggregate level, there have been certain improvements in average educational and health-related developments, and the provisioning relating to that, which mask the disparities among the relatively disadvantaged groups and others. A very common characteristic of the social and economic development in West Bengal, and to a much lesser extent in Kerala, is the relative disadvantage of the rural areas, the SCs, STs, women and agricultural labourers representing the majority of the rural poor and industrial workers and much of the informal sector workers constituting the urban poor, despite specific state interventions targeting them. Kerala, on the other hand, has the relatively high and even distribution of these achievements at lower level of growth.

Given that the study is contextualised in this way, the comparative reduction in poverty and improvement in the level and spread of social development, particularly for the relatively disadvantaged sections in the respective societies, forms the discussion in chapter 2 of this study.

Thus it seems that increase in neither the mere level of growth (high growth in agriculture and so on) or the volume of the provisioning to create social opportunities (the number of hospitals and the number of doctors in a society, for example) ensures that the benefits therefrom will be shared relatively equitably, by the majority of the population, or specially by the sections who were hitherto excluded from availing this.

A growth pattern that is relatively employment-intensive and simultaneously improves the earnings and working conditions will be relatively more participatory in nature. This is a desirable condition to be attained to improve the standard of living of relatively under privileged sections of a society, though it seems neither necessary nor sufficient, as we have mentioned. So, whether the interventions by the leftist in the two states, directly trying to influence the process of economic growth, have succeeded in attainment of such a broad-based growth, becomes a question of valid importance to find out whether the benefits from the latter is shared more equitably than before. With this objective in the background, in Chapter 3 of this study we analyse the respective governments' interventions in agricultural and industrial sectors.

Given the growth process and its specific distribution of benefits, an important question to ask is how the support-led strategies of development, through the creation of social opportunities, can be linked to the social sector achievements, discussed in Chapter 2. The existing provisioning as well as the addition to the existing stock meant for serving the target sections may be utilized by the already privileged sections unless the pattern of resource spending and infrastructure creation are consciously suited to the former sections' needs and they have the necessary access to the same. Thus, by analysing the above-mentioned two factors, on the basis of available secondary information, we try to indicate in Chapter 4, whether there has been better recognition of the needs of those sections than before. In addition, we try to examine the possibility of any correspondence between the sections benefiting from the emergent process of economic growth and those benefiting from the active government

interventions creating social opportunities, since the complementarity between the two sets of interventions is no less than overemphasized.

The final chapter (Chapter 5) summarises the reflections on the comparative development patterns in the states, on the basis of discussions in the earlier chapters of the study.

CHAPTER 2

Comparative Assessment of the Change of Achievements in Selected Aspects of Development

2.1. Arrangement of the Sections

In this chapter, we compare the development achievements of West Bengal and Kerala over time, where development here, in a crude sense, means the improvement in an average individual's achievements with respect to certain functionings that are known to affect her/his standard of living.

In the section 2.2, we specify the aspects, both income and non-income, with respect to which changes over time in the respective states are measured, as well as the reasons for incorporating these aspects instead of other ones. Section 2.3. makes use of the available data and the estimates determined thereof to compare the changes in incidence and severity of income poverty, both in rural and urban areas of the two states since 1977-78 till 1997-98, the latest year for which poverty estimates for both the states are available. The analysis seeks to improve the reliability of the conclusion by crosschecking them with some information at the disaggregated level. In the next two sections that follow i.e., section 2.4., and 2.5., comparison is made on the basis of available secondary data, of the change in the achievements relating to education and health respectively in the two states, over the relevant time period.

2.2. Choice of Certain Basic Aspects for the Comparative Assessment:

The study considers minimum nutrition, education and health as some of the basic aspects affecting development in both the states, and thus level and distribution of achievements with respect to these aspects are compared. The basis of this selection is explained briefly in this section.

The objective of this comparison is to assess the change in standard of living of an average individual in each of these two states. Living may be viewed as consisting of a set of interrelated functionings, each of which in its turn, consists of doings and beings. There may be differences across societies regarding the relevant functionings constituting a reasonable standard of living and their relative importance as well as the acceptable minimum

achievement with respect to each. Among all the possible and relevant functionings, few can be considered universal in that those are probably the ones, which have been and are still valued in majority of the societies. The prevalence of social variations does not rule out agreements on importance of those basic functionings in improving the quality of life there. Thus an evaluation of the standard of living, at the least, has to take the form of an assessment of the achievements with respect to those functionings. This chapter attempts to confine itself to that minimum task.

The situation in which one fails to avoid acute hunger or malnutrition, ignorance associated with the state of illiteracy and lack of education, or illness and premature death, will be accepted as one of low standard of living in both the societies, i.e., in the standard of any inter-personal or inter-cultural comparison. Thus the space of functionings over which the comparison is done includes having the minimum income necessary to meet the minimum nutritional requirements, attainment with respect to education, health etc.

The possibilities of converting incomes and resources into capability to function vary parametrically with personal characteristics and circumstances (Sen, 1981, 1992). The same consumption or income level may have different implications in terms of enhancement of capabilities, the ultimate goal of all developmental efforts, for different categories according to their individual and group characteristics e.g. caste, gender, age, dominant livelihood strategies, the individual or the group's varying dependence on a sole source of support or on a multiplicity of activities to fall back upon in case the other sources are closed to make a living, and other socio-economic and spatial factors determining the access to important goods and services etc. (Chambers, 1992). The study includes comparative assessment of the achievements at some disaggregated level for the above-mentioned functionings, the scope of the desegregations being dictated by the availability of data.

2.3. Indications of Reduction in Poverty in Both the States:

From the discussion using measures of different aspects of poverty in this section there is indication of reduction in poverty in both the states, since 1977-78.

Although the relevant conditions of poverty, specific to a society, are always relative the absolute dimension becomes more important and relevant in a society where absolute dispossession is a fact of life for about half the population. Thus the comparison is done here with respect to a level

that reflects a standard of living common to both the societies, below which people are considered to be absolutely impoverished. Here we compare the change in the available estimates of poverty, based on an energy-adequacy norm and the corresponding use of a minimum required consumption expenditure to attain that energy level¹, that is considered as only the first step in evaluating the change in an individual's standard of living.

2.3.1. Higher Extent of Reduction in the Overall Incidence of Poverty in Kerala:

It will be evident from the following discussion that West Bengal has exhibited significant improvement in reducing incidences of income poverty, though at lower rate and with higher rural-urban difference than the respective values in Kerala, especially after 1977-78.

The Expert Group appointed by the Planning Commission, through the evaluation of the national consumption baskets corresponding to the calorie norms for the base year i.e., 1973-74 at the prevailing state-specific prices determined the state specific poverty lines in order to facilitate comparability across states and over time. They have computed the all-Indian proportion of poverty, both rural and urban as a ratio of the aggregate state-wise number of the poor to the total all-Indian population for rural and urban areas respectively, without adjusting the NSS data to ensure consistency with NAS private consumer expenditure data. In view of the availability of reasonably reliable NSS data over time and space, the methodology adopted by the Expert Group requiring minimum recourse to additional assumptions (except that of uniform consumption pattern for rural and urban areas of all the states, Rath (1996)), the poverty estimates have been reported to be robust. Table 2.1.1 shows the estimates of incidence of poverty, made available by the Expert Group for the period from 1973-74 to 1997-98, roughly coinciding with the period of this analysis.

¹ for the discussion on the relative advantages of using income method see Rath (1996), Chatterjee (1998), Suryanarayana (2000).

Table 2.3.1 Percentage of poor 1973-74 to 1997-98, in Kerala, West Bengal and India.

<i>Year</i>	<i>States (1)</i>	<i>Rural (2)</i>	<i>Urban (3)</i>	<i>Combined (4)</i>	<i>Rural/Urban (5)</i>
1973-74	Kerala	59.19	62.24	59.71	0.98
	West Bengal	73.16	34.50	63.39	2.12
	India	56.44	49.23	54.93	1.15
1977-78	Kerala	51.48	59.54	52.93	0.86
	West Bengal	68.34	38.71	60.65	1.76
	India	53.07	47.40	51.81	1.12
1983	Kerala	39.03	48.65	40.91	0.80
	West Bengal	63.05	32.21	54.72	1.96
	India	45.61	42.15	44.76	1.08
1987-88	Kerala	29.10	43.36	32.08	0.67
	West Bengal	48.30	32.84	43.99	1.47
	India	39.06	40.12	39.34	0.97
1993-94	Kerala	25.76	29.57	26.82	0.87
	West Bengal	40.80	22.51	35.69	1.81
	India	37.27	33.66	36.31	1.11
1997-98	Kerala	9.38	20.27	12.72	0.47
	West Bengal	31.85	14.86	27.02	2.1
	India	27.09	23.62	26.1	1.1

Source: Malhotra, 1997, Planning Commission, 2000,

From the above table it is found that the incidence of poverty has declined in both the states as well as in India as a whole during the period of analysis. For all the years, for which the estimates are available, some pattern can be noticed. West Bengal exhibited the lowest urban poverty and highest rural poverty among the units compared for all the years. Consequently, it showed the highest rural-urban gap followed by that in India for all the years both of which showed a fluctuating trend in a narrow range and did not show much sign of decline also (in fact between 1993-94 and 1997-98 it increased quite substantially for the former). Owing to the higher absolute incidence of poverty in 1973-74 and lower rate of decline in rural areas than in urban areas till 1997-98 in West Bengal, the relative gap between rural and urban incidence of poverty has increased in the state over the considered period of analysis. In Kerala, an absolutely higher incidence of poverty in 1973-74, along with higher rate of decline during the same period in urban areas than in the rural areas implied a continuation of higher incidence of poverty in urban areas than in rural areas, as in 1973-74. In general, the incidence of poverty in Kerala has declined at a higher proportion than that in West Bengal.

If instead of expert group results we compare the estimates obtained by the method followed by the Modified Expert Group², most of the above conclusions do not change. The study by Minhas et al (1991), too, shows a secular declining trend in the incidence of overall poverty in both the states as well as for India, the rate of decline being more prominent and sharper for Expert Group results than obtained in this study.

Kerala was able to reduce the incidence of rural poverty below the corresponding national average (by 1986-87 before which the same for both the states was above the national average incidence) before West Bengal could do the same (Mahendra Dev et al, 1991). The study by N.Kakwani and Subbarao (1990) with the help of disaggregation of poor into a category termed 'ultra poor'³, showed that Kerala had lower proportion of ultra poor and faster decline in the number of ultra-poor than in West Bengal and India, implying lower incidence of poverty and poverty gap and faster reduction in both than in the later two. This means not only West Bengal has a higher percentage of both poor and ultra-poor in its rural population than Kerala, the minimum income necessary to bring average poor up to the poverty line was also higher in West Bengal till 1983.

Between 1983 and 1993-94, too, Kerala recorded the fastest decline in the incidence of poverty measured by head count ratios among all the major states in India, followed by West Bengal (Chelliah et al, 1999). The NCAER survey of 1994, giving information on inter-state and inter-group variations in annual total household and per capita income taking into account the differences in the state-level consumer prices, show that both West Bengal and Kerala have low household income level (Rs.18113 and Rs.19101 respectively), compared to the all-India average. But owing to the small average household size in Kerala, the per capita household income is quite higher (Rs.5778) than the corresponding all-India average (Rs.4485) whereas in West Bengal the same is significantly lower than even all-India average (Rs.3157) which is shown to be even less than that in Bihar (Rs.3691) (Chelliah, et al 1999). Seventy one percent of the rural households fall in the annual household income category of up to Rs.20, 000, whereas it is only 49.7% in Kerala. Again, less than 1% of rural households

² This has dropped the consumer price index for urban non-manual employees and computed the cost of living with the help of consumer price index for industrial workers, thereby affecting only the estimates of incidence of urban poverty made available by the Expert Group.

³ It denotes people failing to attain even 80% of the consumption expenditure equivalent of the poverty line adopted by the Planning Commission in rural areas. This categorisation helps to compare the composition of the rural poor.

in West Bengal fall in the richer income class i.e., the class having annual household income worth Rs. 86,000 and above, the same percentage in Kerala being 4.3⁴.

The other indicators of income poverty⁵ describing depth and severity of poverty in both rural and urban areas have been estimated in some studies. We make use of the estimates obtained in Dutt (1997) where broadly the Expert Group method has been followed in measurement of poverty⁶. Reduction in the head- count ratios, poverty gap measure, Gini coefficients, for which estimates are available for the period standing from 1957-58 till the year 1993-94, for all the major states in India including Kerala and West Bengal, are compared below. That the estimates compared in various years are not all derived from the data obtained from samples with same size poses certain limitations on account of the possible presence of varying sampling errors. We also compare the change in monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE, hereafter) per month where it has been expressed, for all the years starting from 1973-74 and these subsequent to it, (in Rupee) at October 1973-June 1974 all-India rural and urban prices respectively.

A look at the MPCE series reveals that after the year 1968-69 or more correctly since 1969-70, there has been an upward movement in the values of both rural and urban MPCE in West Bengal, which have registered a marked increase after 1983. If we do not consider the thin sample data still we find a steady increase of MPCE in the state. Between 1977-78 and 1993-94 both rural and urban MPCE has increased in both the states. Rural MPCE has increased at a higher proportionate extent rate in West Bengal, where the opposite was found for urban MPCE. In both the states, the MPCE for urban households are typically higher than that for the rural households for all the survey rounds. But generally the relative gap between rural

⁴ This is not to say that there has not been any decline in the incidence of poverty in West Bengal. Chatterjee (1991) estimated the rural and urban incidence of poverty in the state with the help of certain specified average Bengali dietary norms for 1970s and 1980s, showing that both showed declining trend. But, according to the estimates, the extent of ultra poverty declined at a higher rate than that of poverty in general for both rural and urban areas a fact that was reflected in the improvement in Sen's poverty measure in both areas of the state – specially in the rural areas.

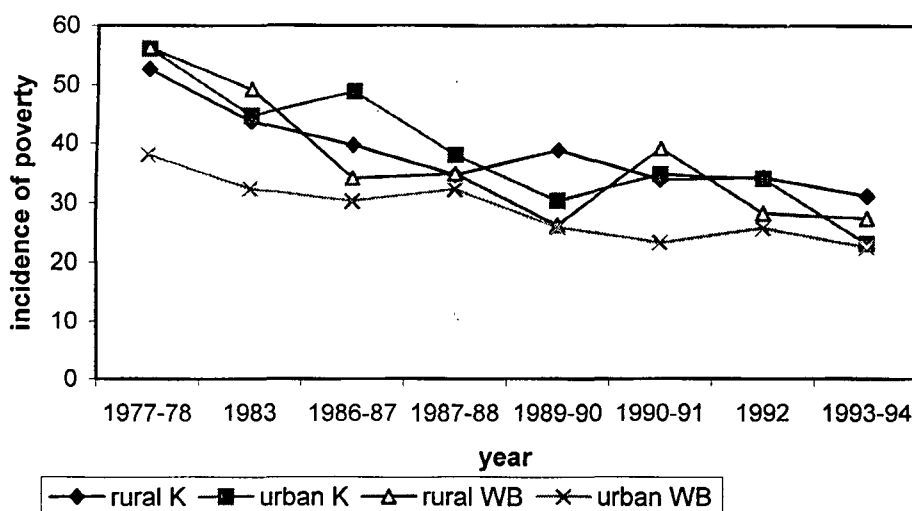
⁵ As we know that head count ratio is completely insensitive to whatever happens to the distribution of income or consumption expenditure below the poverty line as long as no one crosses the poverty line from below. Specially, given the sensitivity of a particular poverty estimate's comparability to even small changes in the location of poverty line or changes in the choice of the poverty measure, the conclusion drawn from the comparison of head-count ratios alone may not be very meaningful.

⁶ The difference lies only in constructing a consistent set of price indices across states and survey periods, using monthly data on consumer price indices from the labour Bureau, where they have used CPI for industrial workers for the urban sector and CPI for agricultural workers in the rural areas adjusted for the price of firewood, which has been held constant in the official series of consumer price indices for agricultural labourers since 1960-61 (World Bank, 1997).

and urban MPCE was higher in West Bengal. Ratio of rural to urban MPCE never exceeded one in the state throughout the period of analysis, though it was increasing for the period between 1983 and 1989-90. In fact, in the early 1990s, the ratio came down to a value lower than even that prevailing in 1977-78.

Again from the same study along with observing a declining trend in head-count ratio for both rural and urban areas in both the states (See figure 2.3.1), we find a higher relative gap between rural and urban incidence of poverty in West Bengal.

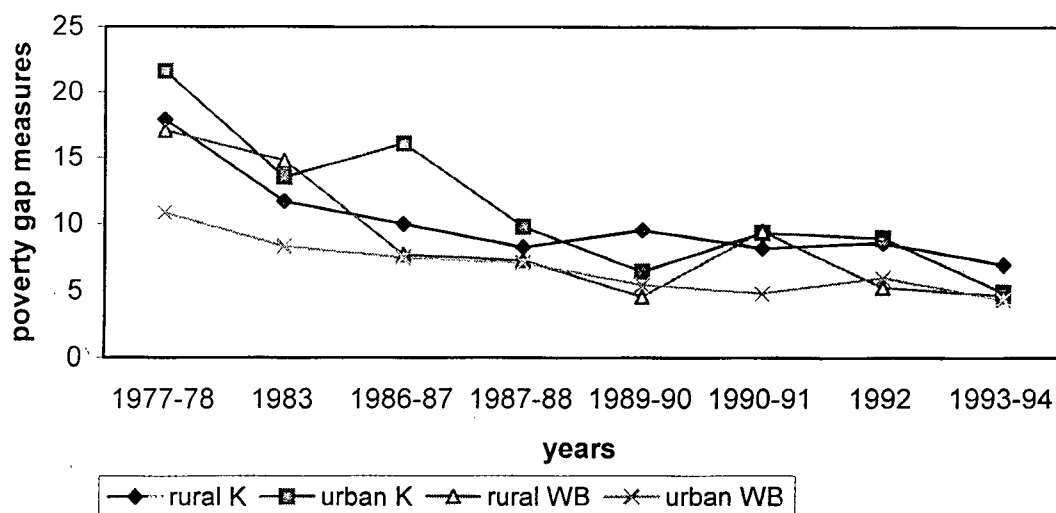
Figure 2.3.1: Incidence of poverty in the rural and urban areas of Kerala and West Bengal, 1977-78 to 1993-94



In 1977-78 incidence of poverty was concentrated more significantly in rural areas in West Bengal whereas the concentration was slightly higher for urban areas in Kerala. Though this relative gap in incidence of poverty has declined in 1993-94 in the latter compared to the same in 1977-78, poverty is still concentrated in rural areas to a greater extent. For most of the years poverty was concentrated nearly equally in rural and urban Kerala except in 1986-87 when urban incidence of poverty rose compared to that in 1983 with the rural incidence of poverty recording a small decline from that in 1983. The rural urban gap increased in favour of urban poverty in 1993-94 when urban incidence of poverty recorded a very sharp decline compared to rural poverty thereby reversing the direction of relative gap between rural and urban incidence of poverty.

A comparison of rural and urban poverty gap measures in West Bengal indicates that for most of the survey-years between 1977-78 and 1993-94, rural areas experienced higher poverty gap than the urban areas. But in Kerala, except in the year 1993-94, just the opposite holds (see Figure 2.3.2).

Figure 2.3.2: Rural and urban poverty gap measures in Kerala and West Bengal, 1977-78 to 1993-94



A higher rural incidence of poverty relative to urban poverty with a higher rural poverty gap implies a requirement of a higher level of additional money income generation in rural areas of West Bengal than in the urban areas, to enable the poor attain the poverty line. However, both rural and urban poor here are closer, in absolute terms, to the poverty line than their counter parts in rural and urban Kerala respectively. Poverty gap estimates of both the states and in both rural and urban areas have declined and come closer to each other than before, especially in the early 1990s.

Gini index has been fluctuating for both rural and urban areas in both the states, urban Gini value showing a clear decline in the early 1990s, especially in Kerala. The measures of inequality among the poor in both rural and urban areas of Kerala were found to be higher than the respective values of inequality in West Bengal, as has been found from the NCAER survey, too. But in general inequality among rural poor has been lower than that among urban poor in both the states, the relative gap being almost similar in both (see Figure 2.3.3).

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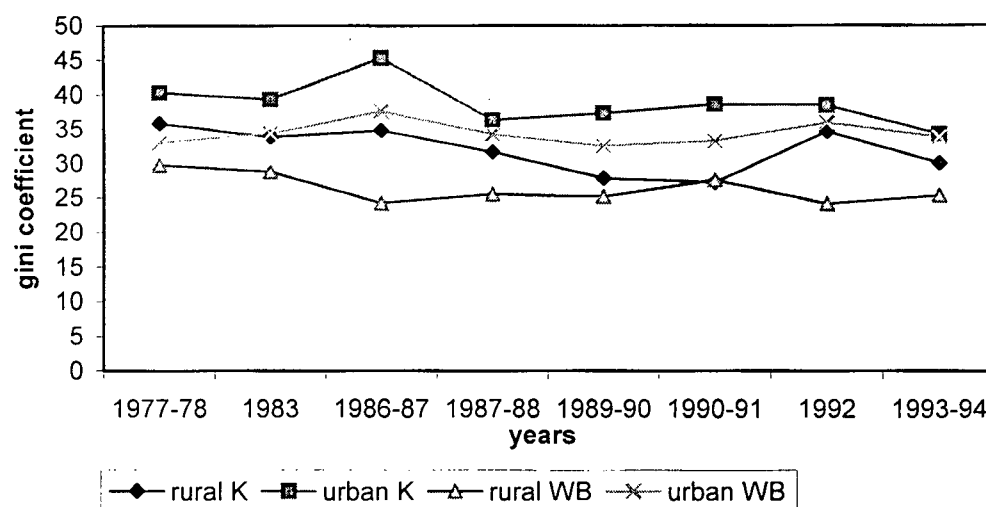
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97.4412 N9
P1



Figure 2.3.3: Gini coefficient in the rural and urban areas of Kerala and West Bengal, 1977-78 to 1993-94



The NCAER survey estimated higher measure of Sen's index in Kerala than in West Bengal. Though the inequality among poor is higher in Kerala than in West Bengal. The same survey showed that the extent of undernutrition, in terms of 'stunting' or 'wasting', is prevalent to a much higher extent in West Bengal, than in the former.

Even from the comparison of the proportion of households getting two square meals a day between 1983 and 1993-94 in the two states (see Table 2.3.2) we find higher improvement in rural West Bengal during this period than that of Kerala, though in both the years the estimated proportion has been higher in the latter. For urban areas, the absolute proportion of households meeting the specified requirement of getting two square meals a day throughout the year was higher in West Bengal than that in Kerala, for all the three years of survey, the increase between 1983 and 1993-94 being higher in Kerala (5.98 percent) than the same in West Bengal (2.31 percent).

Table 2.3.2: Proportion of Household Getting Two Square Meals a Day.

State	Throughout the year			Only some months of the year			Next even in some other		
	1983	1991	1993	1983	1991	1993	1983	1991	1993
Urban									
Kerala	86.05	95.2	92.5	11.67	4.8	5.5	1.85	-	2.0
WB	91.88	95.9	94.0	6.14	3.3	5.4	0.71	0.7	0.6
All India	93.25	96.9	97.7	5.56	2.1	2.1	0.77	0.9	0.2
Rural									
Kerala	80.80	85.7	91.2	15.29	10.7	8.2	3.68	3.4	0.6
WB	60.31	84.0	81.4	31.10	14.8	17.4	8.60	1.2	1.2
All India	81.46	92.8	93.8	16.19	6.4	5.4	2.35	0.7	0.8

Source: NSSO and Bansil P.C Agricultural Statistics Compendium, Vol.I and Supplement 1997.

Again a higher rural-urban difference in the adequacy of food-intake, expressed the terms of having two meals a day, was very high West Bengal in 1983, which reduced in two subsequent years. In Kerala also there was quite high rural-urban difference in the same. Adequacy of food intake has been better in rural Kerala compared to rural West Bengal and again better in urban West Bengal than in urban Kerala.

So on the basis of comparison of the poverty estimates available from the different studies referred here we observe that both Kerala, West Bengal experienced a declining incidence, depth and intensity of poverty for both rural and urban areas between 1977-78 and 1993-94, which was commensurate with the all-Indian average experience in reduction of income poverty.

2.3.2. Evidence of Greater Reduction in the Distance of Deprived Sections from Others in Overall Poverty:

Estimates of incidence of poverty among specific social or occupational groups were available till 1993-94, which indicated a reduction in the proportion of most of the social and occupational groups, forming the majority of poor even in 1977-78 or 1983, in the total incidence of poverty, and more so for Kerala.

Rural poverty has been much concentrated among the agricultural labourer households in both the states. Together with households self-employed in agriculture, they formed the majority of the poor households. In 1977-78, more than 81 percent of the agricultural labour households were poor constituting nearly 50 percent of the total rural poor households, whereas in Kerala almost 55 percent of the agricultural labour households were found below the poverty line, who were more than 40 percent of the total rural poor. In 1983 and 1987-88 also agricultural labour households formed the majority of the poor households in the rural areas.

Table 2.3.3: Comparison of Rural poor, Households by Principal means of Livelihood, 1977-78, 1983, 1993-94

	<i>Self-Empl.</i>		<i>Rural Labour</i>		<i>Others</i>
	Agri.	Non Agri.	Agri.	Non Agri.	
1977-78 (Dev)					
Kerala	17.96	-	40.52	-	41.52
WB	26.93	-	48.18	-	24.89
1983 (Chelliah)					
Kerala	23.3	15.0	31.7	17.6	12.4
WB	28.1	13.9	38.3	8.1	11.5
1993-94 (Chelliah)					
Kerala	23.0	15.1	28.2	19.6	14.1
WB	27.2	19.7	32.6	10.3	10.2

Agri.: agriculture. Non-agri.: non-agriculture.

Source: Dev (1981), Chelliah (1999)

In both the states, however, the total share of rural labour households hiring out labour in agricultural operations, in rural poverty declined during the period between 1977-78 and 1993-94 and more slowly so in Kerala at a lower absolute level.

Table 2.3.4: Head Count Ratio of Poverty by State And Social Groups, 1993-94

States/social group	Headcount Ratio (using official poverty line)					
	Rural			Urban		
	All	SC	ST	All	SC	ST
Kerala	30.2	45.6	37.4	32.1	38.8	3.3
West Bengal	47.5	57.1	72.8	21.4	35.7	20.4

Source: Meenakshi et al (2000).

The above table shows that the incidence of poverty varied among various social groups in both the states, where the absolute incidence was higher in West Bengal for all the groups considered here. Sharp rural-urban difference is evident among the SCs and especially for the STs in West Bengal. The incidence of poverty among STs in urban areas of the state was lower than even the overall incidence of urban poverty and thus overall incidence of rural poverty there.

Although there is an unresolved debate on the validity of the conclusion regarding the general tendency of decline in the incidence of poverty, especially in the rural areas (see Mohandas, 1999; Suryanarayana, 2000, for example) certain other observations allow us to infer that both these states have experienced such a decline. The possible extent of underestimation of consumption expenditure during the 1960s is expected to have been recovered by 1977-78 thus making the conclusion for the latter period valid. Secondly, disaggregated information on the change in the consumption (the average MPCE, at 1972-73 prices, obtained from NSS 1972-73 and subsequent rounds) to that of different decile groups indicates that the generally evident increase in mpce resulting in the decline in the incidence of poverty, specially in rural areas has been experienced by the constituent decile groups, more evenly in the recent years than before in both the states. In Kerala, though the mpce of any group was generally higher than the same for the corresponding group in West Bengal and had a lower rural-urban gap, the relative gap between the groups did not reduce much over the years as in West Bengal. The evidence from the primary surveys for the recent years in the state (e.g. WIDER Project surveys as cited in Sengupta, 1999), poverty estimates based on state-specific dietary norms (Chatterjee, 1998) support this. In terms of nutritional status, too, the rural areas of both Kerala and West Bengal have experienced the proportionate improvement in the quantity or quality of actual consumption basket in terms of increased nutritional intake (Suryanarayana 1998 as cited in Suryanarayana 2000).

Thus in this section we found that, measurement of different aspects of income-poverty indicate a definite reduction in the incidence, depth and intensity of the same in both the states during the period of analysis. Except for a few units at the disaggregated level (urban areas, for example), the reduction has been of greater extent and with higher evenness in Kerala than in West Bengal. In the next section we try to examine whether such an improvement in the consumption standard has been accompanied by improvement in the achievements pertaining to education.

2.4. Comparison of Educational Achievements of Kerala and West Bengal:

On the basis of selected indicators we try to trace the changes in the educational attainment in these two states. As is well-known, there are certain groups such as the SCs, STs, those living in the rural areas and so on, in both the societies, which have, consistently, shown worse performance than the other groups in this regard. Since, our analysis focuses on the development of these groups, identified to be disadvantaged with respect to the specific aspect of development under consideration, in addition to measuring educational achievement of an average individual, we consider the achievement of an individual associated with a particular occupational group, caste, gender or spatial identity. In other words, comparison of the extent to which social exclusion prevails in these two societies at a particular point of time as well as how the former changes over time in each, is necessary to indicate any change in development in the sphere of education.

Since the analysis is based on the secondary data, the constraint relating to the availability of the same confines the scope of comparison to that across social groups (Scheduled Caste, Scheduled tribes), gender (male and female) and space (rural and urban). Some selected indicators are used for the purpose of comparison viz. literacy rate, level of education attained by the population of a particular age-group (viz., 15 years and above), current school or college attendance status of children of age-group of 6 to 14 years, current enrolment as well as drop-out ratios, and the level of education at which the drop-out occurs. The general theme of this analysis however, warrants particular attention on literacy and primary education which constitute, in the given social standard of a developing country like India, the attainable minimum with which effort of the state can be directly related, given the accepted initiatives of the state in this regard.

2.4.1. Comparison of Literacy Achievements in the Respective States After 1977:

Literacy is a minimum necessary educational requirement, which is useful for any individual in acquiring whatever other knowledge he or she values, even irrespective of the way it is acquired. So as a first step, spread of literacy should be included in the agenda of any state attempting to raise the standard of living of its constituent members.

A comparison of the literacy rate, in general, for the two states as well as India shows, as is well-known, that Kerala moves much ahead of West Bengal's as well as the all-India level

performance with respect to the same. More than fifty percent of the population in West Bengal, in 1991, was non-literates, which shows only slightly better condition of education there than what prevailed in Kerala in 1961. West Bengal was in fact one among the eleven states that moved down in the ranking of all states in India in terms of average literacy between 1981 and 1991. However, for all the years, in both the states and also at all-India level, the literacy rate has been increasing. The relative gap between the literacy rates in the two states has slightly decreased.

As is well known that the educational achievements in general and literacy in particular are more evenly distributed in Kerala, spatially, across gender and social groups than in West Bengal. The NCAER survey 1993-94, for example, giving information on rural literacy rates in the age group of 7 years and above for major states in India, showed that for both the states the literacy rate was higher for men from the higher income groups, non-SC, non-ST and non-Muslim groups and in the highly developed villages than otherwise. However, the distance between different groups in terms of literacy rate was much lower in Kerala than in West Bengal (see, for example, Basu and Foster (1998) that showed a very high concentration of non-literates without even proximity to a literate individual in the latter compared to the same in the latter).

Now, let us examine how the literacy performance of the two states, including the performances of different constituent sections in each, has changed over time and specially during the period of analysis. The phenomenon of increasing literacy rate is evident from a cursory look at the table 2.4.1 and table 2.4.2. Considering the problem of direct comparability of estimates computed from different data sources, the conclusions drawn from Table 2.4.1 are subject to the question of compatibility of different concepts used and methods followed, to measure them by different data sources.

Table 2.4.1: Literacy Rates for Kerala and West Bengal in Selected Years by Sex and Place.

		Rural Male	Rural Female	Rural Total	Urban Male	Urban Female	Urban Total	Male Total	Female Total
Census 1961	Kerala	53.5	37.4	45.4	62.8	47.0	54.9	55.0	38.9
	WB	32.8	9.7	21.6	59.6	43.3	52.9	40.1	17.0
Census 1971	Kerala	65.5	53.1	59.3	71.9	60.6	66.3	66.6	44.3
	WB	35.8	15.0	25.7	62.0	47.8	55.9	42.8	22.4
Census 1981	Kerala	86.7	74.2	80.3	92.0	81.9	86.9	87.7	75.6
	WB	52.8	26.8	40.2	77.2	62.5	70.7	59.9	36.1
Census 1991	Kerala	92.9	85.1	88.9	95.6	89.1	92.2	93.6	86.2
	WB	62.1	38.1	50.5	81.2	68.2	75.3	67.8	46.6
NFHS 1992-93	Kerala	89.3	81.3	85.1	91.6	85.4	88.4	90.0	82.5
	WB	70.3	47.7	59.2	86.3	73.0	80.1	75.4	55.2
NSS 1995-96	Kerala	92.8	84.2	88.2	95.9	90.7	93.7	94.3	87.4
	WB	67.5	41.5	55.0	86.2	73.9	80.7	76.8	57.7

Note: for 1995-96 the literacy rate refers to that of the population of the age-group 15 years and above while for 1992-93 it refers to the literacy rate of population belonging to all ages. For all the other years the population considered is of the age-group 7 years and above.

K: Kerala; WB: West Bengal.

Source: Ghosh and Mukhopadhyay (1998) Occasional paper No.4 (1993), Office of Registrar General and census Commissioner.

'NFHS, West Bengal' 1992,

'NFHS, Kerala' 1992/93,

(1995/96) 'Attending an Educational Institution in India: Its level, nature and cost', NSS Report, 52nd round.

Table 2.4.2: Classification by literacy among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Kerala and West Bengal, 1971, 1981, and 1991.

Year	States	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female
Scheduled Caste					
1971	K	45.9	32.4	57.9	43.5
	WB	25.0	8.2	34.0	20.9
1981	K	71.4	55.8	81.4	67.2
	WB	39.8	14.7	53.5	31.1
1991	K	84.2	73.1	89.6	79.6
	WB	52.7	26.3	63.9	42.7
Scheduled Tribe					
1971	K	30.9	18.5	58.2	41.2
	WB	14.2	2.8	26.1	18.1
1981	K	44.2	30.1	75.3	60.0
	WB	24.8	5.3	37.5	21.1
1991	K	53.2	43.1	66.2	55.4
	WB	31.7	11.3	43.7	26.2

Source: Census: Primary Census Abstract, Various Issues.

Occasional paper 4 (1993), Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner
Literacy in India' NSS Report (1991).

Above two tables show that the literacy rate in Kerala is typically higher for urban males followed by rural males, urban females and rural females respectively. The same for scheduled caste and scheduled tribes were generally lower than the overall literacy rate and therefore than the literacy rate for the social groups other than SCs and STs. For West Bengal also, at the upper end of the literacy scale were the urban males followed by the urban females, rural males and then the rural females, next by members of the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. For a woman belonging to either of the SCs or the STs in a rural area the probability of being literate was one of the lowest in both the societies.

Now we can attempt to measure the change in the relative gaps in the achievement of literacy by different groups. Better performance of Kerala than West Bengal at the absolute level is apparent from the following observation. On the other hand, literacy rate of urban males in West Bengal, which was the least disadvantaged group in the state in acquiring literacy (see Table 2.4.1), was found to have improved during this period even less than the literacy performance of the rural females in Kerala, which was the most disadvantaged group in that state (refer Table 2.4.1). This is clear from the fact that though in 1971, the absolute value of literacy rate for urban male in West Bengal was higher than the same for rural females in Kerala, in 1991 it was the other way round. Urban male literacy in West Bengal, as a percentage of the same in Kerala, fell from 116.8% in 1971 to almost 95.4% in 1991.

In Kerala, the male-female disparity in literacy rates was more prominent than the rural-urban gap there where the opposite was true for West Bengal. However, both the gaps have been higher in West Bengal than in Kerala. Female literates in 1991 in Kerala were 90% as a proportion of the male literates in the state where, in West Bengal, they constituted even less than 70% of the male literates there. Both rural-urban gap and gender gap in literacy narrowed almost in the same proportion in West Bengal, but in Kerala the latter closed to a larger extent.

Much of the relative rural-urban gap in both the states has been contributed by the disparity prevailing in the achievement of literacy among rural and urban females. Rural females have been the most socially excluded groups in terms of this indicator in all the years, vis-à-vis the women in rural Kerala and women in urban West Bengal. In 1961, the rural-urban gap between females in West Bengal was very high. It declined steadily both between 1971 and 1981 and between 1981 and 1991. Kerala, however, has experienced a near closure of the

same gap during this period. On the other hand, starting with a situation in 1971 when proportion of rural female literacy in West Bengal was 28.3% of the same in Kerala, even in 1991 the same in the former state remained even less than half of the same in Kerala. However, in 1971 female literacy in West Bengal was slightly more than half of the same in Kerala, whereas in 1991 the former constitutes near two-third of the latter, a higher proportion of the improvement being contributed by the improvement experienced by the rural females. So there has been a faster rise in the literacy rate of the rural females in West Bengal than the same for Kerala.

The NFHS data on literacy for different age-groups that help us in forming an idea about the temporal pattern of spread in literacy, which basically confirms the pattern discerned above. The illiteracy in West Bengal was significantly higher for the age-groups high than the age-group 15-19 years, where in Kerala, it was significantly high above the age-group 45-49 only. This implies that the spread of literacy in West Bengal has been more recent in West Bengal than in Kerala. Similar logic indicates a possibility of an earlier spread of literacy among urban females than that among their rural counterparts. In Kerala, greater spread of urban male literacy preceded that of urban female literacy. Gender-differences in rural areas of both the states, in this way, were found to decline with the lower age-groups. It might be the manifestation of the recent improvement in the spread of rural female literacy compared to the same of rural male literacy. This was true for urban Kerala also, whereas there is an indication of increasing gender-difference in recent years in urban West Bengal.

Similarly, we can compare the differential literacy achievements of different social groups to assess the differential literacy achievements that are associated with different social groups. From Table 2.4.2, we find that the distance in the literacy achievements of an SC individual from the overall literacy performances has generally, declined in rural and urban areas of both the states, and across gender, between 1971 and 1981 and also between 1981 and 1991. Some of the interesting observations on the closure of relative gaps between the constituent units of various social groups are as follows.

Both SC male and female literacy rates in West Bengal, as percentage of the corresponding values for Kerala, the former being typically lower than the latter for all the years, has increased for all the years. Thus the gap between the literacy achievements of the SC members of the two societies has reduced.

The gender disparity in rural West Bengal is much higher than that in urban areas of the state in all the years and the difference, in this regard, between rural and urban areas has not changed over time. In Kerala also, the gender gap has reduced less in rural areas than the same in urban areas. The rural-urban gap in the literacy achievements of both men and women belonging to the SC has reduced to a greater extent in Kerala than in West Bengal. This implies a more spatially even improvement in the literacy condition of SC males in Kerala than in West Bengal during this period of time.

Literacy achievements of the SC female in rural areas of both the states have been consistently lower than other members of the SC in rural and urban areas on the one hand and the overall literacy rates across gender and residences in the respective states, on the other. In Kerala the gap between the literacy achievement of the SC female in rural areas and that of their urban counterpart, or that of urban male (the group with the highest achievement in the state, as was observed in Table 2.4.1) as well as that of SC male in the urban areas, has closed at a much higher rate than the same in West Bengal. The progress of literacy, since 1971, of the former group in Kerala was evident in the data from both 1981 and 1991 census, in West Bengal significant progress was observed only between 1981 and 1991. However, this increase in literacy rate of the rural SC female in West Bengal was quite significant so that the huge gap between the them and rural SC female as well as the urban male in Kerala, in this regard, has exhibited a declining tendency (the proportion of rural SC female literacy in West Bengal in that of Kerala rising from 25% in 1971 to 36% in 1991).

On the other hand, the progress of literacy achievements of the rural SC female in Kerala (the group having the lowest literacy among the SCs in both rural and urban areas in the state, found in Tables 2.4.1 and 2.4.2) has been much higher than the same for urban male and urban SC male in West Bengal (the former having the highest literacy rate among all the social groups and the latter having the highest literacy among the SC individuals in the state, refer Table 2.4.1 and 2.4.2).

The only group in West Bengal, which has prominently shown higher rate of closure of its relative gap with the overall literacy than the same in Kerala, was the SC men in the urban areas of the state that reduced its distance with respect to literacy from that of urban males, especially between 1971 and 1981. For all other constituent groups of the SC, generally the

progress in West Bengal was prominent between 1981 and 1991, where in Kerala it was found to be somewhat uniform during both 1970s and 1980s.

Considering that Kerala had higher level of literacy for all the constituent groups in 1971, we can conclude that Kerala performed at least comparably in terms of incremental achievements relating to literacy. Although West Bengal's performance in improving the same for the relatively disadvantaged groups identified till 1971 has been significant, especially in the 1980s, Kerala's performance, during both 1970s and 1980s, definitely seems to be even better.

Similarly we can examine the relative gaps in literacy for different sections of scheduled tribes with the respective groups from all the communities taken together. ST literacy rates were much lower as a percentage to the average literacy of the population across gender and space, than SC literacy rates were as a percentage of the latter in both the states. Generally, the relative gap between the literacy achievements of individuals belonging to the ST and that of the entire population has decreased for both men and women in rural and urban areas of both the states. This is found to be the case both between 1971 and 1981 and between 1981 and 1991 with a few exceptions (for example for ST men in urban areas of Kerala between 1971 and 1981 and for ST women in rural West Bengal during the same period).

The reduction in the rural-urban relative gap for ST men has been at least comparable in both the states where that for ST women has been much higher in Kerala than in WB, both during 1970s and 1980s. The literacy of ST men and women in both rural and urban areas of West Bengal has improved relative to the respective rates in Kerala. Quite notable among these, has been the improvement of the rural ST female literacy rate in West Bengal compared to that in Kerala, especially during the 1980s, given that this was found to be the most disadvantaged group among all in both the states. But, here again, we find that Kerala performed better than West Bengal in reducing the literacy-gap between rural ST women and urban ST men, the least and the most disadvantaged, respectively in the community, or the distance in the achievements of rural ST women and urban men, the group with the highest success in the state in this regard. Such a differential improvement of various constituent sections of the two states becomes evident from the fact that urban male literacy rate of WB, the highest in the state as has been already mentioned, as a percentage of the rural ST female literacy rate in Kerala has come down from over 335% in 1971 to near 122% in 1991.

Thus we can summarise that there has been a slight closure of the gap between the rural males in the two states over the years, but not in the relative gap between the respective total male literacy rates. There has been some improvement in the literacy rates of females in West Bengal relative to the same in Kerala, too. Though the relative gap in the overall literacy rates also seems to have somewhat closed, the extent of improvement for the least disadvantaged groups seems to be higher in Kerala, than the same in West Bengal. This leads us to the conclusion that Kerala, who had a higher absolute level of literacy achievements of these two groups in 1971, has not only maintained the lead over the years but also has increased the relative gap between the two states with respect to these two groups.

Similarly, the literacy achievements of the SCs and STs in both the states have progressed better in Kerala than in West Bengal while distributing the incremental achievements among the individuals belonging to the relatively disadvantaged sections in the state.

2.4.2. Comparison of Achievements Relating to Basic Education:

Next we consider the participation in primary education in both the states in terms of the age-specific enrolment ratios at primary level. The crucial role of basic education at the primary level is emphasized basically drawing attention to the 'centrality of direct human agency in generating economic expansion', which has proved to be vital either directly or through facilitating skill formation for making successful use of the economic opportunities offered by world market along with contributing to the well being intrinsically. For the purpose of comparison we use the indicators such as enrolment, drop-outs and current school attendance status among the children of school going age, and the level at which discontinuation at study occurs.

We use the enrolment data given by NCERT, (1978, 1986 and 1994, NCAER 1993-94, and NSS 1986-87 instead of using yearly enrolment data made available by the education department in the two states. A comparison of the gross enrolment ratio and gross attendance ratio obtained by Department of Education and NSSO for the year 1995-96 showed that there is a possibility that official enrolment gets overstated compare to actual attendance (NSS, 1995-96). So enrolment data can be considered only with due attention given to the dropout figures also.

Table 2.4.3 shows the enrolment ratio only at primary level for the years 1978, 1986 and 1994.

Table 2.4.3: Age-specific (6-10 years) enrolment ratio at primary level 1978, 1986 and 1994

India/States	1978			1986			1994		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Total									
India	76.3	51.3	64.1	86.4	64.6	75.9	90.0	73.1	81.8
Kerala	86.5	85.5	86.0	87.2	86.1	86.7	98.9	95.7	97.3
West Bengal	76.9	58.0	67.6	80.4	65.0	72.9	88.3	77.7	83.1
Rural									
India	75.0	47.4	61.7	87.4	61.3	74.8	92.8	71.8	82.6
Kerala	88.7	87.2	88.0	87.2	85.7	86.5	103.1	99.0	101.1
West Bengal	81.8	59.5	70.9	84.9	67.1	76.2	96.9	83.8	90.5

Source: 1978 Fourth All India Educational Survey (NCERT);
1986 Fifth All India Educational Survey (NCERT);
1994 Sixth All India Educational Survey (NCERT);

For all the years West Bengal's performance relating to the increase in enrolment ratio was better than all-Indian average but worse than that of Kerala. For the entire period between 1978 and 1994, Kerala experienced almost a similar rate of increase in enrolment ratio of boys as in West Bengal but from a higher initial value than in the latter. This implies a better incremental performance of Kerala than West Bengal with respect to enrolment of boys. For the girls the rate of improvement in West Bengal was much higher than the same in Kerala reducing the relative gap between the female enrolment ratios in the two states from 6.68 in 1978 to 0.81 in 1994. As is evident from table 2.4.3, much of this improvement was contributed by the improvement in the female enrolment ratio in the rural areas, which has been higher than the same for the urban females for all the three years. The achievement differential between the states, according to the NSS data was even higher than what NCERT showed for the year 1986. The gender disparity, however, remains the same across both the data sources. NCAER 1993-94 also gives a higher enrolment ratio for girls in Kerala and lower ratio for both girls and boys in West Bengal than the corresponding values given by the NCERT 1994. The former indicates a near absence of gender disparity (in terms of girls having disadvantage relative to the boys) in both the states where the same at all India level was relatively high. Though the female enrolment ratio showed better improvement than the same for males in West Bengal, the gender disparity there was higher than the same in Kerala

for both 1986 and 1994. However, the proportional female-male gap between the considered ratios registered a decline in both these years over the 1978 values, especially in 1994.

Social exclusion associated with participation in primary education by different social groups is illustrated in the following tables [see table 2.4.4].

Table 2.4.4: Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe enrolment at Primary Level of Education

<i>State</i>	<i>% in Total Population</i>		<i>Percentage in Total Enrolment</i>	
	1981	1991	1981	1991
Scheduled Caste				
Kerala	10.0	9.9	11.3	11.3
WB	22.0	23.6	24.8	28.5
India	15.8	16.5	17.1	19.6
Scheduled Tribe				
Kerala	1.03	1.1	1.1	1.3
WB	5.6	5.6	5.0	5.1
India	7.8	8.1	7.8	9.1

Source: All India Educational Survey Fifth (1986) and Sixth (1994) rounds, NCERT

Both in 1986 and 1994 the share of SC children in total enrolment has remained the same in Kerala with the share of the SC population in the total population also remaining almost the same. For West Bengal, the share of the SC enrolment in total enrolment has increased at a slightly higher rate than the increase in their share in total population. The same is true for the ST population in Kerala. Share of ST enrolment in total enrolment in West Bengal was higher than their share in the total population in the state in both the years and the former increased in the year 1994.

The NCAER data on ever-enrolment rate in the age-group 6-14 years show that the lower income groups in West Bengal, especially one with income less than Rs. 20,000, have greater disadvantage with respect to participation in primary level of education. But there is no indication of such a disadvantage across income groups, social groups or across villages with different levels of development in Kerala. However, in West Bengal, Muslims, STs and SCs are found to be relatively highly disadvantaged. Again, enrolment ratio of the Hindus, the social group with the highest degree of participation in primary education was lower than the same for SCs and STs in Kerala who were social groups with relatively low rate of

achievements in education for example in terms of relatively low literacy rate in the latter state. Similar differential achievements were found in villages in West Bengal according to the classification of the latter in terms of the level of development. However, both Kerala and West Bengal generally showed very low gender disparity with respect to the ever-enrolment ratio across all classified groups than the same prevailing at all India level.

All the above results have to be considered in the light of the comparative evaluation of the dropouts at primary level in both the states for the corresponding years. The dropout rates are highest at all India level, followed by West Bengal. Kerala had the lowest dropout rates for all the years. For 1994, we consider the enrolment in class V as percentage of enrolment in class I as the proxy for drop-outs at primary level assuming absence of inter-state transfer of students, failures of students at class V. Then we find an increase in the drop out of students between 1986 and 1994 across gender and places in Kerala. But drop out rates for West Bengal, though, declined between 1978 and 1986, increased significantly in 1994. Drop out rates in the state were high in rural areas and especially higher for rural females. Social disadvantage associated with being a girl has been increasing over the years. In Kerala, discontinuation rate, according to NCAER survey data for the age group 6 - 14 years in 1993-94, varies across social groups (SCs or STs being on the higher and Muslims and Other Minorities being on the lower sides of it) and across villages with different levels of development in both the states. In West Bengal on the other hand, it varies across income groups, social groups and level of development of a village. The inter-group differences as well as the absolute discontinuation rates were higher in West Bengal. Another point of difference with the Kerala experience was indicated by the much lower achievements of the Muslims and Other Minorities.

Combining the concept of enrolment and dropouts we can compare the current attendance status of children, distinct from net retention ratio, overtime in both the states. Though strict comparability is not present here among the estimates because of the difference in the data source, the difference in the age-composition of the population with reference to which estimates are computed (See table 2.4.5).

Table 2.4.5: Per 1000 distribution of Children Attending School.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Age Group</i>	<i>States</i>	<i>Rural Male</i>	<i>Rural Female</i>	<i>Urban Male</i>	<i>Urban Female</i>
1981	5 - 14 years	Kerala	784	790	849	842
		WB	453	325	686	615
1991	5 - 19 years	Kerala	766	741	782	767
		WB	430	333	623	563
1992-93	6-14 years	Kerala	955	943	945	963
		WB	835	601	833	718
1993-94	5-14 years	Kerala	925	939	955	930
		WB	689	612	835	763
1995-96	6-13 years	Kerala	965	975	975	975
		WB	715	640	810	790

Source: *Census of India, 1981 and 1991*
'NFHS, West Bengal' 1992 and
'NFHS, Kerala' 1992-93
'Report on Employment and Unemployment' 1993-94, NSS
"Attending an Educational Institution in India: Its level, Nature and Cost", 1995-96, NSS.

For all the categories current attendance rate is higher for Kerala than that in West Bengal in both 1981 and 1991. Between 1981 and 1991 there has been a decline in the current attendance ratio for all the groups. This apparent decline may be due to consideration of a different age-group. All the estimates indicate an increase in current attendance ratio in 1993-94 and 1995-96 than that in 1981 for all the groups. Certain notable observations⁷, only, are mentioned here. The rural-urban gap in both the states fell between 1981 and 1995-96 for both men and women. The relative gap between the rural females of the two states falls from 59% in 1981 to 35% in 1995-96.

The other observation relates to the rural-urban gap that has been than the gender gap in both the states. But the rural-urban gap of 6.9% in 1981 in Kerala became less than 3% in 1991, which slowly experienced almost a closure in the early 1990's there. The same in West Bengal though declined over the years, especially between 1981 and 1991, still was as high as 15% even in 1995-96.

⁷ The observed gap between the data on current attendance ratio given by NFHS 1992-93 and NSS 1993-94 may be due to slightly different age-group considered for the reference population. Given that difference NSS estimates are likely to be higher than ones obtained by NFHS, as the latter does not include the children of five years.

The NCAER data presenting the ever-enrolment rate, dropout rates along with non-attendance rates for the age-group 6-14 years show that the probability of participation in primary education in West Bengal was higher for the age group 12 – 14 years. But the probability of withdrawal from the primary level education given by both discontinuation rate and non-attendance rate increases very significantly at the higher age within the same age-group. But very significantly in both Kerala and West Bengal the discontinuation rates for 12-14 years were contributed by more than proportionate share of discontinuation among girls.

An examination of the data on levels at which discontinuation occurs in the two states is attempted on the basis of data made available by the NSS 42nd round 'Participation in Education' survey, 1986-87 and 50th round NSS report in "Attending Educational Institution in India: its level, Nature and Cost" in 1995-96.

In 1986-87, we find rural SC in West Bengal to be the worst off who faced maximum discontinuation in the primary level. The remaining ever-enrolled students discontinued at the secondary level. A very negligible proportion of students continued beyond the secondary level. At primary level a higher percentage of ever-enrolled girls discontinued than the SC boys there. In urban areas however there was less proportion of discontinuation by the SC students at primary level. Very few of them continued beyond secondary level. Gender disparity in the levels at which urban SC students discontinued in West Bengal was quite low. Students belonging to Scheduled Caste in rural Kerala also experienced a higher discontinuation at primary level, with girl students discontinuing at a higher rate than boys. In urban Kerala the proportion of SC boys discontinuing at primary level was higher than that of SC girls. When we look at the discontinuation rate among the STs a sharp rural-urban difference is found in Kerala. None of the ST students discontinued at primary level in urban areas whereas more than 65% of ever-enrolled persons discontinued at the primary level in the rural areas. More than 61% ever enrolled ST women in urban Kerala continued studied above secondary level, but none of their rural counterparts attended secondary level of education in the same state. There was significant gender disparity in urban areas with respect to pursuing education beyond secondary level. In West Bengal ST students the rural areas discontinued at a higher rate than their urban counterparts at primary level of education. Some of the rural boys continued beyond secondary level when no girl student there did that. Below that level, generally ST girls discontinued at a higher rate at primary level and thus at a lower rate at secondary level than the boys from rural ST community.

There is rural-urban difference among ST students with respect to discontinuation at primary level. Most of urban ST students discontinued at secondary level with almost no gender disparity in the pattern of discontinuation. Students from social groups other than STs and SCs experienced a lower discontinuation at primary level. Thus a higher rate of discontinuation was found among them than that of the latter group at secondary level in both Kerala and West Bengal. Also a higher percentage of the former social group in both the states continued beyond secondary level than their STs and SCs counterparts in the respective states. In West Bengal, girls of the 'other' communities had a higher rate of discontinuation at primary level and above secondary level than their urban counterparts. The resulting gender disparity with respect to the same indicator was higher in rural areas than in urban areas. For Kerala there was no rural-urban gap for male discontinuation rates at both primary and secondary levels. At primary level, higher rate of girls discontinued than boys, in both rural and urban areas of the state.

Discontinuation at primary level for urban ST females in Kerala was less than both their rural counterparts as well as ST and SC women in both rural and urban West Bengal. Compared to West Bengal, thus, the effective participation in primary education was generally higher in Kerala in 1986-87. The latter showed a better performance not only with respect to School education till secondary level but also with respect to levels of education above secondary level than the former.

Again discontinuation rates for SC students, both males and females in Kerala were lower than the same for students belonging to social groups other than SCs and STs in rural West Bengal. Notably, the latter was one of the least disadvantaged groups there with respect to the same indicator and the former in rural Kerala was second most disadvantaged group. But in urban West Bengal 'other' social group fared much better than the SC students in urban Kerala, and performed comparably with the rural SC students there. This indicates a more prominent rural-urban gap in West Bengal than that in Kerala. Again SC students in rural West Bengal were much more disadvantaged than the students belonging to 'other' social groups there with respect to discontinuation at primary level. This indicated the high social distance of SC students in rural West Bengal from other groups there.

Similarly, from NSS report for the year 1995-96 gives data on the dropout rates by different levels of education at which the students dropped out by gender and place. In this year

dropout rates for either place or sex were lower for Kerala than in West Bengal upto the primary and middle level of education. Rural female dropout rate in West Bengal was higher than the same for rural males for school education in general and at primary level in particular. But the opposite was true for the middle level of education in the state. In Kerala, for both primary and middle level education rural female dropout rates were lower than the same for rural males. Much higher proportion of students in Kerala continued beyond secondary level of education than in West Bengal, across gender and place. But in urban areas of West Bengal a slightly higher proportion of students went for education above higher secondary level. With respect to this level of education West Bengal showed a sharp rural-urban gap, higher proportion of urban students continuing studies at this level than the rural students. In contrast, higher proportion of rural students in Kerala pursues studies beyond has secondary level of education than their urban counterparts there. Thus Kerala showed a better balance between the proportion of rural and urban students continuing study beyond primary as well as higher secondary level than West Bengal. In the latter state majority of students in rural areas found the larger portion of students discontinue at both these two levels of education.

So the dropout rates in West Bengal were higher at both the extreme levels of education, showing a fall near the higher extreme. For Kerala, however it is lower at the extreme levels and rises in between. This better performance of students of Kerala in continuing beyond primary level of education is reflected in higher median year of schooling for all the groups, as given in Table 2.4.6.

Table 2.4.6: Median years of schooling in Kerala, West Bengal and India 1992-93

<i>States</i>	<i>Rural Male</i>	<i>Rural Female</i>	<i>Urban Male</i>	<i>Urban Female</i>
Kerala	6.7	6.1	7.7	7.2
West Bengal	3.7	0.0	7.7	4.8
India	3.6	0.0	7.7	5.0

Source: NFHS, Kerala 1992-93 and NFHS, West Bengal, 1992.

An even pattern in participation at different levels of education and continuation thereafter is evident in Kerala's high and evenly distributed median years of schooling across place and gender, showing a slight rural-urban and gender gap. Similarly an inequitable distribution of

the educational achievements across different spatial and gender groups is revealed in the widely varying median years of schooling data for these different groups.

2.4.3. Conclusion:

Thus Kerala's differential achievement lies not only in attaining a higher level of literacy, specially on a mass scale in recent years, higher level of enrolment of both boys and girls as both of these two indicators for West Bengal also recorded improvement, though at different rates from that of Kerala. In fact a higher improvement index in educational achievements, based on gross enrolment data, given by the Education Departments, was recorded for West Bengal in 1980-88 over 1970-79 than the same in Kerala, which ranked near the bottom among all the states in terms of improvement (Dutta, Panda and Wadhwa, 1995). But Kerala's achievement lies more in reducing the probability of discontinuation at different levels of studies, securing completion of at least basic education for higher proportion of students ever-controlled consistently than West Bengal. So Kerala experience a lower extent of social exclusion throughout the period of analysis than West Bengal. Similarly, in the next section, we examine the change in the level and distribution of health achievements in Kerala and West Bengal, during the period of analysis.

2.5. Health:

Health is one of the most important basic capabilities in the standard of most of the societies and therefore reduction in deprivation relating to health is analysed here in forming idea about the change in an average individual's well-being over time. Like the preceding sections in this chapter, here also the emphasis is not only on the change in the absolute level of achievements measured in terms of standard health indicators, but also on the changing distribution of such achievements over time. Availability of data dictates the scope of the comparison, which mostly remains confined to the spatial and gender aspects of the distribution. The indicators used here are: crude death rates, life expectancy at birth, infant mortality and child mortality rates. Data for the period from 1981 till 1997 on these indicators are collected from Sample Registration System publications from the Office of Registrar General of India in order to supplement this by information on state of morbidity for the respective population, the 'Morbidity Survey' reports of the NSS for the years 1986-87, 1995-96, NFHS report, 1992 for West Bengal, NFHS report 1992-93 for Kerala as well as NCAER report 1993-94 were used.

2.5.1. Indication of Closure of the Relative Gap Between the Crude Death Rates of the Two States:

We first compare the change in crude death rates over time as the CDR (crude death rate) grossly measures the extent to which the capability to live further is curtailed in both the societies. Table 2.5.1 shows the CDRs in the two states and India as a whole.

Table 2.5.1: Crude death rates in rural and urban areas, 1981 to 1997

Year	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Kerala	WB	AI	K	WB	AI	K	WB	AI
1981	6.7	12.2	13.7	5.8	6.9	7.8	6.6	11.0	12.5
1982	6.6	12.0	13.1	6.6	6.3	7.4	6.6	10.4	11.9
1983	6.6	11.6	13.1	6.9	6.9	7.9	6.7	10.3	11.9
1984	6.2	12.0	13.8	7.3	7.5	8.6	6.4	10.7	12.6
1985	6.5	10.7	13.0	6.6	6.8	7.8	6.5	9.6	11.8
1986	6.0	9.6	12.2	6.9	6.9	7.6	6.1	8.8	11.1
1987	6.1	9.7	12.0	6.2	6.5	7.4	6.1	8.8	10.9
1988	6.3	9.4	12.0	6.7	5.9	7.7	6.4	8.4	11.0
1989	6.0	9.5	11.1	6.1	7.0	7.2	6.1	8.8	10.3
1990	6.0	9.0	10.5	6.1	7.0	6.8	6.0	8.4	9.7
1991	6.2	8.9	10.6	5.3	6.7	7.1	6.0	8.3	9.8
1992	6.3	9.1	10.9	6.5	6.6	7.0	6.3	8.4	10.1
1993	6.0	8.5	10.6	5.8	4.4	5.8	6.0	7.4	9.3
1994	5.9	8.8	10.1	6.4	7.1	6.5	6.1	8.3	9.3
1995	6.0	8.1	9.8	6.0	7.2	6.6	6.0	7.9	9.0
1996	6.3	8.0	9.7	6.0	7.2	6.5	6.2	7.8	9.0
1997	6.3	7.9	9.6	6.1	7.2	6.5	6.2	7.7	8.9

K: Kerala; WB: West Bengal; AI: All India

Source: Sample Registration Bulletin (1999), Office of Registrar General, Government of India.

Extent of deprivation measured in terms of CDR was higher in rural areas of West Bengal and India, as a whole, than the same in respective urban areas for each year between 1981 and 1997. With some exceptions this was generally true for Kerala also. Between 1981 and 1990, the rural-urban gap in CDR in West Bengal was quite high. However, with a fast fall in rural CDR, the relative gap has been declining over the years and CDRs in rural and urban areas

there have come closer to each other in the 1990s. Consequently the overall CDR in the state also fell significantly during the same time and especially from 1992. Consequently, the distance between the two states has reduced during this time as is reflected in the fact that overall CDR of West Bengal was 170% higher than the same in Kerala in 1981, which became 124% higher than the latter in 1997.

2.5.2. Better Improvement in Life Expectancy in Kerala During the Study Period:

The change in the CDR and its distribution among different sections in a society is likely to be reflected in the change of life expectancy. Therefore, a comparison of the life expectancy at birth of these two states is important in demonstrating the deprivation with respect to health and its distribution (see Table 2.5.2).

Table 2.5.2: Life Expectancy at Birth by Sex and Residence, 1981-85 to 1992-96.

Period	States / India	Total			Rural			Urban		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1981-85	Kerala	68.4	65.4	71.5	68.5	65.5	71.7	67.6	65.0	70.3
	WB	57.4	56.4	58.0	55.1	54.7	55.7	64.9	64.0	66.2
	India	55.5	55.4	55.7	53.7	54.0	53.6	62.8	61.6	64.1
1986-90	Kerala	69.5	66.8	72.3	69.6	66.8	72.5	68.6	65.8	71.2
	WB	60.8	60.2	61.2	59.2	58.5	60.0	65.7	65.3	66.1
	India	57.7	57.7	58.1	56.1	56.1	56.2	63.4	62.0	64.9
1991-95	Kerala	72.9	69.9	75.3	73.0	69.9	74.9	73.6	69.3	75.6
	WB	62.1	61.5	62.8	60.6	59.9	61.4	67.6	67.0	68.9
	India	60.3	59.7	60.9	58.9	58.5	59.3	65.9	64.5	67.3
1992-96	Kerala	73.1	70.2	75.8	72.8	70.3	74.9	73.6	69.5	75.9
	WB	62.4	61.8	63.1	60.8	60.2	61.5	67.9	67.1	69.2
	India	60.7	60.1	61.4	59.4	58.9	59.8	66.3	64.9	67.7

Source: SRS Bulletin (1999) Office of Registrar General, Govt. of India.

As already mentioned in Chapter 1, for all the periods and at any level of disaggregation, life expectancy at birth in Kerala was higher than the same for corresponding group in West Bengal or at all-India level. Except for rural India during 1981-85 female life expectancy was always higher than the male life expectancy in both these states and India as a whole, for both rural and urban areas. However, the extent to which the former exceeds the latter differs

across regions and time. This shows a different degree of reduction in female disadvantage for living expressed in terms of life expectancy at birth. The female-male gap was highest in Kerala, followed by that in West Bengal and India respectively. This relative gap was more or less same for all the periods. It was higher in urban areas than in rural areas in all the three units. On the other hand, the rural-urban gap for both male and female life expectancy was quite low in Kerala compared to the same in West Bengal and India, for all the periods. In all the three units compared, again this relative gap did not reduce significantly over the entire period of time between 1981 and 1997. While the relative gap between the male life expectancy in the rural areas of the two states had come down between 1981-85 and 1986-90 and remained the same thereafter, the same between rural female life expectancy in the two states rose during the 1990s, after falling till the period 1986-90. Thus for the latest period 1992-96 a females in rural West Bengal was expected to live an eighteen percent shorter life than her counterpart in rural Kerala.

Comparatively, the relative gap between life expectancy in urban areas of West Bengal and Kerala was very low in the period between 1981-85. But, both male and female life expectancy in urban Kerala increased faster than the same in West Bengal.

This is clear from the values of improvement indices for life expectancy, computed from the SRS data on life expectancy between different periods in the two states as well as India as a whole. However, except for this group, for all the groups, there was higher improvement in West Bengal than in Kerala in 1986-90 over the previous period. Except for urban areas during the same time, value of the improvement indices at all-India level also was higher than the same in Kerala but lower than that in West Bengal. But in the next period i.e., 1991-95 or 1992-96, except for the rural males in both the states, improvement indices for all the other groups were higher in Kerala, followed by India, than in West Bengal over the same in the period 1986-90.

Therefore, the improvement in life expectancy seems to have been higher in Kerala than in West Bengal.

2.5.3. Improvement in Achievements Regarding Infant Mortality Rate:

Similarly, a clear pattern emerges from the comparison of the values of the improvement indices in three-year moving averages of infant mortality rates in India, Kerala and West Bengal, as is given in table 2.5.3.

Except between the periods 1992-94 and 1995-97, the value of improvement indices in Kerala has always been higher than the same in West Bengal. A much better record of achievement of Kerala in both the sub-periods (one between 1981-83 and 1988-90 and the other between 1988-90 and 1995-97) than West Bengal is evident in a relatively very high improvement index of the former for the entire period between 1981-83 and 1988-90. The difference in improvement indices, in terms of reduction of infant mortality rate of both the states was very high in urban areas.

Table 2.5.3: The improvement indices in the three-year moving average in infant mortality rates in Kerala, West Bengal and all India, by sex and residence, 1981 to 1997.

	<i>Total</i>			<i>Rural</i>			<i>Urban</i>		
	AI	K	WB	AI	K	WB	AI	K	WB
1981-83 to 1988-90	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.02	0.06	0.01
1988-90 to 1992-94	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.02
1992-94 to 1995-97	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.02	0	0	0
1988-90 to 1995-97	0.03	0.07	0.03	0.03	0.08	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.01
1981-93 to 1995-97	0.06	0.12	0.06	0.06	0.15	0.07	0.02	0.07	0.01

Note: K: Kerala, WB: West Bengal, AI: all India

Source: calculated from SRS Bulletin.

In fact, the improvement index of urban Kerala was almost six times higher than the same for urban West Bengal. There is no evidence of any significant increase in the improvement indices and thus probably of any cumulative effect of government's effort to reduce infant mortality rate in the second half of the period between 1981 and 1997 from that in the first half. Again, there is evidence that the improvement indices between 1992-94 and 1995-97 were lower than the corresponding improvement indices between 1988-90 and 1992-94 in all three units. This indicates a possibility of slowing down of the process of incremental achievements in the last few years for which improvement indices were computed.

A comparison of the improvement indices in infant mortality rate, disaggregated for males and females in both rural and urban areas also showed a much higher improvement in Kerala across gender and places, than in West Bengal. In Kerala the rural males recorded the highest improvement during the entire period, followed by rural females, urban females and urban males, respectively. In rural West Bengal the improvement was more prominent, during the entire period, especially for females there, than the urban areas. Urban females formed the group, which registered the lowest improvement among all the groups in both the states. In rural areas, improvement for females was higher than that for males, where the converse was true for the urban areas of the state. Urban females experienced deterioration in the relevant achievement in both the states in the 1990s; and the deterioration was highest for urban females in Kerala between 1992-94 and 1995-97.

The NFHS data on infant mortality, child mortality for the fifteen years preceding the survey i.e., 1992-93 as well as the study by Dutta, Panda and Wadhwa (1995) also confirms the possibility of higher improvement in terms of reduction in infant and child mortality rates in Kerala than in West Bengal for the periods 1970-79 and 1980-88.

2.5.4. Observations from Reports on Morbidity Surveys:

An examination of the morbidity record of the two states can help in providing a rough idea of the healthy life one is able to live in the respective societies. From the data on morbidity in 1986-87 (NSS report) we find highest number of short duration morbidity in West Bengal than both Kerala and India, as a whole cold/cough is the group for which incidence of short duration illness was highest in all the three units compared. Compared to Kerala, West Bengal showed a higher incidence of illness due to diarrhea which is mostly a disease indicating the poor state of health and hygiene system e.g. safe drinking water and nutritional intakes. Females in West Bengal were found to be at a higher risk of suffering from these cases of short duration illness compared to the males there, than women in Kerala. Incidence of major morbidity, however, was highest in Kerala followed by the same in West Bengal and India respectively. Contrasting the case of short duration morbidity, women in Kerala seemed to be more highly prone to major morbidity than males there, whereas the opposite was found for women in West Bengal. A comparison of the specific reasons for major morbidity indicates that for almost all the diseases, incidence per lakh population was higher in Kerala than in West Bengal. But, the incidence of T.B. in West Bengal was significantly higher than that in

Kerala, and moreover even than the all-India average incidence of the same. The incidence of this disease, again, could be associated with prevalence of malnutrition, under nutrition in particular and poverty in general. The incidence of hypertension, heart diseases, and mental disease was higher in both the states, especially in Kerala compared to the all India average for the same. Prevalence of diabetes was very high in Kerala relative to the other units of comparison, which can be associated well with higher life expectancy there (supportive of the hypothesis of low mortality-high morbidity syndrome in the state, see Panikar and Soman, for example).

Thus, in comparative terms, West Bengal seems to be affected by both diseases of poverty and those related with affluence where Kerala has been able to reduce the incidence of the former. This is prominent even in case of maternal and child health status if these two states. The variation in reported morbidity across the units compared, known to differ according to the difference in perception of the illness – specially in case of short duration morbidity, cannot be, however, explained completely by variation in the perception only – particularly for cases of major morbidity. In addition to considering the possibility of underreporting and varying perception for diseases like hypertension and mental diseases, the possibility of other factors, such as disadvantageous socio-economic status of an individual in the society, affecting the higher incidence of major morbidity cannot be precluded. For example, a study in Kerala showed that despite the generally high level of literacy and health-awareness of the majority of the population, it was the low socio-economic status for a significant section of the population, and not the perception factor, played a more dominant role in causing higher morbidity (Kannan et al, 1991). Given the incidence of morbidity, short duration and major, health status and associated well-being can be influenced positively to the extent these ailments are treated. NSS data on morbidity that shows the proportion of persons getting treatment, as outpatients, of ailment in rural and urban areas of both the states for the years 1986-87 and 1995-96, can indicate the extent to which the population can enjoy a responsive and prompt health care system.

2.5.5. Change in the Proportion of People Availing of Treatment in the Two States:

For both the years higher proportion of ill persons got treatment in rural Kerala than in rural West Bengal for both men and women. In urban areas of the two states the same is true in 1986-87 for both men and women. But in 1995-96 higher proportions of males in urban West

Bengal got treatment for their ailment than in urban Kerala and equal proportion of females did so in urban areas of the two states. The disaggregation of the data across fractile groups for rural and urban areas of the states and that across gender indicate differential changes in the availing of treatment for them. In rural West Bengal men from all the MPCE groups except one, got treatment in a lower proportion – in case of an ailment - in 1995-96 compared to the same in 1986-87. The same was true for all the fractile groups in Kerala except the lowest decile group in 1995-96. Women from six bottom decile groups experienced availing of treatment in lower proportion in rural West Bengal. But, the same was experienced by women from all the fractile groups in rural Kerala. For both men and women in urban West Bengal the proportion increased between 1986-87 and 1995-96, where the same declined in Kerala from their respective values in 1986-87. Rural-urban gap in availing treatment, in case of ailment, increased in both the states in 1995-96.

Thus, in this section we find that in case of an ailment, the proportion of people availing treatment has come down in the two states in 1995-96 from what it was in 1986-87, across gender and in both rural and urban areas. The rural-urban gap in this respect increased in both the states in 1995-96. Kerala had a higher proportion of people availing of treatment than West Bengal in rural areas for both the years, while in urban areas West Bengal showed a higher proportion of the same in 1995-96.

2.5.6. Reasons Cited for not Availing Treatment:

Till now we considered the medical treatment of ailment that was actually availed by the ailed people. However this does not tell us anything about lack of treatment being their conscious decision as one of not going for treatment. As the data give information on actual utilization of medical services, a relatively low utilization may be due to low perceived need for medical treatment or insufficient provisioning of medical services. A comparison of the per 1000 distribution of not treated ailments over reasons for no treatment, for the two states for both the points of time can indicate to some extent whether 'no treatment' is a deliberate choice made by the individual who is ill or is a compulsion due to lack of purchasing power or adequate provisioning of medical services.

For both the years 1986-87 and 1995-96 'ailment not considered serious' formed the major part of not opting medical treatment of ailment in rural and urban areas of all three units

though it has come down quite sharply, specially in rural West Bengal in 1995-96. However this factor has to be considered cautiously as it changes over time and across places due to change in perception of illness due to spread of formal education, and awareness of the possible nature of morbidity and availability of medical treatments for that.

The next most important reason, as cited by the respondents was 'financial'. However, while the incidence of financial constraints restricting medical treatment of ailment declined in rural Kerala, it rose more than three and half times in rural West Bengal at the next point of time. At all India level also financial factors increasingly constrained one's choice in rural areas to go for medical treatment in the latter year. However it was not as serious a problem as in rural West Bengal. The same factor constrained the availing of medical treatment in the urban areas of all the three units, especially in urban Kerala, in 1995-96 than in 1986-87. Though even after the increase of importance of financial reasons in 1995-96 in urban Kerala, it was comparatively less significant than the same in West Bengal or India as a whole. Now given that quite a considerable degree of medical services are provided free of cost or at a minimum price in order to make it accessible to the poorer sections of the society, the fact of financial factors being one of the major reasons for no treatment can have two interrelated implications. One is that whatever medical services are available are costly and therefore not economically accessible though are physically so, and the other that is a related possibility of the former is that free or cheap public provisioning a charitable medical services targeted for the financially disadvantaged sections of the population are not sufficiently accessible, even physically. This implies lack of freedom of the individual with financial disadvantage in deciding to achieve the functioning i.e. being cured and healthy. Thus such constraints restrict the scope of improvement and increase in the importance of this constraint in every unit except in rural Kerala in 1995-96 from the same in 1986-87 implies reducing one's well-being. It is notable here that the fact of not treating the ailment as serious is less likely to be conditioned by the non-availability of necessary medical facilities and the lack of awareness of its availability in the urban areas of both the states, specially for urban West Bengal, which need not be true for rural areas of the states. Probably in rural areas the reference point for treating an ailment as serious is the opportunity cost of considering the ailment serious, which with insufficient provisioning of medical facilities is likely to be high.

So, the decrease in the importance of 'ailment not considered serious' and increase in the importance of 'financial constraint', in urban areas of both the states and very significantly in

rural WB, as the reason behind not availing medical treatment in 1995-96 from that in 1986-87 indicate the possibility of worsening access to health care facilities, both physically and financially for the mentioned units.

So choosing not to go for a medical treatment of the ailment in rural areas due to considering of the illness as non-serious may reflect the structural constraints in rural areas and may not be so much an indication of rationally made decision. In that sense though in both the states there has been a deterioration in rural health status in recent years, rural areas in West Bengal became heavily disadvantaged vis-à-vis not only the urban areas of the state but also the rural areas of Kerala and therefore vis-à-vis the urban areas of the latter state.

2.6 Conclusion:

In Section 2.3 of this chapter we found that the generally used indicators of income-poverty in these two states show that there has been a definite reduction in the same. Though Kerala's performance in this regard has been even better, the reduction of poverty in West Bengal and especially in its rural areas has been quite considerable compared to the past.

Section 2.4 showed that there has been improvement in both level and distribution of educational achievements in both the states, Kerala, in most of the cases, experiencing better performance in terms of the incremental achievements, too. A notable achievement of West Bengal relates to literacy and enrolment performance of women in the rural areas and especially the progress of the SC or ST women in this regard. But, discontinuation still plagues the educational achievements of both the states and to a much higher extent for WB, which affects the relatively low-income groups and social groups like SC and ST more than proportionately.

In Section 2.5 we found improvement in the indicators relating to health achievements in the two states and again, Kerala faring better in incremental achievements in all regards. But, simultaneously we find a decline in the proportion of people availing of treatment in both the states and especially in the rural areas. The reasons stated by the respondents for not doing so indicates possibility of deterioration in the physical or financial access to health care facilities in the urban areas of both the states rural West Bengal. Financial constraint seemed to be a very important limiting factor in the latter.

The general evidence of high agricultural production in West Bengal and not so impressive growth in Kerala poses these observations as a paradox. Explaining this will, at the minimum, necessitate the examination of the participatory nature of the observed growth. In the next chapter, therefore we examine both the agricultural and industrial growth experiences of the two states, these being the areas where respective governments of these states intervened to affect the growth as well as the redistribution.

CHAPTER 3

Public Interventions Directly Aiming at Influencing Economic Growth

In this chapter we seek to analyse the interventions directed to affect the process of economic growth in Kerala and West Bengal, roughly for the given period of analysis. *Our main aim, here, is to examine whether the specific interventions can be inferred to have succeeded in changing the growth process to a more participatory one than before.* By more participatory nature of the growth process, we mean more employment-intensive production than before so that there is at least the same or more than proportionate increase in employment than the same in output in most of the sectors of production, with better returns to labour and better working conditions, and, higher participation by the direct producers in the decision-making process related to production including marketing.

Certain sections such as agricultural labourers and marginal peasants in the agricultural sector, industrial workers, particularly the unskilled, casual workers in the industrial sector acquire relatively lower economic returns from participation in production compared to other sections engaged in production. This can be associated with low level of ownership in resources for production, considered more essential than others, in the specific historical condition under consideration. *We try to examine how these groups, within the given production structure, have gained from the change in the growth process subsequent to the specific interventions, in the respective states.*

We specifically concentrate on two sectors, viz. agriculture and industry. Much of the interventions in the sphere of economic growth in these two states have been confined mainly to these sectors. We try to examine the change in the participatory nature of growth subsequent to the above mentioned interventions, as well as, the change in the character of those interventions over time. Besides, these two sectors combined together forms quite considerable proportion of the total output produced in the states. Again, there have been various interventions in both the sectors. *We concentrate on agrarian reforms in the agricultural sector, and, specific interventions by the government, targeted to affect the wage and other conditions of employment in the industrial sector as well as industrial relations.* Our focus here is mostly on the change in earnings and other working conditions of the marginal peasants and agricultural labourers in the agricultural sector, and industrial workers in the industrial sector. Section 3.1 deals with the agrarian reforms, the Kerala experience

(3.1.2) and the comparable experiences in West Bengal (3.1.3). Similarly, Section 3.2 discusses industrial experiences in West Bengal (3.2.1) and in Kerala (3.2.2).

3.1. Interventions in the Agrarian Sector:

From various possible government interventions in the agrarian sector such as agrarian reforms, irrigation management, agricultural price policy and so on, *we select land reforms including certain supplementary measures (as specified below) for analysis as it is targeted at achieving equitable income distribution among different actors engaged in production.*

3.1.1. Possible Effects of Land Reforms on Different Sections in the Rural Society:

Instead of describing the policy formulations regarding agrarian and rural development such as land reform by the state of India in the post-independence period till date and implementation of each of these chronologically, we prefer to introduce this section in the following way. As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, the state is viewed here as an entity representing diverse interests of different social formations, simultaneously expressing its relative autonomy on certain occasions, in the form of persuasion of agenda independent of these configuration of interests. A break away from the earlier pattern of development followed by the state will depend on the nature of the regime that rules the state and the section the state attempts to represent i.e., the section the state-policies will target. However, formulation and more importantly implementation of policies of intervention such as land reforms, in the attempt to affect the target section in a particular way, are likely to affect different sections of the economy in general and different sections involved in the agricultural production process in the rural economy in particular. Consideration of such an impact becomes important for a democratically elected government. On the other hand, relative autonomy of the regime is expressed in its effort to bring about changes in the agrarian structure that would asymmetrically distribute the benefits in favour of the targeted sections (generally, land and asset-poor sections) and thus, most possibly, less beneficial for the interests of the propertied and dominant sections. Evaluating the outcome of land reforms can be facilitated by a brief delineation of potential ways in which these conflicting and cooperating interests may influence the formulation and implementation of the relevant policies. *As formulation and implementation of agrarian policies are state subjects within the constitutionally defined limits, a comparison of the actual identifiable outcomes in these two*

provinces would be useful to assess the extent of relative autonomy exhibited by the states. This would be a necessary step towards finding certain historical uniformities in the agrarian development experiences of the states dominated by similar political regime as well as identifying other important aspects influencing the performance by recognizing the heterogeneity within those regular patterns.

In the post independence period, the strategy of economic development based on industrialization was pursued under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie in its effort to detach itself from the imperialist force with the rhetoric of self-reliant growth. But this effort proved temporary, the immediate reason being the way in which economic development was envisaged and sought to be attained. The state's heavy industrialization policy and the tacit effort of the private domestic capital, under formation, to concentrate on the consumer goods sector and differentiate their respective products, even to a limited extent, made the economy dependent on foreign capital for technology and inputs. Liberalization of the domestic economy became imperative, where initial reliance on the public sector industries gave precedence to private initiatives. Now, the foreign capital, most probably in alliance with the indigenous monopoly capital, may not endorse rapid and unhindered development of the productive forces of the economy and thus may prefer to perpetuate the state of underdevelopment in certain sectors of the economy¹. This limited development of productive forces in the overall economy, as required for maintaining high rate of return on capital, is most likely to be compatible with limited development of productive forces in agriculture also (Khasnabis, 1986). However, for industrialization, especially in its initial phase, a minimum development of agriculture is necessary particularly in the form of surplus flow from the sector both real and financial (ibid. & Byres, 1974). The adoption of policy of heavy industrialization, as mentioned above, by the Indian state required some kind of reforms in the agrarian sector from above by the national bourgeoisie.

In the immediate post-independence period the agrarian system of the country, in general, was characterized by separation of surplus appropriation from the production process, virtual absence of productive investment and the consequent low remuneration accruing to the direct

¹ According to Khasnabis (1986) the unsuccessful and deprived sections of the bourgeoisie in the monopoly capitalism that are in favour of unhindered and rapid development of capitalism do not approve of this. The nationalist intellectuals try to organize a struggle, uniting both these small and medium industrial bourgeoisie and the small peasants fighting against the landlordism in the agricultural sector, imperialism, and indigenous monopoly capitalism. But according to the author, on the face of the possibility of revolution under the dictatorship of proletariat this group vacillates.

producers, the working on the basis of personalized relationships exhibiting low growth in the output and high incidence of rural poverty. (Ghose, 1983). More recent reviews of the agrarian structure in the economy showed that low growth and high poverty might prevail in a situation where productive investment by the landowners is present and wage labour is employed. Thus surplus appropriation can be directly related to production process (Khashabis, 1986). But more fundamentally, along with showing these capitalist features, the fact that landowners could retain the earlier kind of surplus appropriation mechanism also, or their role as intermediaries, makes the second characterization comparable with first. In either of these two cases, the system needs a transition towards the revitalization of the disintegrated peasantry, at least in the short run (Ghose, 1983) to switch over to higher growth path. The system, left to itself cannot attain this transition. Agrarian reforms are an instrument available for achieving this transition through creation of an appropriate set of conditions for an eventual emergence of particular agrarian structure. The actual choice of a structure among alternative systems is conditioned by the political processes of the economy. In the Indian context, though formulation of the policies is controlled by the Indian state, the political processes in the provincial states that implement the reforms become more crucial. However, the choice of a particular system has implications in terms of the patterns of ownership and control of the means of production indicating the possible modes of decision-making with regard to the use of resources and accumulation. Thus each system will have distinct profile related to the time path of output and employment (*ibid*) and therefore to the incidence of poverty in rural areas.

Here we would distinguish between land reforms as has been defined by Byres (1974), and a broader concept such as agrarian reforms. Land reforms are meant to refer to “attempts to transform the agrarian structure by altering the distribution of land and the terms upon which land is worked and held”, i.e., changes in the social relations of production. This includes reducing distance between ownership and operation of a landholding, through abolition of landlords and other intermediary interests working on land, transfer of ownership of land to the direct producer through the redistribution of surplus land generated from imposition of a ceiling on the size of landholding. This can be associated directly with the short run aim of revitalizing the peasantry. Other measures to promote viability of small and marginal peasants’ holdings by providing cheap credit or other inputs, irrigation or to promote collectivized farming are considered to be supplementary in deciding the course of transition and the structure that will emerge in the longer run. While agrarian reforms are meant to

include both kinds of interventions, we will focus on different aspects of land reforms and some of the important changes the initial land reforms have given rise to.

We try to work out how interests of different sections considered here, get influenced by different aspects of agrarian reforms, and, specially the composition of the measures, with different order of priorities specific to each situation.

Given the fact that the reforms will affect the volume of marketed surplus from agriculture, necessary to sustain both urban population and industrialization process, any reforms are likely to affect the interest of the urban bourgeoisie and the industrialists and the latter's decision to invest. The latter may thus have incentive in persuading the state to implement reforms that, through development of productive forces in agriculture, can ensure increased marketed surplus.

Given political and economic power configuration, capital can articulate the need only for reforms from above (Khasnabis, 1986). Though Indian urban bourgeoisie and capital have been consistently represented by the Indian state (Byres, 1993), the groups having incentives for perpetual underdevelopment or limited development of productive forces in agriculture, mostly representing 'pre-capital', may use their power to thwart this effort if the state is allowed to intervene in the civil society. Capital may, in this context, prefer the state with minimum intervention to avoid negative intervention and is likely to attempt to accommodate pre-capital rather than destroying it² (Sanyal, 1988). Retaining the pre-capitalist forces in the sector would amount to restraining the extent of reforms developing productive resources and growth there (Khasnabis, 1986).

According to Khasnabis (*ibid*), examination of the various evidences on the relation between farm size and productivity in India showed that development of productive forces along capitalist line and achieving agricultural growth and increase in marketed surplus require

²Sanyal (1988) does not explicitly specify the constituent elements or classes in 'pre-capital', except for indicating the pre-capital to be the negation of capital pursuing growth via accumulation. In this section we would confine the meaning of the 'pre-capital' to the account given by Khasnabis (1986). In the context of the rural society, this is the section that practises different extra-market influences in the functioning of different input and output markets. For example, it may perpetuate some kind of 'bonded labour' in its power to act as informal moneylender even when there is prevalence of wage-labour in the sector. Unlike feudal lords, in classic sense, they invest in productive forces also. Simultaneously they invest money on trading and money lending activities perpetuating imperfections in output and credit market respectively, for example. This is alternatively called 'Landlordism' (Khasnabis, 1986, Basu & Nath, 1985, Konar 1975, Ramachandran 1997)

neither abolition of small-holdings cultivation nor abolition of tenancy to abolish intermediary interests on land. Revitalisation of peasantry simultaneously sets on the process of differentiation of the same, whereby it provides the scope for a section of the peasantry to become dynamic in terms of its decision to invest, adopting new technologies and thus in terms of growth performance. Existence of a section of small and marginal peasants struggling for viability provides scope for the existence of pre-capitalist forces that can coexist with small peasants capitalist production. So the very process of land reforms, initiating the process of peasant differentiation, provides the material basis for an alliance between capital and pre-capital, unless the supplementary measures of agrarian reforms are also undertaken to counterbalance the forces interested only in a limited transition of the agrarian sector.

The other dominant section of the agrarian sector represents the rich peasants, whose interests also have been consistently represented by the Indian state (Byres, 1993) has undoubtedly benefited in most of the states from whatever limited agrarian reforms took place there respectively (Khasnabis, 1986; Byres 1974 & 1993). But demand for similar kind of reforms in the agricultural sector by this group in alliance with the urban and industrial bourgeoisie becomes problematic on consideration of the contradictory interests of these two groups. The rural-urban contradiction of economic interests becomes more relevant here, manifested in the debate around terms of trade between agricultural and industrial products. Although rich peasants, as opposed to feudal and capitalist landlords, directly engage in production and exhibit opposing interests vis-à-vis pre-capital, it may share certain features of pre-capital also, by combining trading and money lending activities like that of pre-capital. It may have control over the produce market or on market for agricultural labourers, if scope for such diversification exists. Thus it may additionally exhibit pre-capitalist features of blending both market and non-market means of surplus appropriation. Thus, like pre-capital, rich peasants also are likely to be interested in limited reforms that is not based on radical redistribution so as to create peasantry of uniform size of landholdings or on the demand for hike in wage without commensurate increase in labour productivity.

Small and marginal peasants are two other sections of the agrarian producers that may directly benefit through the redistribution of land to become middle and small peasants. They can support a land reforms programme inducing redistribution of land as well as abolition of intermediaries or measures ensuring their right to cultivate a landholding. The numerical

strength of the agricultural labourers and possibility of re-peasantisation through redistribution indicate the possibility of successful incorporation of this section to make the demand for such land reforms effective. In fact the generally evident increase in the absolute number of agricultural labourers, in most of the states, may result from the pauperisation of peasantry, and, the demand for even a small plot of land may be quite attractive to them. Thus, they can be better integrated with land reforms based on extensive redistribution of land than with land reforms concentrating on change in other aspects of agrarian production structure or probably even the supplementary movement demanding hike in agricultural wages (Khasnabis, 1986).

Alternatively, much of the agrarian movements based on the 'peasant-unity', conceptualised by the left political parties, has been questioned from within the party as well as by independent researchers. According to Brass (1994), even if it is temporarily possible to unite all peasants and agricultural labourers, in the long run, they are bound to be divided along class-lines on account of the heterogeneity of the peasants. The same has been pointed out by Rudra (1981), when he argued that such a unity of broadly two groups with antagonistic interests can take place only at the expense of the marginal landholders' and agricultural labourers' interests. Empirical findings indicate that if there is scope for commercial crop cultivation in marginal landholdings, this group, too, may have conflicting interests to pursue (Krishnaji, 1992; Kannan, 1999). Again, securing 'peasant-unity,' which has mainly depended on demand for 'fair prices' for agricultural products, finally, is likely to have adversely affected the landless labourers and even the marginal peasants who, typically are net buyers of agricultural produce (Krishnaji, 1992). On the other hand, there are instances where agricultural labourers invoked the rhetoric of 'peasant unity' to bring the outcome of its bargain with the other constituent sections of the unity, to its own advantage (Rogaly, 1999).

The regime ruling the state is viewed here as an arbitrator of these conflicting and cooperating interests, with relative autonomy³, as has been already mentioned. These factors that add to the complexity in this entire process may be the role of the local level institutions that

³ Of course, actions demonstrating relative autonomy of the regime under consideration need not always be guided by ideological considerations but by the requirement of popular demand management. The state may attempt to neutralize the mobilization of the pauperized peasants and agricultural labourers for land. Specially the announcement of land reforms in both 1950s and 1970s, just following Tebhaga and Telengana movement on the one hand, Naxalbari movement on the other, respectively may not be strange coincidences (Khasnabis, 1986; Basu and Nath 1985)

implement the reforms such as the Panchayats, division of the targeted sections of rural population along the identities such as caste, gender and so on.

Therefore the implementation of the land reforms and consequent outcomes can be viewed as the product of the interaction of all the above-mentioned interests and are indicative of their relative strength. The policies formulated at the state level and the diverse meanings those policies are attached with by the local level institutions and local level societies in the course of implementation require analysis. Impact of the land reforms on growth and income poverty is located in the above framework.

3.1.2. Kerala Land Reforms and its Possible Effects on Agricultural Growth and Rural Poverty:

3.1.2.1. A Brief Overview:

To recapitulate, those provisions of land reforms such as abolition of tenancy and conferment of ownership rights to the tenancy holders, conferment of ownership rights of the hutment plots to the hutment dwellers, who were mostly agrestic slaves without any access to land and dependent on their labour power, are known to have been most successful in the land reforms experience of the state (Krishnaji, 1992; Ramachandran, 1997; Raj and Tharakan, 1983). Very limited success has been recorded in recovering surplus land from ownership holdings with size exceeding the ceiling limit, specified for the reforms, and therefore in meeting the provisions related to redistribution of surplus land. Thus, it can be inferred that other than the above-mentioned two changes, the rest of the agrarian structure, has been left unchanged (Raj and Tharakan, op cit), at least initially. The success is attributed to the organized effort of the leftist parties (Krishnaji, op cit, for example) despite several negative interferences by the Indian government and Congress government of Kerala, and, the appropriateness of the issue chosen by them and the timing of such a movement that was coincident with the phase when the overall enthusiasm on land-reforms was very prominent at the national level. The failure, on the other hand, can be associated with the failure to operationalise certain necessary institutional arrangements, given the constitutionally defined limits, to counter the resistance against the reform measures⁴.

⁴ e.g., the inability to withdraw various exemptions regarding land-ceiling, made by the successive governments, the subsequent withdrawal of certain innovative measures such as organized representation for any controversial land to the land board set up under Kerala Agrarian Reforms act, 1959, by the Congress government and no resumption of it by later left governments.

3.1.2.2. Nature of and Reasons for Relatively Successful Tenancy Reforms:

A review of the inter-regional differences in the agrarian structure and agrarian developments, of different parts of present Kerala, in the colonial period (Raj and Tharakan, op cit, for example) shows that reforming tenancy arrangement, in the state and specially in erstwhile Malabar region of the then Madras Presidency, was a necessary first step for any transformation of the agrarian system. The initial phase of agrarian movement was mostly based on consolidation of the demands for tenancy reforms in northern Kerala. On the one hand, the relative success can be traced back to the synchronized action of the Communist-led ministry of 1957 where there was no time lag between all the three relevant steps of the reforms (ibid). On the other hand, such a reform, either abolishing tenancy or providing security to the tenants, would affect even the capitalist landlords of erstwhile Travancore, which might affect the growth prospect of the sector adversely. Probably on these as well as electoral considerations, the reach of these particular provisions was not extended to certain sections of the tenants in Travancore (ibid.), probably on electoral or growth consideration, thus limiting the benefits accessible to a relatively weak sections of the tenantry.

3.1.2.3. Performance Relating to Land Redistribution:

Similarly, apparently, on consideration of growth prospect of commercialized crops, plantations were exempted from the reach of ceiling law. Again, this land, eligible for exemption, was defined with respect to the crop it grows, so land other than plantations, such as that of garden land, producing those specified crops, were also exempted thus limiting the scope of finding surplus land (Krishnaji, op cit). Small peasants were another group which was not targeted for recovery of surplus land in the state, even when much of the small holdings produce commercial crops as well as combine activities outside agriculture for major part of their income (ibid.). It may be associated with the fact that many of these small holders became owners of their land holdings, as an outcome of the provisions of conferring ownership rights to the tenants and the left government did not want to alienate them. Subsequently also this section was strengthened further numerically, as analysis of landholdings structure showed the predominance of small and marginal holdings in the economy (Raj and Tharakan, op cit, Ramachandran, op cit, AERC, 1998).

3.1.2.4. Supplementary Measures:

There were attempts to make the small and marginal holdings viable through supplementary measures defined before (Raj and Tharakan, op cit). Another agrarian policy, adopted by the government of both left and rightist political parties, was providing price support for the agricultural produce. The leftist political parties, interested in providing price-incentives for production by the small and marginal farmers could not exclude the rich and middle peasants from reaping the benefits of the achieved advantageous terms of trade in favour of agricultural produces, to maintain peasant unity. The latter group benefited both in terms of enjoying the provisions in the supplementary measures, to make peasantry - small and marginal in particular – viable, such as provision of cheap credit facilities and so on, on the one hand, and being protected from any measures in the land reforms that could have reduced their economic and political power, by virtue of the ‘peasant-unity’ aimed at by the leftist political parties, on the other.

Improvement in the wage and working condition of agricultural employment, an expected outcome of different measures of land reforms, is one important way through which direct producers’ control over the production system could be consolidated. This can be considered as the minimum necessary condition for the improvement of the standard of living of the agricultural labourers, as well as of the marginal peasants, who typically depend on wage-employment for subsistence, and are the relatively deprived sections of the agricultural sector. The gains related to wages here refer to regular increases in the relevant wages and Kerala’s experience in this regard compares favourably with most of the other Indian states. For example, Jose (1994, as cited in Nath 1996) showed that the highest percentage increase in real daily agricultural wages between 1970-71 and 1988-89 was in Kerala (6.3 percentage for men and almost of the same range for women), among major States in India, accompanied by improvement in the conditions of terms of wage employment in the states. The strong labour movement in the state and the dynamics created by it demanding regular increase in wages and protecting current employment, under the leadership of the Communist Party of India, later on by the CPI (M), are known to have been successful in achieving this. In the post-1975-76 period, subsequent to the beginning of the remittance inflows in the state, the increase in the money wages in agriculture is attributed to the international remittances, in addition to the factors explaining success in the pre-1975-76 period.

However, the cautious approach adopted by the left parties regarding the relatively better off peasants as well as the militant labour movements, could neither completely sustain the unity nor could ensure high agricultural growth. *Now, we will examine this specific aspect to understand - to what extent this growth performance can, inferentially, be explained, where we consider the specific interventions by the leftist parties, backed by organized movement aiming to change the relative strength of the different groups - mentioned above - in a particular way, as an entry point.*

3.1.2.5. Growth Performance Related to Various Measures of Land Reforms:

From a review of growth performance of the agricultural sector we find that between 1956-57 and 1972-73 growth rate of agricultural production has been reasonably high (Raj and Tharakan, op cit.), compared to the subsequent years during which agricultural output actually declined. Between 1975-76 and 1988-89, the average growth of agricultural output at constant prices was negative (-0.2%), where 1975-76 marks the year when significant remittances started flowing in the economy (Kannan, 1999). Though there is evidence of the sector's recovery for a short spell during the later half of the 1980s, it has developed at a slower pace since the beginning of the 1990s till 1994-95 (Thomas, 1999). However Kannan's (1999) estimates showed that the growth rate of agricultural output (3.7%) between 1988-89 and 1995-96 was higher than that in the preceding period i.e., between 1975-76 and 1988-89. Examining the phenomenon of agricultural stagnation in Kerala between 1962-63 and 1985-86 across crops, seasons and regions, Kannan and Pushpangadan (1990) showed that the yield-stagnation was all pervasive across crops. Yield increased only for paddy, due to shift of land away from cultivation. A more recent study by Thomas (1999) also observed a shift towards cash crops with better growth performance. As a result, we find a continuous decline in the food grains production in the state since 1970s till 1997. Between 1983 and 1997 the rate of decline increased than before (at -3.14% average annual rate)(Economic Review, Kerala, different issues).

The need to introduce better farming-technologies in attempting any agrarian development strategy was suggested, in view of the prevailing technological stagnation in the sector since the 70s (Kannan and Pushpangadan, op cit) and also in view of the saturation point reached by the net sown area in the state (Thomas, 1999). Raj and Tharakan, (op cit) also, mentioned

technological backwardness in the cultivation, as a factor that does not promote the incentive for higher production on the part of the cultivator.

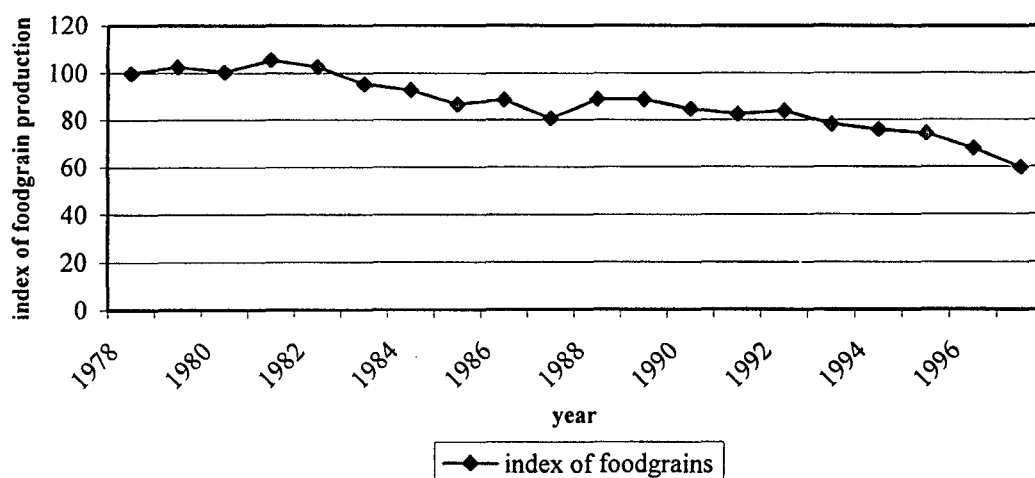
Now, given the politically active labour unions and the generally high level of consciousness of its members, it is plausible to infer that technological upgradations or modernizations that have lower employment-intensity than the present one will be met with resistance by the agricultural labour unions. The combination of high agricultural wages in the state compared to the corresponding rates before, and the threat of mobilized action against any attempt to curb employment or restrict labor's freedom, was one of the most important factors reducing the relative profitability of agricultural operations. So the farm-employers were likely to be willing to adopt labour-saving technologies, which, in turn were likely to be opposed by labour unions. In certain places modernization was allowed only on the condition of retaining the existing level of employment, which made the cultivation less profitable and unattractive on account of both the additional cost of labour, unnecessary for the cultivation, and the chaos involved in implementation of such contracts (Kannan, 1999, for example). Definitely, this factor alone cannot explain the reduction in relative profitability. Thomas (1999) identified declining profitability of farm operations, shortage of farm labourers, high prices of agricultural land, its frequent conversion for non-agricultural use and so on, as current problems inhibiting agrarian development. It is clear that the decline in profitability is an outcome of the other factors mentioned here. The referred high price of land, due, mainly to the rising demand for land with increasing scope for competing uses, increasing demand for labour in non-farm activities creating shortage of farm labourers and consequent decline in profitability have been explained by Kannan (1990). The exogenous shock, in the form of inflow of international remittances, was referred to have suddenly increased the market price for land, without matching increase in land-productivity as well as increasing the demand for labour for construction sector etc., from the farm sector, and thus raising money wages irrespective of the labour productivity condition (ibid).

In response to these developments, farmers shifted to mixed-cropping pattern to minimize the fluctuations in the earnings from a definite acreage (Kannan & Pushpangadan, op cit). On the other, it led to flight of capital in agriculture to regions with relatively low labour-cost or shifting towards the cultivation of cash or other labour-saving crops e.g., coconuts (Kannan, 1998 and 1999, NSS landholding Survey data for 1991-92). In other cases it led to the conversion of land from agriculture to non-agricultural use (Kannan, 1990; Thomas, 1999).

The observed increase in agricultural production since late-1980s can be partly explained by such strategies of reducing the labour cost of agricultural production.

All this must have led to the decline in agricultural output. But a stagnant agriculture might have meant less number of employment days, thus reducing the effectiveness of an increase in agricultural wage in reducing poverty of agricultural labourers. While one can infer that rural poverty decreased on account of high agricultural wages with high level of employment associated with relatively high growth in agricultural production, at least between 1956-57 and 1972-73, compared to the same in the subsequent period, it is not easy to definitely infer, on the possible direction, of rural poverty and therefore on the possible effect of agrarian reforms on the landless labourers in the latter period. Lack of growth in agricultural production, and, specially the decline in foodgrains production (see the figure 3.1.2.1) has meant the absence of a potential trickle down mechanism, by forgoing the option of raising the local availability of the same (UN, 1975). Conferment of ownership rights to the hutment dwellers, i.e., distributing small plots of land to landless labourers and marginal peasants might have worked towards increase in wage, on the other hand, and a favourable terms of trade for agricultural produces might have reduced the extent of poverty to the extent of improvement in relative terms of trade.

fig. 3.1.2.1: Index of Foodgrain production in Kerala, 1978-79 to 1997-98



Certain steps on the part of the government to improve the selected infrastructural facilities could have eased the crisis, by increasing the overall productivity in agricultural production. But, the state lacked in development of critical factor inputs and in the absence of proper supplementary measures in the broad agrarian reforms policies failed to increase land-productivity. Incorrect prioritization of irrigation in the state, in terms of relatively excessive emphasis on major and medium irrigation, for which cost of delay is quite high compared to that for minor irrigation, lack of proper attention on soil conservation measures, and so on were some of the factors cited as inhibiting augmentation of the land productivity (Kannan and Pushpangadan, 1988), though these can not be the sufficient conditions for increase in agricultural production.

In addition, the low level of cooperative marketing was identified as the other important factor, adding to the disincentives, since traders, as intermediaries, reduced the farmers' potential-margin from the sale of output (Raj & Tharakan, op cit.).

3.1.2.6. Change in the Participatory Nature of the Growth:

It is expected that there has been repeasantisation, at least to a certain extent, due to tenancy reforms and the limited land redistribution, in addition to the conferment of ownership rights to the hutment dwellers. Given the possibility of profitable cultivation of commercial crops even in the small and marginal landholdings, especially with increasing terms of trade in favour of the agricultural sector, this must have implied better earnings opportunity for such landholders than in the situation when they did not have any land. Again, due to direct movement for higher agricultural wages or indirect buttressing of the wage movement through other provisions of the land reforms the achieved increase in wages must have meant better earnings opportunity for the labourer who is able to find employment. But the total produce in the sector has declined where the distributive shares of the earlier deprived sections have, probably, improved in their favour. So net effect from this can not be easily discerned. Kannan (1988) has inferred, despite the existence of such ambiguities in assessing the improvement, that there has been a modest improvement in the earnings of the agricultural labourers. The data made available by Rural Labour Enquiry also indicate an increase in the average number of employment-days available to both men and women from agricultural as well as from rural labour households, as given between 1974-75 and 1993-94 (the latest year for which this datum is available). The increase has been more prominent between 1987-88

and 1993-94. This must have implied a definite improvement in the earnings of the agricultural labourers.

The above discussion also implies that the absence of more extensive land redistribution in combination with the above-mentioned interventions - in the form of the supplementary measures, involves potential loss of agricultural output, which limits the extent to which the growth can be participatory.

However, this is not to deny that such an intervention, in addition to affecting the growth process, affects the economic and social opportunities, too. In fact, it is not quite correct to consider agrarian reforms and, as a necessary constituent part of it, land reforms, as instrumental for, and thus in terms of alleviation of poverty and enhancement of growth alone, at least in the short run. In Kerala, movement for agrarian reforms was one of the earliest movements under the leadership of the Communist party. In response to the then ongoing development of early phase of capitalism in agriculture and other spheres of economic life, and, consequent proletarianization (Kannan 1988), this was one of the decisive processes attempting to reduce the extent of exclusion of the earlier deprived sections from economic and social opportunities, on the basis of caste or occupational grounds, and to widen their opportunity set. As already mentioned, it seems to have indirectly buttressed the other developmental initiatives (for e.g. providing a strong foundation of movement for higher agricultural wages and better working conditions) that had the potential of directly contributing to reduction in poverty. So on the basis of its possible limited effect on growth and poverty alleviation it is difficult to infer that the agricultural process in the state has not become more participatory than before.

However, other than the lack of direct contribution to growth and reduction of income poverty, land reform initiatives in the state also are consensually known not to have succeeded with respect to long run aspects of the programme. It did not transfer agrarian power to agricultural labourers and poor peasants neither established production co-operatives nor collectives (Ramachandran op cit), which could have combined equity, on the one hand and efficiency and thus growth, on the other. But, as already mentioned, peasant differentiation is an organic process and in the context of commercialised agriculture lack of long-term effort towards such a change the agrarian structure would imply that a particular agrarian structure must have evolved which, may not conform to the one that was aimed. For example, the

objective of abolition of landlordism of all kinds was not fulfilled, as capitalist landlordism is known to have existed till quite recent years (ibid.). Thomas (1999) also observed reappearance of tenancy in Kuttanad areas though the mode of contract was reported to be more impersonal and market-dependent than before. However, in view of the complexities in characterizing a particular agrarian structure, it is clear that the available secondary information on the sector is not enough to infer about the former. A detailed study on the present agrarian structure in the state can help us locate the state's initiatives on land reforms in alleviating rural poverty.

But, in an attempt to assess the scope for and possible direction of interventions⁵ that could have and, in future, can be contemplated keeping with the objectives of the programme, what gets noticed is the absence of long-term initiatives or evaluation of past achievements and failures and conceptualisation of alternatives. This has been most clearly manifested in the absence of any effort to resolve the contradiction in the party's positions of not affecting the sections having commercial interests, both in and outside agriculture (Krishnaji, op cit.) on the one hand and continuous support or at least stand of 'no opposition' to militancy of agricultural labour unions⁶ till recent years, on the other. The relatively high non-agricultural activities (construction, for example, after mid-70s) and employment, even in rural areas – with generally high wage, international remittances from and employment opportunities in Gulf countries, probably, eases the pressure in the agricultural sector. All this is likely to have reduced the pressure on agricultural land by reducing the rural population's and particularly agricultural labourers' dependence on agriculture sector and, thus, probably, lessening the intensity of their movement with demands related to the gains in the agricultural sector. The relatively well-functioning public distribution systems in the state (in 1986-87, all the interventions of the government directed to the poor used to contribute to almost twenty per cent of the total consumption expenditure of the rural households below the poverty line there, Kannan, 1995) must have absorbed the pressure related to the shortage of foodgrains

⁵ A notable feature of the formulation of land reforms policy in Kerala is that a cursory view of the policy initiatives of the various governments distinguishes agenda of left politics from that of non-left parties in the State. Though both sets of parties are popularly known to have similar support base, and to have followed similar policy patterns—mostly dominated by leftist political agenda (Ram Mohan 1991, for example), the question of ideology and relative autonomy appears to be more relevant for the former, at least in the initial phases of their initiatives towards agrarian reforms.

⁶ The regular movements, pressing on the demands of the agricultural labourers alienated the small peasants, who, in Kerala, typically have other sources of earnings than agriculture but uses wage-labour quite considerably (Krishnaji, op cit; Kannan, 1999) and thus eroded the very support base of the movement for agrarian reforms movements (Alexander, 1985).

production as well as the unemployment in the rural economy, but most probably in the relatively short run. Thus the clear thinking on the long run goals becomes more important in the context of resultant adverse impact on agrarian growth in general and food gains production, in particular.

3.1.3. Land Reforms Experiences in West Bengal under Radical Political Regime:

West Bengal's achievements regarding land reforms have been distinct from that of any other Indian state, as has been claimed by the left government and quite a number of researches. The dimensions of the referred distinctive success, are: (a) relative success of the state in redistribution of surplus arable land; (b) providing security of tenancy to a large section of tenantry; (c) novelty in the use of local level institutions in the rural areas e.g. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs, hereafter), in the implementation of the reforms measures as well as involving Panchayats in administering activities augmenting land productivity; and (d) as a result of the land reforms as well as the supplementary measures of agrarian reforms, ensuring high and improved growth performance in agricultural production in a small and marginal farmer's economy, without further worsening the income distribution, thereby improving the earning of even the weaker section of the agricultural sector such as marginal peasants & agricultural labourers.

These claims, and the counter claims that go with it, will be discussed in this sub-section from which we try to discern the pattern, if any, in the government intervention related to agrarian reform within the framework developed at the beginning of this section. Let us now look more closely at the claims and counter claims regarding performance in redistribution of surplus lands, reforming tenancy, panchayats' role in implementing various policy measures and improvement in the earnings in particular and standard of living, of the land-poor and landless households.

3.1.3.1. Land Redistribution Performances:

First, the state has a better record of acquisition and redistribution of surplus agricultural land than most of the other Indian states. This related to the recovery of higher percentage of estimated surplus land (higher than the corresponding national average) as well as having the highest percentage of the total number of beneficiaries from this programme of the country, to

its credit (Lieten, 1992, 1995, 1996). Besides, a series of amendments made by the Left Front government, bringing all classes of land under the ceiling provision by withdrawing exemptions provided earlier (Bhaumik, 1993) and rendered the programme more effective.

However, it was during the rule of the two United Front governments that land acquisition and redistribution programme reached its peak momentum as an outcome of active peasant policies organized by the leftist parties and the government's (basically left wing's) decision to prevent state-repression on the movements (Bondyopadhyay, 1981; Bhaumik, 1993; Lieten op cit.). What the LFG is known to have significantly accomplished is to extend "*de jure* recognition of *de facto* ownership" which has rendered the redistribution programme "less dramatic and more institutionalised" (Sengupta and Gazdar, op cit.).

The relatively less unequal land ownership structure in West Bengal, given the land ceiling, limited the scope of recovering surplus land. So a more extensive land redistribution programme would have acquired a drastic reduction in the ceiling limit. But the evidence of a considerable percentage of undistributed surplus land with the government (Gazdar and Sengupta, 1997; Basu, 2001). The allegation of illegal possession and rent-appropriation, form this land by local Krishak Sabha hint at the possibility of at least an exchange between right to cultivate on those undistributed plots against support for the party.

Secondly, some researchers found that, given high population density in the rural areas, fixing 17.29 acres of irrigated land and 24.12 acres of unirrigated land as minimum necessary land and thus as the ceiling limit for the previous land owners, is not justifiable given that the 'beneficiaries' of the programme were, on the average, assigned only 0.50 acres of land, quality of which is likely to be inferior to that of the non-acquired land (Ray, op cit.; Basu, 1991; Nath, 1996; Basu, 2001). Particularly, Basu (2001) has shown that a reduction of ceiling limit to 10 acres can recover surplus land which would have been 98% of the total land redistributed till now during the LFG regime which would have affected only 1.36% of the rural households acquiring more than 10 acres of land at present.

This seems unexplainable, specially, given the way the issue of land redistribution was viewed prior to 1977. According to Chowdhuri (as cited in Ray, op cit.), the ceiling law cannot be applicable to the landlords, both feudal and capitalistic, and whoever owns more than 10 acres of irrigated land can be considered to be a non-cultivating owner. If these

landlords are allowed to retain land up to the ceiling limit, high land-concentration on one extreme, and landlessness and land-poverty on the other, will co-exist and various pre-capitalist exploitations will prevail around such inequitable distribution of land and land redistribution programme will be rendered redundant. Given such a conceptualisation, the cautious approach followed by the LFG can be only partly explained by its attempt to give the results more permanent and effective character than the earlier chaotic and short-lived spurts of land-grabbing actions (Rudra, op cit.); Sengupta and Gazdar, op cit.). This implies, in addition to the rent-appropriating role of the peasant organization of the CPI(M), a possibility of exchange of right to cultivate the undistributed land for support or sympathy for the party's interests (probably closely related with electoral calculations).

Crucial to all these relatively successful programmes has been the mass mobilization, mostly integrated with the organized movement attempting to unravelling potential surplus land and resisting eviction, wherever possible. The revitalized PRIs were used quite innovatively since 1978 to implement the measures of the reforms (Khasnabi 1981, Lieten, 1992,1995 & 1996; Gazdar and Sengupta, 1997, 1999, for example.) so that these otherwise bureaucratic, constitutionally defined institutions were used to strengthen the mobilized effort of people, the earlier weaker sections, for the same.

The role the PRIs played in the implementation and supervision of this programme, given the higher participation of landless labourers and marginal peasants in PRIs than before, indicates a possibility of stronger effort towards this programme than earlier time. There are primary evidences of fulfilment of main administration objectives of this programme (Harriss1993; Gazdar and Sengupta, 1997)

However, certain factors cast doubt on the effectiveness of the panchayats in supervising that the hitherto deprived sections benefit. The still dominant position of the rich middle and small-peasants, groups other than cultivators (e.g. teachers) and the evidence of rent-appropriating role of the local Krishak Sabha leaders is the most important among these.

However the LFG's success lies more in covering a large number of landless households under this programme. More than 2.5 million of the landless and land- poor have received some land till 1998 and LFG alone has added more to the number of beneficiaries than what all its predecessor governments did and more than half of the former are SCs and STs. Thus

the availability of surplus land or amount of land assigned per beneficiary in itself indicates neither the success nor deficiency of the broader programme (Chowdhuri as cited in Ray op cit.; Khasnabis 1986, for example). Rather the low size of the resultant holdings constitutes the precondition for co-operativisation or collectivisation that theoretically can combine both efficiency and equity criteria and especially also proved to be more egalitarian than other historically observed agrarian structures (Ghose 1983). But very limited initiations, in this direction, have been observed on the LFGs' part, though it was on their early agenda. This, probably, can be considered as the most important factor behind the observation that existing ceiling laws 'ameliorated but did not resolve class contradictions or significantly alter class relations between the land-rich and the land-poor' (Sengupta & Gazdar op. cit.)

3.1.3.2 Tenancy Reforms:

Like the attempt to evade land ceilings through 'benami' transfers, vested landed interests' attempted to evict the bonafide sharecroppers from their rightful operational holding by bringing it under personal cultivation. Such attempts were quite successful because of "a considerable time-lag between the need, its articulation through movement, reflection in legal enactments and actual implementation of different steps of land reform" (Bondyopadhyay, 1981). The earlier Congress and United Front government in the state formulated and enacted laws to provide security of tenancy to bargadars by (a) conferring legal rights of cultivation to, and thereby preventing willful eviction of tenants by the landlords and; (b) pushing up the tenant's share in the produce to the three-fourth of the same.

By 1991, over 1.4 million bargadars recorded, who operated 1.1 million acres of land under barga cultivation, and a majority of these beneficiaries were reportedly SC or ST households (Lieten, op cit).

Though there have not been evidences of tenants getting their stipulated three-fourth share of the produce, even when no cost of cultivation is shared, (Bhaumik 1993; Basu 2001, for example) a sharp distinction has been noticed between the crop-sharing behaviour of recorded and unrecorded tenants. The recorded tenants who belonged to the so-called inferior socio-economic status exercised their crop-sharing rights more effectively than the unrecorded ones. On the other hand, the recorded tenants exhibited better performance in terms of higher productivity than the other groups of tenants. Therefore we can at least infer that here

recording did not have any negative impact on growth of agricultural production immediately (Bhaumik, 1993). This is important in the context that there is some positive opportunity cost involved in perpetuation of tenancy, even if made secured - as has been done in the state, is borne out by the observation that both groups of tenants have a tendency to use higher quantum of input on and gain better productivity from the land owned and operated by them than from the land they operate as tenants. Thus there seems to be certain extent of loss of efficiency involved in the allocation of resources when intermediary interests on land are not completely abolished and the reforms stop short of conferring legal ownership right to the tenants, an objective set as the minimum necessary condition even for bourgeois democratic revolution.

There are, however, certain possible limitations to the impact of these particular measures on well being, especially of weaker sections of the rural population: In terms of covering a substantial number of sharecroppers, the programme has been considered a success by many though there is controversy regarding the exact percentage of recording tenants. However, in the presence of the option to register the deterioration in the gains from cultivation to tenants can be restricted. In fact there are evidences where unrecorded tenants (in a particular study mostly belonging to the same caste as the lessors (Bhaumik, 1993)) reportedly found it best in their long-term interest (ibid & Lieten op cit.). Another important observation from the survey was that the earlier dependence-dominance relationship ("personalized", according to Ghose, 1983) between the tenants and landowners gave way to more free markets relationships (Bhaumik, op cit.; Bhaumik and Chadha, 1996) so that the former gets the stipulated share.

The focus on sharecroppers and landless labourers in the reform requires delineating factors as to why sharecroppers' and landless labourers' movements were the entry point of left politics in the rural society and were taken seriously later on:

- i) Historically prescribing destitute conditions made the left parties recognise this as minimum necessary agenda (for details, Bhaumik op cit., Chatterjee 1997). The advanced stage of peasant differentiation and increasing landlessness and consequent emergence and preponderance of sharecropping (to evade colonial law on tenancy regulation to give occupancy rights to tenants, which was not extended to the sharecroppers, Bhaumik, op cit.) in the south-western districts of Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan & Midnapur, the northern districts of Cooch Bihar and the southern district of 24 Parganas of undivided Bengal (Chatterjee, op cit.);

- ii) entry of hitherto excluded castes in Congress politics of the independence movement around the 1920s; the middle class nature of the demands of the Congress Provincial leadership basically representing the urban upper cast elite; consolidation of rich and middle peasants' interests and control over the local politics, in the course of fight against the colonial government; and, with increasing destitution of the sharecroppers and landless labourers, bearing the brunt of classic semi-feudal exploitation through the working of interlinked markets, the scope created for organising these antagonistic classes against the exploitative system of tenancy in general, and sharecropping in particular; and
- iii) entry of another section of urban, upper caste elite in the agrarian politics from outside, having no bondage to land and agrarian system and who themselves were not constitutive part of the system, whose only stake in the sector was to ensure food supply to the urban society & the state (Chatterjee, op cit.), ideologically motivated to organize the movements from below. Given the above-described scenario, thus tenancy reforms were the minimum necessary agenda that left had to pursue. This movement along with few other factors provided them with the statewide prominence. Given also that there was no significant improvement since then, in the plight of the sharecroppers till the left front came to power, implies that it was not surprising that though sharecropping as a mode of tenancy was on the decline, the sharecropper's movement was pursued consistently by the LFG.

Tenancy reforms were accompanied by supplementary measures to aid the question of viability of land redistributed.

3.1.3.3 Supplementary Measures and the Question of Viability:

An examination of the data on land-holding structure from agricultural censuses since 1970-71 till 1990-91 (the latest year for which data are available and from NSS for the years 1971-72 till 1991-92 show that there are evidences of repeasantisation or rather of halting of depeasantisation (Lieten op.cit, Harriss 1993, Nath 1996) especially during the 1980s. This phenomenon, however, has actually been observed only in five districts of West Bengal, according to 1991 Census data (Nath, op cit.). This is partly an outcome of the land-redistribution programme & preventing further concentration of land through large scale eviction i.e., eviction of small and marginal tenants (AERC, 1996 Lieten op cit.) and partly the outcome of land-market transactions where landless labourers were reported to purchase

small plots of land (Harris, 1993). Other than the measures mentioned above, we find that about 0.25 million households were provided with homestead land. Another important regulatory measure was to check indiscriminate conversion of land from one use to another (Lieten, 1996).

However, the adverse land-man ratio of the state, absence of pull-factors in the economy outside agriculture and specially in industry, and fragmentation due to inheritance and so on have led to further proliferation of small and marginal landholdings in the agricultural sector, otherwise also dominated by them. Consequently, the question of viability of those small and marginal holding gains increasing importance in this context, since a land-poor household was observed typically to be poor in the ownership of other assets necessary for cultivation even after being provided with redistributed land (AERC, 1992, 1996, 1998).

Two other attempted areas of government intervention, specially for landless households, were: (i) Providing financial assistance in the form of subsidy to the assignees of the vested land (ii) creation of job for landless labourers through public work programmes, as a part of the broader agrarian reforms (Bandyopadhyay, op cit) became important with re-peasantisation and increasing concentration of small and marginal holdings. But food-for-work programme was introduced immediately after the LFG came to power, but had to be withdrawn within a few years after its inception.

Further, panchayats have been delivering seeds, fertilizer etc., to the small and marginal land holders or landless labourers leasing in land, i.e., ensuring supply of crucial inputs and also activities augmenting land-productivity such as water management, land development programmes, thereby improving the viability condition of the benefiting small and marginal land owners as well as enhancing growth in agricultural production (Sanyal, Biswas and Bardhan, 1998; Lieten, op cit.). Provisioning of cheap credit facilities for the recording bargadars in particular and small and marginal land-owners in general has also been supervised by the PRIs (Lieten, 1992,1996)

These measures have been followed by high growth in agricultural production, which has been persisting for more than one and a half-decade. In terms of increase in the economic gains to the relatively poorer section of the sector, the reforms are considered to be a success as the improvement in growth in agricultural production has been observed without

accompanying worsening of income distribution (Lieten, 1992, 1995). In fact the recorded decline in rural poverty in West Bengal was found to be a result of the growth in agricultural production rather than redistribution under land reforms (Ghosh, 1998; Chatterjee, 1998). While the direct effects of redistribution on growth is debated, the existing evidences suggest that certain factors have been crucial in achieving this (Sengupta and Gazdar, 1999 for example), viz., (i) use of particular productivity-augmenting technologies and (ii) use of certain strategic inputs, hitherto left unused, such as water after the ground water-irrigation potential has been realized, making conversion of land, under non-HVV cultivation to HVV cultivation of foodgrains easy, raising the number of crop-cycles in a year. Duration of each crop-cycle reduced and the difference between pre-harvest and post-harvest prices of food grains reduced, too, thus lowering the demand for consumption-loan on the part of the marginal peasants (Sanyal, Biswas and Bardhan, 1998). No significant variation in cultivators' response to market forces relating to change in relative productivity for crops or relative prices was observed across size-classes (Ibid). There are also indications of increased profitability of cultivation even in small and marginal units so that seasonal leasing of land becomes profitable for both the lessor and the lessee. In fact increasingly, contracts in the nature of fixed tenancy are entered and many of the tenants were found to be the landless labourers and poor peasants (Bhaumik, op cit.; Harriss, op cit.). Further to the extent, the composition of SC and ST, notably weaker sections of rural WB, in the total recorded tenants of the state matches the same in the study villages of Bhaumik (op cit.), it can be inferred that the improvement in the earnings potential was shared by comparatively high percentage of them.

But the conclusion of Sanyal, Biswas and Bardhan (op cit.) that land reforms, by reducing the distance between ownership and operation of a particular landholding, have raised productivity and finally working through numerous such landholdings, subsequent to barge recording and land-redistribution, have led to an end of the 'agricultural impasse' (ibid) can be falsified on the following ground. The argument of increasing labour productivity when the ratio of family labour to hired labour increases, at a constant intensity of supervision by family members of the owner-households, can be compatible with a situation, when in a very small or marginal landholding sufficient family labour is not employed because even when it

is intensively employed it may not ensure even the minimum subsistence income for the household from the farming⁷. Two issues thus become important.

First, to what extent the general characteristics of predominance of small and marginal holdings will, through viability problem, lead to the creation of pre-condition for working of pre-capitalist interests in the economy, most importantly, hinges upon the distribution of other means of production than land, too. Secondly, as different regions have different characteristics with different crop and cost-sharing arrangements, and there is no mechanism to promote the viability of small cultivating units uniformly across the states, there remains scope for regional inequality in the pace and pattern of agrarian development, as well as the inequality between rich, middle and poor peasants. This brings to the fore the issue of peasant differentiation which is an organic process and sets on with the revitalization of peasantry occurring because of tenancy reforms or other measures of land reforms. Left to itself, it might lead to an inequitable pattern of agrarian development defeating its short-term achievements.

Thus concluding that significant and sustained improvement in the earnings of relatively poor sections of the agricultural sector is achievable from limited land reforms, may involve the danger of taking a static view of peasant differentiation process. To avoid that, at the least, we look at the important features of different input-markets and the output market - to infer - which section of the agrarian population has probably, been empowered by the recent developments in the sector and try to place the reforms as interventions in response to those developments.

3.1.3.4. The Functioning of Different Input Markets:

3.1.3.4.1. Credit Market:

The attempts to make cheap credit available to land-poor and other asset-poor sections of the peasantry, who otherwise do not have access to institutional credit because of their non-

⁷ Such a situation has been observed in a substantial number of marginal landholdings in the study villages specially in the district of Purulia (AERC, 1992) where, instead of using the family labour for operating the farm, it becomes economically more gainful to sell the labour in the market for non-farm activities specially at the peak-harvest season because of lack of complementary resources necessary for cultivation and the size of the holding does not allow to reap the benefit of economies of scale.

possession of collateral, is consensually known to have remained inadequate. There are evidences of poor peasantry and specially, recorded tenants availing such credit more than the unrecorded ones (Bhaumik, op cit.; Bhaumik and Rahim 1998). But the inadequacy combined with the assetlessness, to the extent of being unable to supply even the working capital (AERC, 1992, 1996), exclusion of agricultural labourers from getting institutional credit, the institution's bias towards owners of middle and large holdings, have created scope for the lucrative functioning of the non-institutional credit (Bhaumik op cit.; Bhaumik & Rahim, op cit). As is well known, this is a pre-condition for prevalence of pre-capitalist (the well-noted semi-feudal) characteristics in the sector.

Most studies report the dominance of non-landlord moneylender for the informal loans in the rural areas (Lieten op cit.; Bhaumik op cit., Bhaumik & Rahim op cit.; Harriss op cit.) who were divided in three categories: "village moneylenders", "input-sellers", and "friends and relations". But big cultivators and traders account for quite a significant amount of loan, and the traders, by controlling the output, are in a position to appropriate rent outside production, introducing interlinkage between the output and credit markets.

This creates room for development and reinforcement of pre-capitalist forces. Interlinkage was observed between credit and labour markets, too, by Bhaumik (op cit.) during 1986-87 in his study villages. Such a possibility has been mentioned in the AERC studies, given the asset position of the land-poor households and by Harriss (op cit.) for the respective study villages⁸. Khasnabis (1994) also reported the dominant presence of big-merchants-traders; (selling modern inputs to the peasants or buying the marketable surplus from them, who are not necessarily landowners), schoolteachers, panchayat employees, village doctors and other salaried people as the non-institutional moneylenders implying the increasing dominance of the middle class of the rural society in the changing agrarian structure

3.1.3.4.2. Water Market:

Growth in the agricultural production has improved mostly with ground water-fed boro rice cultivation, accompanied by the adoption of the HYV seed, fertilizer and pesticide combine,

⁸But a significant conclusion in this context is that even if labour was exchanged for credit, this did not mean any extra-economic coercion so that labor was tied to a particular employer and could not work with other employers and did not get wage at the going market rate (Bhaumik, 1993).

which is a capital-intensive method of production creating the conditions for the consolidation of the new rural elite. This kind of cultivation, requiring substantial amount of money for the relatively expensive inputs at the beginning of each production period, 'price-out' the relatively poor sections of the peasantry from the whole process" (Ibid) Seasonal fixed tenancy contracts, as observed by Bhaumik (op cit.) in 1986-87 in 12 villages of Midnapore and Harriss (op cit.) in 1991 in a village in Birbhum district, can be considered as a response to the uncertainty regarding the availability of irrigation for boro season. But with the development of groundwater irrigation, which again is likely to have developed oligopolistic water market, due to high cost associated with it generally beyond the reach of marginal peasants and landless labourers, the possibility of 'reverse tenancy' arises (Basu, 2001). The notable decline in the proportion of leased-in-area to net cultivated area for marginal, small and semi-medium classes and increase in the same for medium and large sized classes also indicate this possibility (Agricultural Census, 1990-91, cited in AERC 1996, 1998). As OB has meant improved terms of leasing for lessees, middle and rich peasants also take advantage of that (probably this acts as incentive for these latter sections to conform to 'peasant-unity'). Otherwise, in the absence of reverse tenancy, those sections of peasantry gain from revenues from sale of water in the market with the rich peasants as the dominant sellers (Basu, 2001). Given the inadequacy of even production loans from the institutional source, poorer sections of the peasantry are at a disadvantageous position to break this oligarchy.

The above pattern does not imply that political action i.e., organized mobilization in the sphere of politics cannot curb the adverse effects of rich and middle classes' domination on the rural poor. Given the perceptible improvement in the income level of the relatively poor sections in the rural areas, and the changed atmosphere of confidence and self-dignity enjoyed by them (Lieten, 1996; Sengupta & Gazdar, 1999) any domination, now, has higher chance of being contended than before. Panchayats as the local level institution of the state, despite being a bureaucratic organ, can indicate the relative autonomy of the state, that it has demonstrated in OB and recovery and distribution of surplus land, by attempting to curb interlinkages between markets and imperfections or extra-economic influence on the working of markets, for both inputs and output. But, as already mentioned, to what extent the panchayats or the peasants will be able to succeed in doing that depends on the extent of mobilization, which in turn depends on the ideological position and involvement as well as the social relations of production in that region. As is well known, all the panchayats in the

state are not similarly effective in curbing the above-mentioned domination (Lieten, 1996 for example) and to a considerable extent panchayats are seen, at local level, as institution offering state patronage thus attracting a crowd including opportunity seekers from outside the target group. Again, the complete silence regarding agricultural taxation in a situation when lack of resources is known to hinder co-operative movements seems unexplainable. So is the support, the LFG places, regarding agricultural pricing policy to benefit the peasants, most probably at the cost of the marginal peasants and landless labourers.

Therefore, that there is immense scope for peasant differentiation taking its course, where the emergent structure need not be one combining efficiency and equity, is not given required attention. Thus, the middle stratum of the society, including rich peasants, benefit with the developments in the agrarian structure, from both intervention and lack of intervention of the LFG.

3.1.3.5. The Impact of Reforms for the Landless Labourers:

A careful examination of the NSS landholding data show that in 1982 while 17.21% of rural households in the state were landless in the state (a proportion exceeded only by Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra) top 6.9 per cent of households owned 41% of land. Between 1961-62 and 1982, West Bengal was one of the minority states where landlessness increased. In 1992, the percentage of total number of operational holdings and the percentage of area operated by them declined from the respective values in 1982. But the ratio of percentage of area owned and percentage of households at the top of the rural society has increased from 4.81 in 1972 to 5.94 in 1982 to 7.19 in 1992 while it has remained constant for India and has declined for Andhra Pradesh and Bihar (Basu, 2001). The proportion of landless as well as semi-landless households increased in West Bengal (in response to those developments, commensurate with the all-Indian trend. Thus, there is an indication of “large transfers of land from the ‘large’ to the ‘small’ with the middle remaining untouched” which is behind the consolidation of the ‘middle’, “with the support of the ‘small’” (Ibid). Further, number of bargadars is far less than the number agricultural laborers- the poorest section of the agrarian sector, and the land cultivated by them also is much less than that cultivated by farms using family labor and or hired labor (Rudra, 1981; Basu, 2001).

Tenancy regulation may not be as effective as a means of redistributing economic claims from the rich to the poor as at the time of Tebhaga movement and other subsequent mobilized actions against tenancy, as the parties involved in this form of economic transaction do not conform to earlier class-pattern involved in it (Sengupta and Gazdar, 1997; Ray, 1987). In the recent years, in fact, there are evidences of predominance of mixed tenants in the land-lease market. So the lessees need not be small or marginal land owners and in fact owners of medium or large holdings, typically in possession of better and higher quantum of necessary inputs such as water, may be in better position to take advantage of this regulations and reap the benefit of economies of scale by leasing in large amount of land, in a consolidated fashion. The lesser, being a small or marginal landowners, may not be able to cultivate viably and find it profitable to lease-out, given the insufficient availability of cheap credit facilities.

Thus, Rudra's (op cit.) reflected that the call for 'peasant-unity' to contain class conflicts within the organizational set-up of Kishak Sabha would finally affect the agricultural labourers, i.e., the most oppressed section in the agrarian sector. The empirical evidences on the improvement of earnings potential of these sections in comparison to the same for the rest of the agricultural as well as rural population even till recently suggest the same. Basu (1991) has shown that between 1974-75 and 1989-90 the increase in annual farm income increasing to the agricultural labourers was around 2.37% per year, while increase in total income from agricultural production has been 4.2% per year. Between 1975-78 and 1981-84, the agricultural labourers' share in total income from agricultural production fell from 31.88% to 24.82% while it increased to 29.72% during 1987-90. Real earnings of the agricultural labourers also followed the same pattern – it fell around 1981-84 when employment days available in agricultural occupation also fell due to drought. The later increase in their real earnings has come about despite their share in the total value of agricultural production between 1975-78 and 1987-90 because production increased at a higher rate, mostly due to increase in area under HYV cultivation. Even in such a situation an agricultural labourer household could not have enough income from agriculture alone, to attain the consumption expenditure equivalent to the poverty line (ibid.). Jose (op cit.) has shown that between 1956-57 and 1984-85 West Bengal was one of the few states, which experienced a decline in the real wage for agricultural labourers, though in 1984-85 this state was at the fourth position at the top, in terms of value of agricultural production per worker. Even between 1984-85 and 1994-95, the increase in real wage was of the magnitude 1.8% per year where growth rate of food grains production, alone having this time was 5.1% per year. (Nath, op cit.). So the

increase in yield rate for foodgrains production did not lead to commensurate evidence in real wage of agricultural labourers. Thus, till 1994-95, the conclusion that only depending on agricultural wage-employment it is not possible for an average agricultural labour to cross the poverty line remains valid (ibid.).

The LFG's performance in this regard is defended on the ground that though the minimum wage has not moved up very rapidly compared to other states, the minimum wage law is enforced more effectively in this state and secondly on the ground that it has seen the fastest rate of growth in wages. In this context, however, Sengupta and Gazdar (1997) mentioned that the agricultural production has also increased at the fastest rate among all the states during the same time. Though the success, according to the government sources and certain researchers, is an outcome of the increased bargaining power of the landless and marginal landholding households mobilized under the left's organized political effort.

The evidences of staging a strike for wage hike and the party's or Krishak Sabha's role as a broker in the entire bargain weakens this claim (Bhattacharya 1999; Rogaly, 1998, 1999). Rather it indicates the indispensability of a separate organization of labourers, different from the one incorporating their employers and thus their demands – economic and otherwise. This is suggested more clearly by the fact that there has not been any significant effective initiative to enforce or even formulate effective regulation regarding terms and conditions of agricultural employment or to bring the agricultural labourers at par with the formal sector employees.

Further, the years since early 80s have also exhibited increase in the gross-cropping area. Thus, with increasing number of landless labourers, it may be expected that there has not been, at least, any decline in the number of wage-employment days in agriculture for the years after 1993-94. This indicates the possibility of increase in total earnings per worker. But, there is no clear increasing trend in the number of man-days (employment-days) available to the agricultural workers, over all the years, with the improvement in growth performance. The average number of wage-employment for men from both agricultural and rural labour households had clearly increased between 1987-88 and 1993-94 (the last year for which the number of employment-days available to the worker in agricultural operations in rural areas are available from 'Rural Labour Enquiry for both SC and ST households and all households taken together). But for women, it has decreased except for those from the ST

agricultural and rural households. The ST men and SC women labourers engaged in the agricultural operations get one of the lowest remuneration among all the groups.

Almost for all groups, the respective values have decreased between 1983 and 1993-94 - the period of high growth, in varying degrees. The 1987-88 value was in both the cases, lower than the 1977-78 values, the average wage-employment available per male worker per year, before growth performance showed an improvement. For ST male workers from both agricultural and rural labourer householders, the average availability of wage-employment in agriculture declined after 1977-78 till 1983, after which it continued to increase till 1993-94. But for female workers it was just the opposite. Except for ST women workers from both agricultural and rural labour households, the average wage-employment available has come down for households from all classes and Scheduled Castes between 1983 and 1987-88 and then continued to decline till 1993-94. And the declines between 1977-78 and 1983 and between 1987-88 and 1993-94 were quite significant, the first marking the period when agricultural sector experienced interventions favourable to the hitherto deprived sections, and the latter signified the period of sustained growth. Even, for the ST women workers from agricultural and rural labour households, the rise in the number of wage employment – days was not significant enough to reach the relevant 1977-78 value. Thus, there is very few evidences of women daily wage-labourers sharing the benefits of land reforms, through whatever increase in earnings potential has taken place in the sector. Till 1993-94, there is no significant tendency of as fast a rise in the average number of days of wage – employment in agriculture for both male and female workers from agricultural and rural labour households for all classes, SC or ST, as could be expected from the high growth in agricultural production, especially in the 1980s. During the same time, except for SC households, for others, there was hardly any increase in the average number of wage – employment in non-agricultural occupations.

One way of explaining the low level of wage–employment and therefore income generation in agriculture is to look in terms of the different earnings pattern associated with different ownership structure, as has been done by Basu (1991). A landowner hiring labour earns a higher return from the cultivation, than a worker does from the same and the landowner's return includes both profit and ground rent. The wage–worker creates more value than he receives as wage, thereby creating an additional income for the employer. The employer will stop employing labour at the point where the additional worker creates fewer surpluses than

the value, which is considered by him, as the minimum for continuing operation. But if the worker becomes the owner through conscious organized movement while the working of pre-capitalistic forces is curbed, he is likely to continue to employee labour (family labour mostly) as long as the income generated by the additional labour exceeds the wage rate that the worker used to get. Assuming the cultivation to be in the economic regions of production it can be inferred that labour requirement in the latter case will be greater than the same in the former case. So a radical land redistribution programme, in addition to pushing up the reservation wage of the agricultural labourers - one of the objectives of the programme, can raise the required number of wage-employment days, so that the number of days an average rural worker has to spend idle can be minimized.

Lack of mobilization towards realization of that target has meant restricted increase in the required employment days and loss in earnings for agricultural labourers and marginal peasants. This has been less prominent in the policy discourse of the state than the projection of the achievements accomplished so far within the constitutionally imposed difficulties. Without belittling the achievements, it can be inferred that such a mobilization is important, given the untapped opportunities within the constitutionally defined limits, as mentioned earlier in this subsection. Since public action has already been demonstrated to be instrumental for those achievements its importance need not be stressed here, any more.

3.1.4. Conclusion

The land reforms experiences in both the states indicate that maximum priority has been given to measures related to tenancy cultivation. The agrarian structure in each state, notwithstanding its variations, was mostly characterized by diverse tenancy systems providing comparatively less returns to those who were with low level of ownership of resources considered more essential than others required for agricultural production in the specific historical context under consideration. This system promoted neither growth nor equity. Leftist parties, supposedly motivated by the ideology of a different political order based on a different economic order, had to address the question of changing those inequitable institutions such as tenancy. A notable fact was that these parties organized not only the tenants directly in conflict with the landlords (for whom there were some legislations in the colonial period and who was quite a powerful lobby when left entered the agrarian politics), but also the whole lot of inferior tenants in Kerala and sharecroppers and other inferior tenants

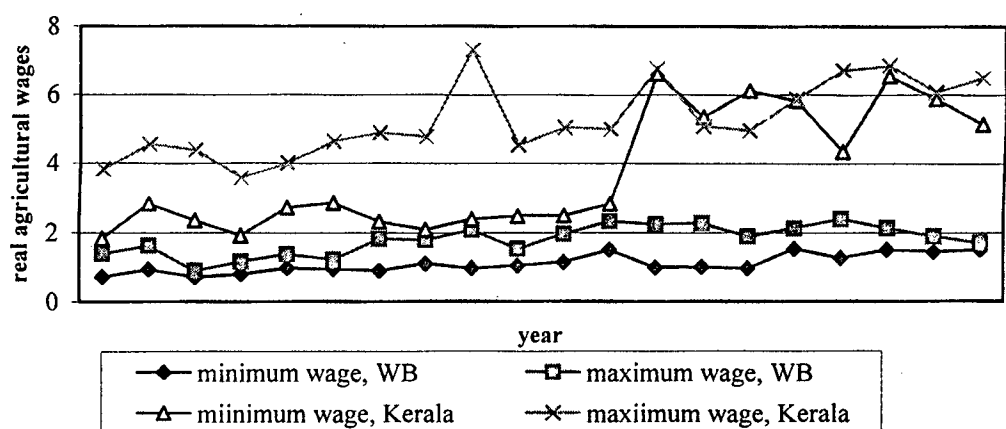
in West Bengal. Both the states, in addition to abolition of feudal landlordism as it happened in the entire country, demonstrated considerable relative autonomy of the respective left government in pursuing the policies abolishing or reforming tenancy. While Kerala is known to have succeeded in abolishing tenancy, in West Bengal it has been regulated and been made permanent at least in the short and medium run. Abolition of intermediary interests on land was an accomplished fact in Kerala while in West Bengal tenancy reforms are limited to improvement in the terms of contract and providing security against willful eviction. To the extent, share-cropping is a second-best solution (in terms of efficiency and productivity) to the problem of inequality in the distribution of ownership in land and other resources such a regulation might have adverse effect on productivity and growth. This becomes true, specially in view of a potential loss involved in the imposition of a uniform set of regulations for the diverse cost-sharing and crop-sharing arrangements that prevailed in different regions of West Bengal for different crops prior to the reforms. Non-recording of many tenants in the state may partially be attributed to this.

Enhancing productivity through reducing the asymmetry over ownership of resources for cultivation (landlord having the land and possibly the other inputs, tenants having labour power and so on) as well as improving the potential level of earning of the tenants in such a diverse situation would have been possible when the tenants are conferred the ownership right of the land too. That is the economic rationale behind the rhetoric a 'land to the tiller' which has either been lost sight of or has been compromised for some immediate benefits such as not alienating a large section of rich, middle and small landowners, in the state. Though the situation is expected to be more complicated because of the presence of a section of the lessors who are small or marginal landowners, this happens to a large extent, also because the latter lacks resources, other than land, necessary for cultivation. Therefore the process in which such landowners are compelled to lease out land can be reversed through proper intervention. For marginal and small landowners who are not able to cultivate it themselves (for example such plots being owned by women and so on), specific interventions are not hard to imagine.

Regarding redistribution of surplus land West Bengal has a better record than Kerala, though both the states in this regard, lagged behind Jammu and Kashmir, a state not dominated by left politics. While in Kerala, the scope of this programme was limited by various exemptions; it was more radical in West Bengal specially after LFG has done away with all exemptions.

However, if we consider both tenancy abolition and conferment of ownership rights in land to the tenants as well as redistribution of surplus land, together, the net effect of redistribution of land in terms of repeasantisation may not be very insignificant in Kerala also. But, it seems to be counterintuitive that Kerala with no intermediary interest on land didn't have a better growth performance in agricultural production than West Bengal where still intermediary interests prevail. Probably in West Bengal, delivery of subsidized and ensured supply of the inputs through panchayat activities to promote water management and land development projects was more effective, thereby facilitating conversion of considerable amount of arable land into those under HYV cultivation at least in the districts where spectacular growth has taken place than in the other. Besides, registration also has led to replacement of share-tenancy contracts by fixed tenancy contracts, which also might have added incentive to the lessees towards achieving higher productivity. Another important factor causing the differential growth performances in the two states, as suggested by the comparison, is the differential labour-cost of production. As figure 3.1.4.1 indicate that in most of the years since 1974-75 the minimum and maximum real daily wage rates for a field labour, both male and female, in Kerala were higher than the corresponding minimum and maximum rates respectively in West Bengal (at 1960-61 prices). In Kerala, which is increasingly a small farmer's economy as West Bengal,

Fig. 3.1.4.2: Real agricultural wages, minimum and maximum, for the male field labourers in West Bengal and Kerala, 1970-71 to 1994-95



the high wage as well as the movement for higher wages, mostly supported by the leftist parties have led to the substitution of labour-saving crops for those, cultivation of which requires intensive use of labour input. In other cases, cultivation was abandoned in the state so

that the land was kept fallow or the capitalist landowner migrated to regions, outside the state, with low wage rate, given labour productivity. All these led to a fall in agricultural production and particularly that of foodgrains production. As we have seen, West Bengal has seen no impressive improvement in wages and other conditions of employment of agricultural labourers, which seems puzzling in view of the dominance of left politics in the state as well as the higher growth in agricultural production and the possibility of a successful wage movement of labourers as evident from the experience in Kerala. The way agricultural labourers' movement gained ground in the two states can partially explain this divergence. Agricultural labour union in Kerala came into being and their movements became focused at a time when communist movement in the state was gaining momentum by mobilizing different deprived sections like industrial workers, tenants etc., in an all encompassing attempt to challenge the then prevailing economic order. Agricultural labourers were not clubbed with any other sections of the sector such as small or middle peasantry etc. But because of the nature of the overall leftist movements in the society, they got support from the industrial workers, who were also organized in different production sites in rural Kerala in the agro-processing units, in a dispersed manner (Kannan, 1988). Perhaps, it was relatively easy for the agricultural labourers in Kerala to be organized as most of them belonged to certain castes such as Parayasa & Pulayasa or even Ezhavas (who were tenants too). This close correspondence between caste structure and the occupational structure made it possible to identify the oppression in the sphere of production along with that related with caste. In the milieu of organized movement and articulation of demands, the economic basis of oppression provided the immediate cause for being organized. The demonstration of social reform movements probably had a positive effect in consolidating the hitherto deprived sections by changing their world-view enabling them to believe in the possibility of change of the existing social and economic order, which was strengthened by the communist movement. In West Bengal, caste – consolidation did not happen partly because various middle and so-called lower castes were scattered spatially. Though the middle caste gained more power after 1920s than before, there was a clear line of hierarchy between the upper caste leadership and these groups and the presence of a hierarchy where urban (metropolitan) got superiority over rural in Congress. But the party's successful handling of the former contradiction and projection of colonial government as the common enemy contained the other contradiction. Later on, the communists, mostly from the upper castes themselves attempted to organize the rural peasants and agricultural workers from outside (Chatterjee, 1997) and attempted to do so along class

line only, though hitherto deprived castes also benefited, as was argued in this sub-section, like in Kerala.

The agricultural labourers were grouped with the deprived sections of peasantry in their organized articulation of demand, as both the groups depended on share tenancy as well as sale of their labour power for subsistence. *Rural or agrarian politics was conceived as a separate sphere outside the scope of peasant-industrial work unity.* Later, when communists became stronger in the state through a series of movements and finally left parties formed the LFG, formation of separate organization for the agricultural labourers was ruled out because by that time (after late 1960s) 'peasant-unity' has become the accepted guideline for action. Such 'united' action resulted in, among other things, mock strikes to keep the appearance of class struggle and not to alienate the working class in the rural society. Such a compromising role of the party proved successful in electoral terms as well as improving the earnings of a large section of rural poor bit by bit, consistently perhaps. But shying away from the question of radical reforms and mobilization towards it, on the ground of constitutional limitations⁹, has brought about complications both of expected and unexpected types, which needs further study in both the states. Available evidences suggest that it be expected that the persistent growth combined with increasing cropping intensity have led to increase in employment days, at least after 1987-88. But as we have mentioned earlier that this increase is not likely to be of the scale as it can be if it is accompanied by full-fledged land redistribution or from co-operativisation of the otherwise non-viable landholdings assigned to the marginal landowners and agricultural labourers. Again this is another issue on which left parties, in both the states, have not been able to make many inroads.

3.2. Interventions Aiming to Influence Industrial Growth under the Radical Political Regimes

The importance of industrialisation as a strategy to step up economic growth is well-recognised in the literature on economic development as well as in the discourse of Indian economic planning that followed an industrialisation-led development path. Industrialisation, in primarily agrarian economies with surplus labour and characteristic problems of unemployment and underemployment, is envisaged to generate employment in a sector with

⁹ In fact, the government was to be viewed as an instrument to these ends, according to the earlier guidelines of the CPI (M) (the dominant coalition partner till now).

activities adding higher value than those in agriculture do. To what extent this strategy of industry-led growth followed in India, at both centre and the provincial levels, has led the economies of West Bengal and Kerala to overcome the problems of unemployment is a relevant question to ask at this point. This becomes significant especially in the context of the early industrialisation experience of both the states in general and West Bengal in particular.

3.2.1. Industrial Experience of West Bengal

3.2.1.1. Importance of an Appraisal of the Industrial Performance by Linking it with the Left Regime:

The question raised above assumes importance in the analysis of the distinct role a political regime, ruling at the provincial level, plays in influencing the course of economic development in the relevant provinces, West Bengal being the case under consideration, at least on two grounds, as mentioned below.

First, the industrial workers in West Bengal constitute a significant proportion of the deprived sections of the society, especially of those in the urban areas. The nearly stagnant state of employment generation combined with large number of loss of employment-days due to industrial disputes in the registered industries in the state following the industrial recession in 1965, the increasing casualisation of labour till recently, and, accompanying expansion of the unregistered industries hint to that possibility. Any policy intervention by the state in the industrial sector that affects their employment opportunities, positively or negatively, is likely to have a bearing on the improvement in the standard of living of the overall population of which they form a part. It, thus is an important component in our analysis.

Secondly, if one considers (i) the victory of the parties forming the LFG in 1977 election on the background of the rising importance of trade-union activities following large-scale retrenchment of labour after 1965 and the possibilities of intervention by the left parties, created therefrom;

(ii) the proposals regarding industry, adopted by left parties in their minimum action plan before the election as well as those offered to the central government regarding the same as a part of

their declared industrial policy of 1977¹⁰; it becomes pertinent to evaluate the extent to which the regime has attempted and been successful in attaining those objectives¹¹.

3.2.1.2. A Brief Review of the Industrial Performance in the pre-1977 Years:

This section traces back the observed low growth rate in industrial production of West Bengal during almost the first half of the study period and the beginning of the much discussed labour unrest and militant trade unionism into the post-1965 (marking the year when industrial recession set in) developments in the industrial sector. Following is a brief review of these developments.

The state's industrialisation performance during the left front rule has to be assessed in the context of its generally declining contribution to the industrial output of the Indian economy, in the post-independence period in general and post-1965 era in particular. As is well-known, Bengal was the leading industrialised province in the erstwhile British India, and also at the time of independence in terms of recording the highest percentage of the industrial workers in India. In fact, the state accounted for 35.1% and 28.7% of the total number of industrial workers in 1921 and 1939 respectively. In 1956, also the same lead was maintained as is demonstrated by the first census of manufacturing industries in India (Dasgupta, S 1998). Since 1951 the value of industrial output as well as the employment in the registered manufacturing industry in the national economy rose quite sharply, with the latter growing at a lower rate than the growth rate in the population and the size of the labour force (Basu, 1991) till 1965. That West Bengal was soon losing its leading position was clear from the inequitable distribution of value-added of industrial output and industrial employment

¹⁰ This remained the sole statement on industry till the declaration of new industrial policy in 1994, which seemed to have aimed at redressing the prevailing labour problem after taking stock of the industrial sector of the state and the possible constraints it was likely to pose in achieving their objective.

¹¹ Use of the industrial policy of the LFG as the reference point to link actual industrial performance of the state in the subsequent years with the nature of the regime ruling there, even in presence of highly decisive industrial policy of the central government, can be justified on the following ground. The recognition of the importance of a) the working class playing their crucial historical role in people's Democratic Revolution, the ultimate stated objective of the CPI (M), the dominant member of the LFG, b) the Marxist and Leninist notion of trade-union activities not being limited only to economism and reformism (as was made clear in resolutions from the central committee meeting in 1967 and later reiterated in 1983) distinguishes, ideally, their approach to industrialisation from that envisaged by other political parties. Ability of any government to follow this approach is expected to result in higher economic gains as well as control over the production process for the class of industrial workers and thus, in more participatory growth. Failure to pursue such strategy can act to improve people's awareness regarding the limitations of the bourgeois-landlordist state in pursuing any people's democratic development programme and therefore of the need for fundamental change in the society as was argued to justify the formation of the LFG (Bhattacharya, 1985).

between these two most industrialised states – Maharashtra and West Bengal - in the economy. Apparently two distinct factors are known to have inhibited the industrial growth in West Bengal. The first arose when, through deliberate policy to promote a regionally balanced industrial development throughout the economy, 'freight equalisation' of steel and coal was initiated, as well as de-licensing of industries. This neutralised the locational advantage of the engineering industry of the state enjoyed over the other regions of the country, in terms of its proximity to major input sources for the industry, (Dasgupta, *S op cit.*). On the other hand, there was no similar policy implementation to balance the comparative cost advantage of Maharashtra and Gujarat in accessing cotton, the principal raw material for the textile industry, with respect to which West Bengal continued to suffer from its relative locational disadvantage (Basu, *op cit.*; Dasgupta, 1985). The second restraining factor was the presence of a fairly stagnant agricultural sector in the state compared with the ones in the other industrialising states during the same period of time. This meant a failure to generate sufficient demand for industrial output from within the economy of the state (Dasgupta, *op cit.*). Underlying the apparently superior status of industrial development of the state during this period was the dominance of old industries, set up in the colonial period with their backward production technology, in the overall composition of industry in the state. Such a composition, together with the above-mentioned two factors, accentuated the declining tendency of the state's industrial sector in the following years and till 1977-78 (Basu, 1991; Dasgupta, 1985; Dasgupta, *op cit.*).

The industrial recession beginning in 1965-66 in Indian economy, which was otherwise 'short-lived for the country as a whole' had affected the West Bengal economy to such an extent that even by 1977-78, the productions in certain industries were not recovered to the pre-1965 period production level. In 1968, Maharashtra overtook West Bengal in terms of total employment in the industrial (census) sector. Industrial employment from 1965 till even 1977-78 in West Bengal was below the pre-1965 level of industrial employment there, while Maharashtra maintained its above-mentioned leading position all-through. Though industrial employment in 1977-78 increased in the census sector, it was only 15% of the same in India as a whole. In terms

of value-added also Maharashtra was the highest contributor, whereas both Tamilnadu and Gujarat also improved their position vis-a-vis West Bengal in this respect¹² (Dasgupta S, 1998).

An important development in this context, as is relevant for this analysis, was the widespread lay-off and retrenchment, which were resorted to by the employers to lower the level of industrial employment. This caused 'acute labour agitation' in the form of trade union activities, leading to substantial increase in the number of industrial disputes. The recessionary conditions in the industrial sector, the accompanying fall in the agricultural production in 1965-66 and 1966-67 and resulting 'food riots' and associated political agitation, led to the replacement of the prevailing regime in favour of a coalition regime of pro-labour parties followed by several terms of President's rule. On the background of this political instability and not improving industrial relations, intended industrial investments were on the decline and lower proportion of the latter was aimed at expansion of already established units or setting up of new units. The actual investments after 1970s increased to some extent, but did not still attain the pre-1965 level, and was therefore not sufficient to check the declining industrial employment, thereby worsening the labour-situation. These factors worked in a circular way, where low investment leading to low employment generation and high level of trade union activities involving labour agitation led again to further decline in intended investment.

3.2.1.3. Growth Performance of the Industrial Sector in West Bengal in the post-1977 Years:

During the entire period of analysis, i.e. 1977-78 to 1996-97, the movement in the general index of industrial production in India experienced fluctuations between 1977-78 and 1982-83. From 1983-84 till 1987, the index grew at an average annual rate of more than 6% (Dasgupta, 1998). Thereafter, till 1997 it recorded an average annual rate of growth of over 8%, with high fluctuations around, as the period exhibited the countrywide industrial recession in the 1990s, as well as significant rise in the index in the years 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1997-97 (see Table 3.2.1.3.1).

¹² Even the share of West Bengal (5.6%) in the total assistance disbursed by all-India financial institutions during this period was significantly less than that of Maharashtra (18.6%), Gujarat (12.6%), TamilNadu (10.2%), Karnataka (7.8%) and Andhra Pradesh (7.4). (Dasgupta, 1998).

Table 3.2.1.1 Percentage increase or decrease in the general index of industrial production over previous years in West Bengal in India.

<i>Years</i>	<i>West Bengal</i>	<i>India</i>
1985-86	4.68	8.72
1986-87	5.61	9.15
1987-88	0.45	7.29
1988-89	4.13	8.71
1989-90	5.60	8.46
1990-91	0.69	8.25
1991-92	1.78	0.61
1992-93	1.15	2.34
1993-94	0.73	3.01
1994-95	7.00	9.35
1995-96	10.74	12.14
1996-97	6.93	7.06
1997-98	4.02	4.17

Source: Computed from figures given in Economic Review, Govt. of West Bengal, Various Issues.

Till 1986, the growth record for industrial production in West Bengal was dismal, compared to the country's industrial performance. Between 1975 and 1986, industrial output at the national level increased by about 100% where in West Bengal the increase was by 13% only (Chattopadhyay, 1987). Between 1986 and 1997, the industrial output increased at these two levels by 103% and 61% respectively (where the base year was 1980-81). As a trend continuing since 1965-66, i.e. the recession year, the state's share in total industrial output of India declined, from 22.9% in 1960 and 13.8% in 1970-71 to 12.5% in 1977-78. The average annual growth rate in industrial production has increased during the years between 1986 and 1997 compared to the value of the same during the years between 1975 and 1986. But the share of the state in the total industrial output of India exhibited the same declining trend as before in these later years, with the state's share in the total population in India remaining almost the same i.e. around 8% (Government of West Bengal (GoWB), Economic Review, Various Issues). Notably, during the same period the growth of the industrial sectors in some other states such as, Gujarat, Karnataka, Haryana, Punjab and Maharashtra was much higher than that in West Bengal. This was reflected in the lower growth in general index of industrial production in West Bengal than in the national economy even for the years when growth in the state became faster than before.

When we consider the share of industry¹³ in state domestic product (SDP) of West Bengal we find that this ratio also decreased from 32.3% of SDP in 1977-78 to around 26% in 1993-94 and remained around 25.5% till 1997-98¹⁴. The value recorded fluctuates within this range during the entire period. If we take output of only manufacturing and mining and quarrying industries into account (the dominant components of the industrial sector in the state) the decline of the value, as a percentage of SDP, becomes more prominent from 23.34% in 1977-78 to 16.43% in 1993-94. After this, it remained above 16% till 1997-98, including fluctuations around the values mentioned here.

3.2.1.3.1. Conclusion:

Therefore, whatever indicator we use, we can roughly conclude that industrial production in West Bengal has increased between 1987 and 1997 compared to the same in the preceding decade - especially for the years following 1993-94. But the relative position of industrial sector, in contributing to the SDP or to the total industrial output of the national economy, has come down over the years.

That industrial production in the state increased after mid-80s and specially since early 90s is evident from the growth pattern of the constituent units of the industrial sector; e.g. manufacturing, both registered and unregistered, construction etc.

Till now the discussion was confined to the factory sector comprising the large and medium manufacturing units¹⁵ of the industrial sector in India. For the analysis on the unorganised sector or non-factory sector¹⁶ we will focus on small-scale industries (SSI) in core discussion. This sector is chosen because this constitutes a very large segment in Indian unorganised industrial sector, and has received various incentives due to the strategic importance attached to it in solving the employment problem in Indian context. However, the secondary data available on the

¹³ Industry here includes the entire secondary sector and mining and quarrying from the primary sector.

¹⁴ 1997-98 values are provisional, so results are reported mainly for the period till 1996-97.

¹⁵ This is defined in terms of employment.

¹⁶ Unorganised sector, alternatively called informal sector, here, refers to the sector where labour are unorganised in the sense that they are not protected by any labour legislation (Mukhopadhyay, 1998). Data on number of such units and employment therein are available for following sub-groups: (a) small-scale industries; (b) powerloom; (c) Khadi and village industries; (d) handlooms; (e) handicrafts; (f) coir; and (g) sericulture (Mukherjee et.al. 1999).

SSIs are not completely reliable¹⁷. Therefore, most of the studies on this have relied on evidences obtained from available primary surveys, though the latter also is scanty in general, and insufficient in particular, for drawing any conclusion on the growth pattern of the sector over time.

The study by Mukherjee, Das and Bhattacharya (1999) showed that the number of registered SSIs (not necessarily working)¹⁸ has increased in West Bengal at a comparatively slow rate of 2.63% per year (exponential trend) between 1982-83 to 1992-93. This rate was almost equal to the year to year average during the same period. It was during the same period that the corresponding number for the entire national economy increased at a higher rate of 7.69% (exponential trend) and 7.8% (year-to-year average). However, the growth in the same indicator in West Bengal for the period between 1975-76 and 1996-97 was 8.71% per year, and the year-to-year average growth rate was 8.30%¹⁹.

Data from Census 1971, Census 1981, and, the surveys on the unorganised sector conducted by the Government of West Bengal, indicate the fast expansion of the sector. This along with the sector's low capacity of income generation points to the prevalence of poverty and lack of employment opportunities, according to Basu (op cit.). Thus higher and higher number of workers are compelled to engage in these low-paying activities that do not provide them with even the minimum subsistence income (associated with the poverty line). The 1981 census data describes an even worse situation than that in 1971.

The survey on the unorganised sector of the urban areas in 1971, conducted by Government of West Bengal also indicated such possibility. However, a very small proportion, 4.6% of the

¹⁷ The reasons are as follows:

- (a) SSIs being defined in terms of capital invested in plant and machinery, can simultaneously be registered under factory sector and may be estimated already elsewhere;
- (b) the registration being voluntary, a considerable proportion of the units alongwith their operational details may lie outside the scope of this data collection (Mukherjee et.al. 1999);
- (c) the data on (i) closure of any hitherto-registered-units, (ii) the extent to which various kinds of corrupt practices such as registering an already existing unit with a different identity to take advantage of the incentive schemes meant for the newly established SSI units etc. prevail are not available (Basu, 1991).

¹⁸ For example, according to the Report of the All India Census of Small Scale Industrial Units, Government of India, out of 94362 registered SSI units in West Bengal only about 46794 (49.59%) are found working. In fact, the state was seen to have one of the highest percentages of registered units that have been closed, following only Haryana. Thus, while in terms of the number of SSI units in West Bengal has one of the highest percentage shares in total units in India, in terms of working SSI units its share goes down from 9.56 to about 7.9 (Mukherjee et al. 1999)

¹⁹ Here the arithmetic mean was reported to be a good measure of central tendency of the year-to-year growth rates during the entire period, and arithmetic mean, geometric mean and medians were seen to be almost close to each other.

unorganised sector units recorded relatively higher capacity of income generation than the others in the sector did. But, no recent empirical evidence is available to estimate the proportional presence of this group in the unorganised sector. Thus, it is difficult to infer whether, the growth performance of this sector has improved.

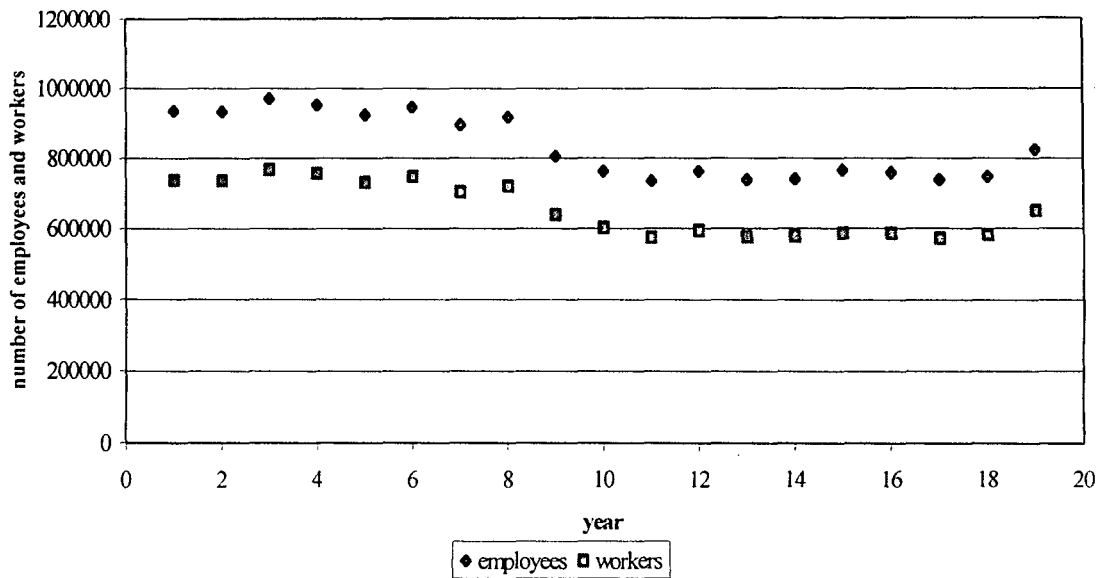
Starting from a consensus that the units in the unorganised sector have increased during the last two decades Mukhopadhyay (1998) concluded, from the both primary and secondary evidences, that with the diminishing unemployment opportunities in the formal sector this sector has been maintained as a backyard of informal activities. The formal sector, instead of replacing the latter, takes advantage of the cheap unorganised labour through subcontracting, as is evident from the global trend of extensive sub-contracting, apparent in the Indian context, too. The large extent of diversification, a gradual horizontal expansion along the different occupational lines in West Bengal and particularly in Calcutta Urban agglomerate (CUA), and a probable decline in the proportion of subcontracting in the recent years are the distinct characteristics of the expansion in the unorganised sector there. There has been a rise in the self-employment activities, which possibly is a consequence of various incentive schemes for development of self-employment activities offered by the ruling government (ibid.).

To the extent self-employed activities generate higher income compared to the subcontracted labourers (to the person employed) and large part of the expansion of the sector is attributable to the expansion of self-employed activities during the left-front regime, the total value-added accruing to this sector is expected to have grown.

3.2.1.4. Employment: Overall and Industrial

According to the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) data on number of workers employed in the factory sector declined from 7.4 lakh to 5.7 lakh in 1987-88 and thereafter fluctuated but remained below 6 lakh till 1993-94. Except a slight increase in the number of years between 1987-88 and 1988-89 from almost 5.8 lakh to 6 lakhs, the value hovered around 5.8 lakh till 1994-95 after which in 1995-96 the number increased quite significantly to 6.5 lakhs. (See Fig.3.2.1.3).

Figure 3.2.1.3 Number of Employees and workers in the factory sector of industry in West Bengal, 1977-78 to 1995-96



However, this increased value of employment was lower than the same in 1984-85 and therefore much lower than the corresponding value in 1977-78, and during the entire period, thus there was a negative growth in employment of the magnitude 11.81%. Similarly, for employees, the growth in the number of employees also was negative during this period (-11.73%) and followed almost the same pattern as the number of workers did. After 1993-94 the number started increasing and between 1994-95 and 1995-96 the number of employees like, the number of workers, increased by 10.46%. The revealed decline in the number of employees may arise due to the decline in the number of workers, as there is a parallel variation in both. Such a year-to-year fluctuation may indicate the presence of a considerable number of casual workers in the organised sector. Another notable feature is that for both the series the tendency of decline becomes more prominent after 1984-85.

Coming to the unorganised sector unemployment, again the dearth of reliable information becomes binding. What follows is an attempt to form some idea about the employment and labour-use in the sector with the help of available evidences. According to the 1971 survey on informal industries in the urban areas of West Bengal as mentioned earlier, the number of employees was 4.36 lakhs, in total 1.65 lakh units out of which 58.26% were family labour. Most of these units were loss making. The workers and employers in these units have earned

respectively, 37% and 53% less than the value of annual expenditure that denotes the poverty line for that year. However, workers from the family of the employers stood better chance of being absorbed in the relevant family unit, than other workers in the sector. Among the total employment, 86% was in the units generating very low income per employee. In the units, which recorded higher income created per employee, all the labourers were hired, and wage per worker here was quite low. But, income generated per employee here was sufficient to leave the employer with positive return over the fixed and working capital invested by them even if they had paid the workers enough to enable them attain the minimum subsistence expenditure (equivalent to the amount associated with poverty line) (Basu, op cit.). The agricultural stagnation prevailing in the state at that time and the recessionary industrial performance must have acted as 'push' factors for the growing number of workers engaging in the informal sector and accepting such low wages.

The period following this saw quite a high rate of growth of employment in the SSI units of the unorganised sector. In the study by Mukherjee et.al (1999), we find that during the period between the years 1975-76 and 1996-97, the exponential growth rate was 7.08% while the average of year-to-year growth rates was 6.69%²⁰.

Mukhopadhyay (op cit.) conceptualised the informal sector as a continuum of various degrees of exploitative labour use ranging from the most exploitative one of sub-contracting activities to the least exploitative self-employed activities. During the left-front rule, especially since early 1980s following the spurt in agricultural production and relative rural prosperity, the influx of migrants from inside West Bengal (especially rural areas) is expected to have declined. But the influx of migrants from outside the state, specially from the rural areas of the neighbouring states (as is evident from the survey done in six areas of CUA by the author) in West Bengal and particularly in the CUA, led to a forced expansion in the job types and a higher degree of informalisation of industrial activities. However, from the available evidences a weak inference was made in the study that during the first two decades after independence the expansion of the informal sector in CUA was mainly through the expansion in the extent of subcontracting. The evidence of expansion of the sector in the 1980s, however, happened mainly on account of expansion in self-employed activities (ibid.).

²⁰ Same as footnote 10.

The non-comparability of the results from surveys, done at different points of time, on the informal sector in Calcutta due to definitional incompatibility, allows only to infer weakly that in majority of the city areas number of self employed exceeds subcontracted labour force in the recent period. The former was reported to be the upper end of the continuum with the weakest market link with the formal sector, with higher income earnings potential. This was the group, benefiting, mostly from different state development aided programmes (ibid.). At the same time, this group seemed to be one with higher capacity of shock absorption than the subcontractors/others in the sector (Mukhopadhyay, 1994 as cited in Mukhopadhyay, 1998). Thus, an increase in favour of the self-employed activities indicates an improvement for the informal sector in terms of the labour use²¹ in the sector. This is more important given that due to the slower pace of industrialisation in the state after independence and specially after mid 1960s²², the possibility of large sub-contracting firms with better facilities to labour was not existent (ibid.). The study has traced the dual role of the government that has prevented pauperisation and marginalisation of workers:

- (a) in presence of a pro-labour government, the trade unions have been strongly resisting the moves to informalisation;
- (b) on the background of rising unemployment and closures and prevalence of sick units, the government facilitated the way this unemployed could survive with a capacity of earning a reasonable income, through a number of self-employment development programmes;

As already mentioned, the primary survey by the author also supports the inference of higher incidence of self-employed labourers in the informal sector of CUA. From the Economic Census 1980 and 1990 also it was found that there was increase in the proportion of own account enterprises among all enterprises and decline in the proportion of hired labour and expansion of household industries, during the 1980s. Among the other observations²³ of the study by Mukhopadhyay (ibid.), an important one is that unskilled labour dominates in all the

²¹ We can not infer, from the information given here, whether this improvement is matched by higher quantity of absorption of unemployed labour i.e. whether there is any trade-off between quantity and quality of employment. Thus, this inference can be applied only for the quality of use of labour that is employed since.

²² The author's classification of pre-1977 period as one with less growth in employment and output increasing the extent of subcontracting activities and post-1977 period as one experiencing high number of self-employment development programmes and thus easing the problem of low employment generation runs into problem with following observation. The maximum growth in employment took place after independence till 1965; the low growth in industry was more of a post-1965 phenomenon that continued for the maximum number of years during the left rule i.e., in the post-1977 period, in the state.

²³ The basis of one of the observations that migrant labourers in the informal unit hardly originate within the state is not clear, as out of 221 migrant labourers surveyed 110 were from within the state.

occupations. This has led the author to conclude that the alternative initiatives pursued by the 'pro-labour government' to promote self-employment so as to safeguard 'job-seekers from unemployment and marginalisation have served as a way to survival, as was the case in 1970s²⁴ not as one to better labour standards even in 1990s, (Basu op cit.). However, the entire account of employment in the informal sector of industries remains incomplete because it was based on the surveys done in Calcutta.

Now, let us form some idea about the extent of unemployment that these policies were meant to address. From census 1981 and census 1991 we find that the percentage share of the total main workers in the total population of the state has increased in the 1980s, thus lowering the share of marginal workers and non-workers, taken together, in the total population. But absolute number of marginal and non-workers, taken together, has increased between 1981 and 1991. Though absolute number of male marginal workers has declined, the same for female population has increased quite significantly in both rural and urban areas²⁵. Absolute number of both male and female non-workers has increased during the same period and the rate of increase is higher for urban areas of the state. Without denying the significance of increasing percentage of total main workers in an absolutely increasing population, we can say that the extent of unemployment is still quite large. About 70.8% of the urban population in 1991, was either marginal or non-workers, and the proportion of the non-workers in the former was almost 99.5%. Even leaving almost 13% of the urban population, who are in the age-groups of 0-14 years and 60 years and above, and therefore supposedly not in the workforce, and a significant proportion of the workforce ideally in the process of skill-formation - in addition to seeking job, we find a significantly large percentage of the urban workforce unemployed, seeking job either in industrial or service sector. A limited,²⁶ but direct measure of the number of job seekers and their employment can be obtained using the employment exchange statistics. From the sector

²⁴ Given the observations in the analysis, without denying the importance and desirability of higher incidence of activities with higher income generating potential we may have to locate this achievement at a different level. A relevant question to ask at this juncture is whether the apparent better-off condition of the self-employed labour is a reflection of their absolute prosperity or it indicates lack of more gainful opportunities. The latter situation seems highly possible given worse-off condition of the sub-contracted labour, and almost stagnant and increasingly uncertain employment in the organised sector with increasing casualisation of labour force.

²⁵ This may very well be due to higher work participation rate of female population.

²⁶ This data are of limited use to following reasons:

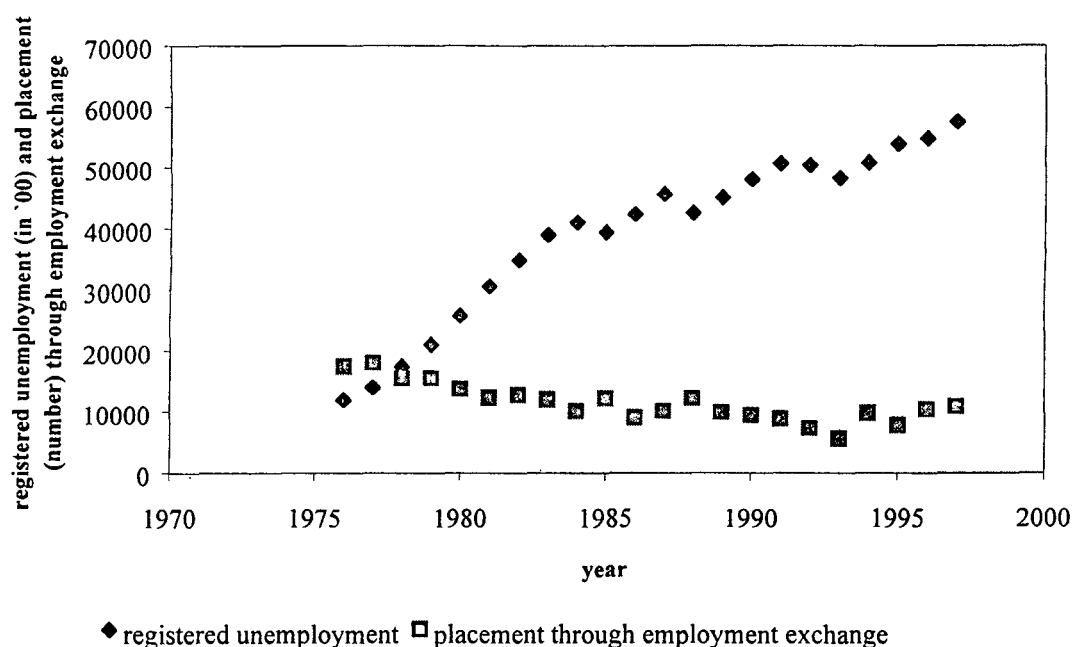
(i) not all job-seekers in the state are known to register with employment exchange; (ii) some of the registrants are employed, either in the look-out for better job-opportunities or have not informed the exchange once they got job; in either case the number of unemployed in each year will not be equal to the number of registrants remaining on the register at the end of the respective years.

wise employment data given by the employment exchange we find that public sector employment between 1980 and 1998 has slightly declined. Between 1975 and 1980 it increased from 13.52 lakh to 15.8 and increased to about 16.7 lakh in 1983. Slight tendency of decrease is visible after 1992 till 1997.

But the organised private sector employment has decreased from 11.58 lakh in 1975 to 9.95 lakh in 1983 and fell down to 8.79 lakh in 1993, with fluctuations exhibited till that year. After 1993 it still declined and remained around 7.9 lakh.

Data on the total number of registrations at the end of the year and placement effected through employment exchange during the same year showed that the latter as a percentage of the former came down from 1.46 in 1976 to 0.19 in 1997. It is clear from the following figure (Fig. 3.3.1.4) that the rate of unemployment (even in '60s) was much higher than the rate of their absorption. After 1995, the latter increased but did not reach the 1976-77 values as a percentage of the former.

Figure 3.3.1.4: Total Registered Unemployment and Placement through employment exchange in West Bengal, 1976 to 1997



3.2.1.4.1. Conclusion:

What all this indicates is that given this extent of unemployment, the initiative to prevent pauperisation and marginalisation of labour through incentives for developing self-employed activities may turn out to be meagre. To the extent such welfare measures can absorb the unemployed workforce itself seems to be limited from the above evidences. So the only sustainable way to check it is to launch on a growth process that generates more gainful employment with a better working condition than before. So the industrial policy of a pro-labour government and its effect on the industrial performance of the state has to be assessed from the point of view of this objective.

3.3.1.5. *Conceptualisation of the Industrial Problem and New Industrial Policy of West Bengal, 1994:*

3.3.1.5.1. Reasons for Industrial Backwardness:

There are many analyses attempting to explain why such a growth process has not taken off in the state. Most of these primarily traced the cause in terms of lack of investment in the state's industrial sector²⁷, both private and by the central government, though emphasis laid on this is variant across the studies (Dasgupta, 1998; Mukhopadhyay, 1998; Banerjee, 1998; Basu, 1991 and Chattopadhyay, 1987). A cursory glance at the Table 3.3.1.5.1 proves the validity of this explanation.

²⁷ (i) A 'hostile central government' discriminating against the state in terms of issuing of industrial licenses for investment in the sector, taking away the state's locational advantage to attract private investment, through certain policies.

(ii) absence of a regionally loyal bourgeoisie both Bengali and others (Basu, 1991, Dasgupta 1998, Banerjee 1998) with close tie in a state with strong unions backed by a leftist government' (Dasgupta, 1998), and so on, were cited as factors preventing private industrial investment in the state.

Table 3.2.1.2: Number of Industrial Licenses Granted to West Bengal

<i>Year</i>	<i>1977</i>	<i>1978</i>	<i>1979</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1983</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1985</i>
Total	40	23	30	23	34	27	71	93	51
NU	9	4	6	5	6	7	7	5	4
SE	6	3	4	4	6	4	4	8	5
<i>Year</i>	<i>1986</i>	<i>1987</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1993</i>	
Total	21	25	22	14	18	3	2	3	
NU	2	5	10	5	4	1	-	1	
SE	4	3	5	-	3	-	-	-	

NU: new units to be established SE: substantial expansion of existing units

Source: same as in Table 3.3.1.1

As a response to the mounting unemployment problem, in tune with the findings of these analysis, therefore, in contrast with the industrial policy announced by the front in 1977²⁸, the main thrust in the new industrial policy of 1994²⁹ was on attracting private investment in the state. The new industrial policy, the chapter on 'Industry' in the 'Economic Review' of the government of West Bengal in the successive years and some analyses (Dasgupta, 1998 for example) project these initiatives to attract investment as a factor able to solve the problem of

²⁸ Main thrust in 1977 industrial policy was on:

- (a) acceleration of growth in the industrial sector;
- (b) reduction of unemployment;
- (c) encouraging and promoting SSIs and cottage industries;
- (d) to loosen the grip of the monopoly capital groups and the MNCs hold over the economy of the state;
- (d) promoting indigenous technology and self-reliant industrialisation;
- (f) strengthening the control of the direct producer in the industrial sector i.e. the workers.

Much of these policies, specially those relating to (d) and also to public industries and sick industries were different from the industrial policies pursued by other states in India at that time, and were compatible with the conceived political character of the left front (Dasgupta, 1985). Basically, this focussed on 'some new forms of enterprise and management practices involving active worker participation' (Dasgupta, 1998),

²⁹ According to the government sources, and as reiterated in Dasgupta (1998), the need to take advantage of certain parts of the New Industrial Policy of India, 1991 e.g. abolition of industrial licensing system and partial abrogation of the freight equalization in transport of steel, led the state government to announce this policy. According to these policies: (a) encouraging entry of appropriate and mutually beneficial foreign technology and foreign investment; (b) recognizing the crucial role of private investment in accelerating economic expansion, notwithstanding their perspective on public investment having an instrumental role in attaining balanced growth and social justice; (c) encouraging joint ventures in association with the private initiative even in important infrastructural sectors e.g. power; (d) devising of different incentive schemes to promote private industrial investment and organisational changes to simplify and help the private investors through the procedure of clearing an investment project; (e) the worker-management conflict has to be resolved through negotiation where the workers have to realise the problems facing management and the need for modernisation, have to ensure increase in productivity; on the other hand the management has to consider the legitimate demands of the workers (what demands will be considered legitimate is not clear).

unemployment through setting up new industries. It was acknowledged that it might not be altogether solved, due to the limitations associated with running a provincial government, without complete control over its economic policies. In this situation limited option of pursuing alternative industrialisation policy is left with the state government, except mainly in terms of promoting SSIs and cottage industries. But the latter being considered as no substitutes for large, medium or heavy industries (Sen, 1994), the government declared its intention to serve the workers' interests, to the maximum possible extent. But changing the exploitative relation between the employer and the worker³⁰, while working within these mentioned constraints, is considered impossible.

3.2.1.5.2. Suggested Solutions: New industrial Policy of West Bengal, 1994:

Given such conceptualisation of the problem and locating investment as the best possible solution, the shift at the level of policies does not seem contradictory, when we try to trace the approach implicit in recent state level initiatives to revive industrial growth. Different official

³⁰ This raises a valid doubt whether it is at all meaningful to analyse the effect, on the industrial performance of the provincial economy, of the provincial regime - on the basis of its industrial policy attempting to attain certain specified objectives. For a provincial economy, regulated by the financial, administrative and constitutional arrangements of the central polity, the overall development planning, in general, and national industrial policy in particular, and therefore the nature of the Indian state is binding. Thus there are immediate problems in treating the industrial policy of the provincial state in the same way as the national industrial policy as a guideline for assessing the provincial government's intervention as well as non-intervention in its industrial sphere. First, it is difficult to assess any initiative in view of the complexity of such constraints involved. Secondly, without the analysis of the nature of the Indian state, analysis of the policy either at central or provincial level runs the risk of being carried away by rhetorics. Regarding the theory on the nature of the Indian State there is no consensus and review of it lies outside the scope of this study. But it is neither necessary nor possible in the context of this analysis to ignore rhetoric altogether. Because this analysis of development under a particular political regime begins with certain shared ideas on the nature of that regime where the latter is the outcome of the political ideology and history of the party, certain past rhetoric (realised or not), and on the experience of the role it played in the past on the issues of economic policies and interventions similar to the one at hand. Secondly, the rhetoric are built on the material condition of the economy and society and clear drawing of support from certain sections of the electorate while mediating the latter's demands. Industrial policy of the government ruled by that party in this context provides a starting block as to what its course of intervention and equally important non-intervention in the economic sphere will be. The 'pro-labour' identity of the CPI (M) in West Bengal has originated from the history of the party's politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the state. Analysis of the industrial policy of 1977, almost same as the 'Common Minimum Programme' designed by the party before the election of 1977, becomes meaningful as that starting block, as some other official documents suggest the need for viewing its economic programmes in association with the party's political ideology. Thus, its comparison with the 1994 industrial policy, on the basis of the theoretical rationale behind it, the ways to conceptualise the constraints and possible ways indicated to deal with them, and available empirical evidences, is important. For it can indicate, at the least, the need for reconceptualisation of development process in the society and consequent change in the prioritisation in the sphere of economic policy of the regime. More importantly, it may indicate the extent to which an alternative development programme can be implemented as opposed to the development programmes of the central government, specially its industrial policy. In the post-liberalisation period, with more scope of state government's policy manoeuvrability, instead of stopping at the level of locating contradictions at the level of rhetoric, if any, we can take into account certain selected acts of both commission and omission in the industrial sphere during the entire regime.

documents regarding those efforts, before and after the formal announcement of the new industrial policy in 1994 also indicate the same (Dasgupta, 1985; Chattopadhyay, 1987). After 1994, various incentive schemes have been offered by the state government to entice new private investment in the state.

Success of this policy depends on the following factors. The first question concerns whether sufficient investment will take place in the state in response to these incentive schemes or other economic factors. Theoretically, investment will take place when (i) on the demand side the economy is growing, i.e. there is expanding market for the concerned industrial products; (ii) on the supply side, there is developed infrastructure, both physical and human and (iii) there prevails socio-political stability (Bhaduri & Nayyar, 1996), (iv) stable industrial relations and sufficient control over the labour process (Banerjee, 1998; Kalecki as quoted in Dasgupta 1988, Kannan 1990).

There are certain factors, which are mentioned to be favourable to the condition of investment in the state, as follows. First, abolition of the licensing system removing the negative influence of political factors in deciding the site of the investment; secondly, partial abrogation of freight equalisation in transport of steel reasserting the locational advantage of the state as a site for building up new industries, (ii) the recognition of the strategic location of the state as a gateway for trade with Asia-Pacific region following opening up of the economy (GoWB, 1997); (iii) the spurt in agricultural production continuing for more than one and a half-decade thereby creating a market for industrial products, especially in the rural areas; (iv) the declining number of strikes and number of man-days lost due to that indicating improved labour-relations in the industry; and (v) a 'vulnerable'³¹ work force creating 'favourable ground condition for renewed capital accumulation' (Dasgupta, 1998).

Offer of numerous industrial incentive schemes by the state government is said to reflect the 'government's pragmatic attitude to the capital labour relationship', to persuade the industrial investors to invest in the state through direct communication with the latter. It is argued that this effort, among other important factors, induced the 'dramatic upsurge in investment intentions in the industrial sector of the state' by removing 'any remaining misgivings that investors might

³¹ A vulnerable work force emerges in areas with dying industries and consequently a large segment of work force being either laid off or retrenched and without any alternative employment opportunities (Massey as cited in Dasgupta 1998). Dasgupta (1998) however, concludes that workers in West Bengal had not reached such an extreme stage by the late 1980s specially because a pro-worker government was in power.

have had in investing in a Marxist-ruled state' (Dasgupta, 1998; GoWB, 1999). Given the fact that earlier, even the profit income earned in this state was not reinvested here, creating favourable condition to get the same reinvested here is, no doubt, a necessary step. In terms of outcome, we find that between 1991 and September 1998, the total number of industrial approvals received by the state was for 1817 projects involving an investment of Rs.48497.76 crore, out of which 1135 approvals were received between September 1994 and September 1998, i.e. after the announcement of the industrial policy. Silpa Bandhu, the single-window clearance cell of the WBIDC to assist the industrial investors and facilitate the process of clearance handled 950 cases successfully between November 1994 and 1998. In the Economic Review (1999) this perceptible increase in industrial investment has been illustrated with the fact that industrial investments between 1977 and 1981 were Rs.250 crore whereas in 1996 and 1997 these were Rs.536.64 crore and Rs.408.08 crore respectively. This increase in number of investment proposals and approvals was matched by a high rate of project implementation in the state. In fact, 36% of the total industrial approvals received by the state was implemented and this rate was quite high compared to the other states in India (GoWB, 1999). The 'industrial revival of West Bengal' as reflected in the rising industrial investment in recent years' has been attributed to all the above-mentioned factors related to intervention of the state government in the economic sphere.

But the requirement of continuous inflow of investment brings into existence certain incentive schemes or concessions to the industrialists. This inflicts cost on the society, to be borne even by the poorer sections in it through foregone potential public expenditure for the latter causing a transfer of resources from the latter towards the investors at least in the short run. At the same time the concessions have to fulfil two conditions in competing for investible fund with all the other states in India and also other countries both industrialised and industrialising³². First, it has to compete more favourably with the more developed states in India or industrialised countries in providing developed infrastructure. Secondly, it has to compete favourably with others in terms of supplying cheaper labour, better labour discipline, and cheap raw materials than the other developing states also with abundance in cheap unorganised labour and raw material.

³² Nation states in both First and Third World are engaged in the dominant trap of offering tax concession and other policy incentives to the MNCs in the similar way. However, the policy manoeuvrability in the first set of nation-states is probably greater than in the second.

Now this leads us to the second level of question regarding the success of this industrial policy in attaining the aforementioned objective. Even when there is favourable condition of investment taking place in the state, it does not guarantee more participatory nature of industrial growth, as is expected to follow the private investment. If it has to solve these problems even to some extent, without affecting the profitability of the industrial investment in order to ensure the continuous inflow of the latter we have to have a phase of co-operative capitalism, where capital and labour need not have conflicting relationship. As, in an open economy underconsumptionist argument becomes less important (Marglin and Bhaduri, 1994), marginal response of investors to a wage cut is likely to be greater than that induced by increased capacity utilisation caused by increase in effective demand through a rise in wage. Effective demand can increase due to the increase in demand from abroad, besides relying on the rural prosperity of the state. But this requires achieving international competitiveness that may require further and further wage cuts and adoption of capital-deepening technology, and labour-market flexibility, at the minimum. In that context, the co-operative relation between capital and labour can hold only if there is continuous export surplus so that at the reduced wage there is employment expansion due to increased capacity utilisation to meet the export demand (ibid) and capital-widening technology is adopted with growth effect (Sengupta 1994). Given the limited control governments may, generally, have on the international market such a condition is difficult to be ensured. Given the emphasis on the export-oriented industrial production, whether the possibility of earning export surplus will improve or not will depend on the match between the internationally demanded commodities and supply of exports of the state and various policy factors and thus needs a detailed investigation. However, keeping with the objective of this study we confine the analysis here to certain general observations in the following part.

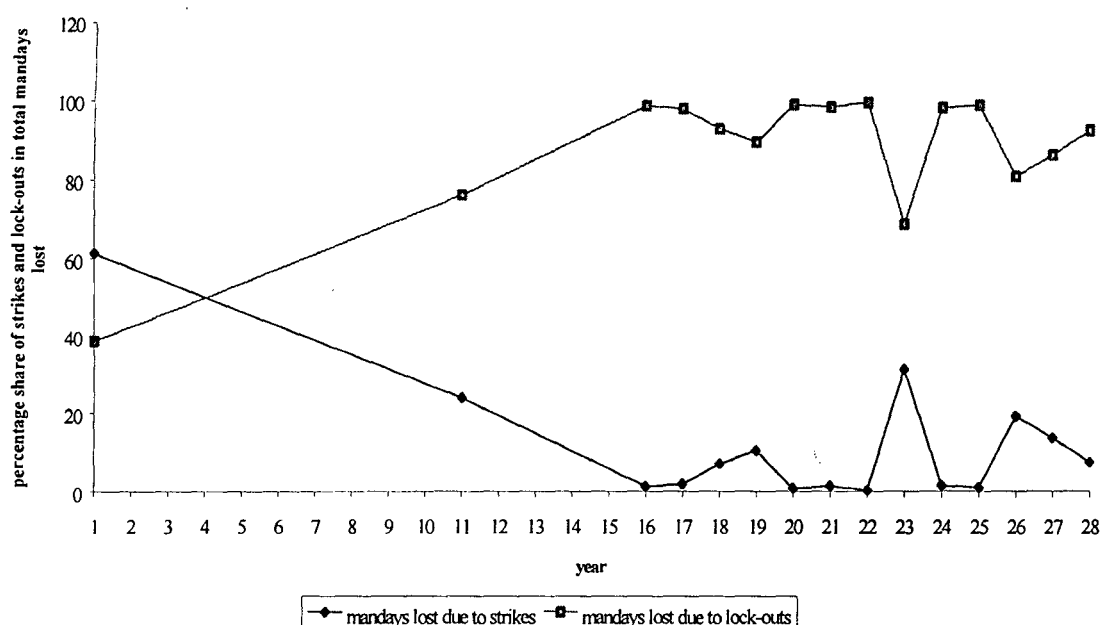
3.2.1.5.3. Gains to Industrial Workers and Industrial Relations Before and After New Industrial Policy:

The presence of trade unions in the organised sector of industry has been, reportedly biased towards protecting existing employment and occasionally the current pay also. Hence the need for labour policy reforms in the form of making labour market flexible with respect to fixing of level of employment and wage rate on the one hand, and invoking of the 'responsible unionism', on the other. However, macro evidence at the national level and micro evidences from industries

from different states including those from West Bengal³³ are available which particularly contradict the standard argument of organised labour market rigidity. Making use of these, Chakravarty (1998), has demonstrated that with declining organised sector employment there exists flexibility 'both in terms of wage and rationalising the labour force', which has been 'increasing at least from the late eighties'. Figure 3.2.1.4 shows that though the extent of lay-off and retrenchment has been fluctuating during this time but has persisted throughout.

The MNCs, while globally organising production that is vertically divided across several countries and given the high demand for investible funds from numerous developed and

Figure 3.2.1.4: Percentage contribution by strikes and lock-outs to total mandays lost due to industrial disputes in West Bengal in selected years



developing economies, can choose their global investment and employment programme 'relatively freely' (Bhaduri & Nayyar, 1996). Thus, in deciding the place and other specificities of investment decisions, the MNCs are in a position to take advantage of various economic policy regimes through manipulation of decisions on production, pricing, marketing and so on. In this context, nation states have been experiencing declining control over the spheres of production

³³ For example, Roychoudhuri (1977), Ramaswamy (1997), Dasgupta (1998), among others, mentioned the multi-pronged systematic attack on the part of the capitalist employers against the unionised workers in the organised sector in various ways, where the latter became 'helpless victims of such attacks'.

and investment while having similar, if not increasing, responsibility for providing employment to its people as before. Thus the governments of the liberalising states have been engaged in competition for investible resources in terms of offering tax concessions, deregulation and wage restraint to attract or to retain investment by MNCs, or to avoid 'delocation' (Bhaduri & Nayyar, 1996). It follows, therefore, that even with formal 'labour market rigidity', neither the ruling government, at centre or at provincial level, nor the trade unions supported by them are likely to be able to change even the most anti-labour action, e.g. lay-offs, retrenchments, lock-outs, of the MNCs or other private investors³⁴. In fact, the preliminary analysis of the change in the workers' conditions, as summarised below, may imply this.

i. During the years between 1985-86 and 1995-96, the years after India entered the liberalisation regime, the labour-productivity (Net value added per worker) showed a rising trend despite exhibiting fluctuations. But the workers' share of wages in the net value added decreased significantly between 1985-86 and 1995-96. The labour productivity slightly decreased and shares of wages in NVA increased in 1994-95 and 1995-96 but did not reach the 1985-86 levels respectively (ASI data series).

ii. There are empirical evidences of increasing casualisation of labour force throughout the national economy (Nagraj, 1994; Roychoudhary, 1991 as cited in Chakravarty 1998; Deshpande & Deshpande 1998, Mukhopadhyay 1996). As the proportion of casual and contract labourers is increasing in a not highly growing industrial workforce, the employment situation in organised sector seems gloomy. For example, between 1987-88 and 1993-94, the proportion of casual labour as a percentage to total urban households (which is likely to have grown) has increased from 8.3% to 10.32%, whereas proportion of incidence of regular wage earners or salaried in the same decreased from 54.3% to 49.79% (Thorat, 1999). As we have already mentioned, the fluctuation in the total number of workers in the factory sector and public sector also hints at the possibility of having a considerable size of casual and contract workforce.

iii. Between 1987 and 1994 there has been employment expansion in certain industries like 'food processing', 'jute textiles', 'textile products', 'paper', 'leather', 'chemicals', due probably to

³⁴ In the history of jute mill workers' movements in the state we see that only in 1969 i.e., in the immediate post-recession period when the industry fulfilled the condition of having a 'vulnerable' workforces, the organised workforce could make their employers accept many of their demands (Dasgupta, 1995) with notable success. This can be associated most probably with the specific political stand of favouring militancy taken by the CPI (M) as a dominant coalition partner in the 1969 United Front Government in the state.

a shift in output composition from capital-intensive sectors to labour intensive ones. But excessive capital-deepening is not an unfamiliar process there as well as in most of the other industrial sectors. This has caused low employment expansion, where the primary condition for high employment generation is capital widening i.e., promotion of labour-using or capital-saving technical progress associated with the new investment (Sengupta, 1998). So long as there is no ban on policy front, against capital-deepening, there is no guarantee for substantial employment expansion also, even with new investment.

iv. The statistics on total number of industrial disputes and the proportion of lock-outs and strikes in it has been quoted as an indicator of improvement in industrial relation and labour condition in projecting the favourable investment climate in the state (GoWB, 1999, for example). But, the same indicator gives a different impression when looked from the workers' viewpoint. Total number of disputes decreased between 1970 (806) and 1980 (208) and remained around 200 throughout the year including fluctuations around this value. Initially it was strikes that contributed to total number of disputes more rightly in 1970s (81.77% of total); but the percentage came down to 44.47% in 1980 and then it declined further and came to be very insignificant. Number of workers involved decreased from 454.1 lakh to 153.8 lakh between 1970 and 1980 and after that except in 1987, 1992 and 1995 it was generally around 180 lakh. But the man-days lost have generally increased specially from 1985, after declining between 1970 and 1980. After 1992 it showed a declining tendency mostly. But once we look at the proportion of strikes and lock-outs we find more than 90% of the man-days lost are due to lock-outs between 1980 and 1998; except in 1988, 1992, 1995 and 1996, the other years when loss of man-days was less than 10%. It was mostly around 1%. This trend has been continuing since March 1977 when strike as a cause of additional man-days lost, and closure, was insignificant. Similarly, for the number of workers involved (in thousands).

Now, there are two dimensions to it, which have adverse impact on the attainability of the stated objective. It is accepted that significance of strikes as an instrument for mediating workers' demands might have reduced once there was a government ruling the state which was supposed to make a pro-labour stand in its power to resolve the industrial disputes (Bhattacharya, 1985). But, there is no evidence to empirically establish the fact that the decline in the number of industrial disputes through lowering the number of strikes resulted from the voluntary

acquiescence³⁵ of the unionised workers. But the government's intervention has not been effective to bring down the extent of lock-outs and the number of workers involved and number of mandays lost due to that. Secondly, higher proportion of workers affected by all the industrial disputes in a year has been involved in strikes than the proportion of man-days lost due to strikes in the total number of man-days lost. This implies that duration of strikes must be less than the same for lock-outs. Among all the disputes in a year, lock-outs, on average, outnumbered the strikes while brunt of lock-outs seems to have been higher compared to that of strike in terms of more number of unemployed days for the workers. Thus the objective condition of the working class also did not improve much as was reflected in the low wage and no compensation for the long gap between settlements (Ramaswamy, 1997).

There are even empirical evidences of state making use of its power of coercion, particularly in the jute industry (Dasgupta, 1998; Ramaswamy, 1997), when persuasion failed. A wide range of options, using the mode of persuasion and coercion, are available to a democratic government. Persuasion works in the way of assuring the workers that the steps taken to induce private investment, both from inside the country and abroad in the state is in the workers' interests³⁶. This is, however, expected to facilitate the activities of the capital. (Dasgupta, 1998). This concept of 'persuasion' also extends to the left unions' effort to convince the workers about the crisis (from demand and/or supply side reducing its profitability) facing a particular industry (e.g. jute) by invoking the concept of responsible unionism (Ramaswamy, 1997). But a detailed

³⁵ Voluntary acquiescence of the organised workers is questionable on two grounds:

(i) Unions supported by the ruling party are dependent on the latter because it is the latter who resolves the industrial disputes of course, amenable to pressure from both sides of the bargain. So generally the terms dictated by the party may be binding for the unions, as well as on the member workers (Ramaswamy 1997).

(ii) The validity of the rationale offered for accepting a compromise e.g. a wage cut etc. as an exchange for better future working condition is questionable for reasons mentioned earlier.

(iii)

Given this, it is likely that the apparent voluntary acquiescence, projected as the cause of reduction in the number of strikes, can be used to minimise the total number of industrial disputes.

³⁶ Economic Review of 1979-80, alongwith mentioning the insignificance of strike as a cause for additional mandays lost compared with the additional mandays generated in the year and thus for industrial sickness, projected strikes as resistance on the part of the organised workers in support of what the latter considered to be their 'justified grievances'. Particularly this approach of the government towards labour was associated with its distinct economic policies guided by and reflecting pro-labour ideological stand of the CPI(M). But within another ten years, the Economic Review of 1987-88 or 1988-89 became completely silent about the relevance of labour agitation and its link with the industrial performance of the state and with the economic condition of the national economy at a broader level. It neither gave any explanation for not doing so, where in fact, the underlying factors affecting industrial sphere are the same as in 1977-78. Rather, accepting some of the existing discourse in this regard, by projecting labour militancy or eroding work ethics as the cause of the industrial stagnation, workers are persuaded against militant actions without exploring alternative ways to enable the latter in the bargain with capital. Such an approach is evident in arguments like: the government's 'pragmatic' approach towards the capital-labour relation leading to 'industrial revival' as it is occurring in the state, and thus should be the objective workers should pursue.

examination of the profitability condition of the industry may prove the assessment of the profitability incorrect (Kanoria Sramik Sangram Sanhati Committee, 1995). Persuasion even includes the standard way of conceptualising public sector as 'inefficient' and that the present way of running the units will lead to no better situation. This is not to deny the validity of the pervasive problem of improper work culture and other management problems in the public sector units. But the explanation of the failure of these units in the above way stands in contrast with the regime's resolution to introduce alternative management practices and labour policies, as expressed in 1977 industrial policy (Dasgupta, 1985; Mitra 1987). To the extent the management practices and existing mode of running the public units do not change, there will be high probability of resistance from the part of unionised workers in those units. Consequently, it will be conducive to project the insider-outsider dilemma as the constraint in achieving higher employment generation and in serving workers' interests.

Again, there is no guarantee that inflow of investment in the state will replace the unorganised sector. The global trend of extensive sub-contracting may prove existent in this state also, with big capital and MNCs making use of the existing informal sector through sub-contracting to a greater extent, probably with a better labour condition of subcontracting arising from further industrialisation.

However, there is evidence of coercion from the part of the state as well, when, in order to create favourable infrastructure for smooth mobility of capital, there is ban on any slow-moving vehicle in the city without creating sufficient alternative employment opportunities to the workers or units affected. For example, with the ban on handpulled rickshaws (on the ground of doing away with a feudal practice of a human being carrying another one manually), the unorganised repairing industry got adversely affected, in addition to the almost one lakh rickshaw pullers and the lower income stratum of urban population that used to benefit from this service. Bengali unemployed workforce mostly reaped the alternative employment opportunities meant to rehabilitate those affected, not the rickshaw pullers who, mostly, were non-Bengalis and thus are not voters. This mode of transport was sought to be replaced by autorickshaw and big capital only gained from the manufacturing of this vehicle, which has been increasingly, demanded with these changes in policy. In addition to the adverse implications of this change for environment, it hints to the government's effort to make the city faster moving than before (Sen, 1998). The

entire initiative can be associated with the government's effort to attract private investment and to build proper infrastructure for that³⁷.

3.2.1.5.4. Progress of Investment Projects following New Industrial Policy and its Impact on Industrial Workers

The projects for which investment has taken place as per the list given in Economic Review, 1999 do not give definite indication of having much connection with the consumption pattern of the weaker section in both rural and urban areas and the economically prosperous sections in the rural areas.

From the Employment Exchange statistics, we found that there is increase in percentage of educated job-seekers among all the registrants from 51.51% in 1986 to nearly 56% till 1997. On the other hand, there was a decline in the percentage of below-graduate job seekers from 81.4% in 1986 to 76.3% in 1997 after fluctuating around 75% in between. In this group the percentage of job seekers that passed only 'school final' increased considerably during the same time. In other words, supply of considerably highly educated manpower has increased over last 12 years.

But among the total registrants percentage of skilled and semi-skilled has fallen gradually over the years. From 7.02% in 1978 it came down to 4.37% in 1990 after which it increased to 5.66% in 1990 and 1991 and remained around 5.46% till 1998. But the percentage category of 'unskilled and others' did rise quite significantly from 52.83% in 1978 to 73.49% in 1990 (it became 78.6% in 1982 and 1983 in between) and came down to a little above 72% in 1998³⁸.

The list of approved projects, however, indicates that the skill requirements for the newly created jobs are likely to be quite high, specially for the software industries in particular and electronics

³⁷ This is reflected in the official documents of the government explaining the need to build better infrastructure, both physical and otherwise, for NRI investors; in about Rs.9000 crore public investment, mentioned in the Economic Review in recent years to build better townships for the investors; in the explanation of the need to encourage better facilities of social infrastructure like hospitals and educational institutions and modes of transport as well, mainly for the private investors even on private initiatives, probably also in the moves like 'hawkers' eviction in the city of Calcutta etc.

³⁸ There may be possible biases like increasing registration by the unskilled job-seekers or decreasing registration by the skilled or semi-skilled job seekers with the employment exchange which are ignored here, due to lack of alternative sources of data to verify these effects.

industries in general. For the high percentage of unskilled workers, the organised sector is not likely to be a solution (Banerjee, 1996; Yechury, 2001). Again, much of the goods and services demanded by the comparatively less number of highly skilled workers with better payment potential, besides food and other agricultural products, may be more import-oriented (Datta, 1984) and therefore may not have high potential for employment generation.

3.2.1.6. The Regime's Role in the Light of the Above Findings:

Thus the above discussion identifies dual roles of the government: one of promoting self-employment activities to cushion the unemployed to some extent against widespread de-industrialisation and consequent joblessness, the other being its initiative to create favourable condition for private investment in the state to generate employment as well as taking coercive measures for labour, if necessary. These two sets of actions may not seem contradicting once we place each action playing its respective role in facilitating smooth functioning of capital and promoting workers' and other weaker sections' interests to the maximum possible extent in that process. The efforts, irrespective of the policy intention on the part of the government in the state seem to be likely to give permanence to 'enclave-hinterland' dualism (Sanyal, 1986), which has been referred as 'social democratic management of capitalism' (Dasgupta, 1998; Chandravarkar 1997 as cited in Dasgupta 1998, Dasgupta 1985). 'Enclave' with its high skill-requiring investment activities and better infrastructure is likely to be more or less self-contained except for certain goods demanded by it or to the extent it needs to take advantage of the cheap unorganised labour in the 'hinterland', through sub-contracting etc. Its investment decision, either for industrial or service sector or for creating social infrastructure is likely to be independent of the consideration of the 'hinterland' (alternatively referred as 'unintended city' by Sen, 1998). The 'hinterland', however, is likely to benefit from the general expansion of economic activities and particularly of industry. On the other hand, state government, through various development policies such as those for promoting self-employment or offering compensation for the workers affected by lock-outs or closures (GoWB, 1999) or the unemployment doles, tries to curb the problem to a manageable extent. But given the magnitude of the problem and the requirement of fiscal austerity by the governments following liberalisation, these welfare measures are likely to be of limited importance. The 'explosive outburst' in 'Victoria Jute Mill' in 1993, or action of Kanoria Jute mill Workers in late 1993-94, in complete disregard of the dominant CITU union, even the shrinking support base in Calcutta city and adjacent industrial and urban areas, as reflected in the declining voters' proportion for

the left parties from these areas in successive elections (Dasgupta, 1998) are probably the manifestation of the workers' and other deprived sections' perception of this insufficiency. The indifference shown by the concerned government departments at the least, its coercive measures, to contain those expressions (Dasgupta, 1998) at the most, have to be placed in this context. This leads us to the question whether there was any alternative available to the government not holding state power in Marxian sense (Dasgupta, 1985), faced with a stagnant industrial sector, many unemployment, not favourable political factors - inhibiting industrial investment in the state, thus perpetuating the stagnation. At the very outset itself one is able to appreciate the difficulties and complexities involved in the situation and the innovative and politically cohesive measures it warrants. Some immediate areas suggest themselves, on the basis of secondary literature, where it might have been appropriate to pay more attention and which might have benefited from more innovative action.

For example, the study by Raychaudhuri and Chatterjee (1998) shows how the risk-perception on the part of the producers and 'faulty management practices' leads to the perpetuation of production with backward technology. As an effort to avoid labour problems, widespread subcontracting is prevalent, with very meagre benefit for the subcontracting worker. In absence of the minimum necessary vertical integration, this renders the system inefficient for the small-scale industries that depend on the market for its demand (garments industry, for example, as has been mentioned in the same study). To the extent basic capital goods and engineering industries had assured market with demand from the government, subcontracting proved to be efficient, though less beneficial to the ancillary units than to the parent units. Given this heterogeneity, government has a crucial role to play, the study concluded, on both demand and supply sides, specially, through developing the necessary infrastructural facilities and intervening in the labour problems (though the kind of the necessary interventions has not been specified in the study). With an analysis of the constraints facing and prospects of silk industry and electronics industry in West Bengal, Banerjee (op cit.) also suggested the need for more innovative and selective government actions to free the functioning of credit and output markets from the possible imperfections and to induce an improvement in the risk-management by the producers in the respective industries. This is demonstrated to be necessary to enable the firms with high capacity of labour-absorption to reap the benefit from incentives offered by the market under liberalisation. All these studies, in view of the prospects of the small-scale industries seem to indicate the need for a shift in orientation with respect to government industrial policies away from a growth based on urban-centred heavy industrialisation towards one promoting medium

and small-scale industries. Probably, with higher rural prosperity than before, establishing light and medium industries can be attempted in rural and semi-urban areas, as with abolition of industrial licensing, there are no impediments before the government's choice of any site for investment (Mitra, 1995). Again certain studies hint that the jute industry with a large internal market and expanding foreign demand can be crucial in the post-liberalisation period. But solving the problem of backward technologies or lack of technological modernisation through opening more and more export-oriented units with high productivity but low employment potential, as it has been happening in the state (Kanoria Sramik Sangram Sanhati Committee, op cit), does not necessarily signify any alternative approach of development aiming at furthering workers' interests. Managing the public sector industries in different ways could have been or even now can be attempted³⁹.

3.2.1.6. Conclusion:

The all-pervasive problems of allegedly militant trade unionism opposing modernisation and any other step against the already employed, even if the latter is necessary for efficiency, at a different level, seems to be the outcome of the leftist parties' failure to link the trade union activities with the broader political movement, if any, and to free that from narrow economism and sectarianism (Dasgupta, 1985; Dasgupta, 1998), supposedly a distinguishing mark of the leftist trade union activities. In any case, it is not our purpose to suggest specific alternatives, which is the subject of a separate and detailed analysis. But to assume that there absolutely is no alternative way, which could have been followed or a complete absence of any discussion or systematic analysis of alternative approaches in the documents of a 'pro-labour' government does not indicate high priority attached to workers' interests. On the other hand, if there is really no alternative, then, bringing the limitations of pursuing any economic reforms that seeks to bring any fundamental change in the structure of the society to the awareness of common people appears compatible with the ideological stand and the stated objectives of the party ruling the government (Dasgupta, 1985) instead of asserting the present policy to be the best available option in attaining the stated objectives.

³⁹ In fact, immediately after the announcement of 1991 Industrial Policy by the Congress Government at the centre, the left government of West Bengal suggested an alternative industrial policy, which indicated some alternative policy option. For obvious reasons, it was not accepted by the central government. But both these proposals as well as the reasons for not incorporating them in further policy discussions at the state level are not comprehensively known.

3.2.2. Performance of the Industrial Sector in Kerala:

3.2.2.1. Growth Performance:

To start with, this discussion concentrates mainly on the growth performance of the manufacturing industries, partly because much of the prominent secondary literature is grounded on the analysis of manufacturing industries. Moreover, the recent changes in the type of state intervention in the industrial sector seem to be around this part of the industry. This is so, probably, due to the empirically observed shift in the importance of manufacturing in the process of economic development as defined in the early literature concerning the latter (Subramanian & Azeez, 2000).

In 1950, the per capita NSDP from manufacturing sector was significantly higher i.e., Rs.48 than the same with the value of Rs.37 at the all India level. With industrialization being encouraged in the Travancore state during the thirties and forties, Kerala had a relatively better industrial base than most other regions following the metropolitan cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras at the time of independence (Albin, 1990). But in the following decades, except in the 1960's, Kerala's growth rate in per capita manufacturing output was less than the average value of the same for all India (Albin, op cit). Between 1961 and 1979, the trend rate of growth at the national level of the factory sector in Kerala has been 6.07% compared to 5.56% trend rate of growth at the national level. But, we find that the growth rate substantially declined in the period between 1970 and 1979 from what it was between 1961 and 1979. In the second sub-period the factory sector in the state grew at an annual compound rate of 2.12% as against national average around the rate of 6.07% (Subramanian and Pillai, 1986). Between 1965 and 1975, the growth rate of factory sector output (from census sector of ASI publications), at the 1970-71 prices, rose at a higher rate than the same at the national level, which signified the period of industrial recession for the country as a whole. But while the national economy recovered between 1975 and 1985, Kerala showed a lower than national average growth rate (Subrahmanian & Pillai, op cit.). For the period, 1981-82 to 1996-97, we find a consistently lower growth rate in value-added of the factory sector in Kerala than at national level. At 1980-81 prices, also, annual growth rates in NSDP by manufacturing in Kerala have been lower than the corresponding growth rates at all-India level in each decade since 1970s. Though annual growth rates in the 1980 and first half of the 1990s increased from the same in 1970s, there was not much difference between the growth rates between the

80s and the first few years of the 90s (Subrahmanin and Azeez, op cit.) indicating stagnation in industrial production. Isaac and Mohanakumar (1991, as cited in Ramachandran, 1997) noted an improvement in industrial growth between 1986-87 and 1990-91. The share of the manufacturing sector increased from 13% in 1986-87 to 16% in 1990-91. The compound growth rate of the manufacturing sector in NSDP at constant prices was 12% per annum during this period. Kannan (1998) also demonstrated the improved performance of the manufacturing sector during the period from the 1988-89 to 1995-96 compared to that during the period from 1975-76 to 1987-88. Owing to the relatively highly growing manufacturing output and declining growth rate of population, growth in per capita manufacturing output in state also increased in the latter period. The average annual growth rate of manufacturing, both registered and unregistered, between 1987-88 and 1997-98 was around 7.75% (computed from the SDP values given by the CSO at 1980-81 prices). When the new series of NSDP data at 1993-94 prices were used, the growth rates for the later part of the nineties were found higher than those estimated from the NSDP series at 1980-81 prices [Subrahmanian & Azees, op cit.].

Subrahmanian and Pillai [1986, and 1983 as cited in Ramachandran, 1997] showed that both productive capital per capita and gross per capita output in the factory sector have been consistently lower in Kerala than in India as a whole or than in other South-Indian states. The study also showed that between 1972-73 and 1987-88 the growth rate in Kerala, in the number of working units, in fixed investment, in productive investment, in net value-added and in employment in respect of small industries was below the all-India average. Rate of growth of fixed capital in Kerala's manufacturing sector as a whole was far less than all-India level, particularly during the post-reforms period. This observation is important given the observed symmetry between the growth performance of fixed capital and value-addition, evident in the estimates of annual growth of fixed capitals in 2-digit industry groups in Kerala (Subrahmanian & Azees, 2000). In the following years till 1995-96, percentage values of factory units, the net value-added in Kerala in the corresponding values at all-India level, have risen and fallen respectively. The percentage of productive capital of the state, in the same for the entire national economy, has gone down substantially from 0.286 in 1980-81 to 0.0267 in 1990-91 and thereafter to 0.018 in 1995-96 after declining till 0.0156 and 0.0162 in 1993-94 and 1994-95 respectively (ibid.).

As to the composition of the manufacturing industries in Kerala, some structural changes in terms of shifts in the organizational structure and output composition took place, as observed by Subrahmanian and Pillai (op cit.). Earlier prevalence of manufacturing in total industrial sector was marginal and concentrated in the unorganised sector. But in the 1980s the share of registered sector has exceeded that of unregistered units. However, the fact of industrial stagnation seems, mostly, to be an outcome of relatively slow growth rate of registered manufacturing in the state, which remained far below the national average (Albin, op cit.). But between 1986-87 and 1989-90 registered manufacturing output, at 1980-81 prices, grew at very high rate of 11.83% after which the growth rate was negative in 1990-91. Between 1990-91 and 1997-98, this sector recorded positive growth but it was far less impressive than the short period of high growth between 1986-87 and 1989-90. Growth in the unregistered manufacturing output exhibited more fluctuations than the registered output. Between 1975-76 and 1982-83 there was quite slow growth in the sector, which became negative between 1982-83 and 1983-84 and also between 1983-84 and 1988-89. It increased by 31.52% in 1989-90 from the previous year's value and, between 1989-90 and 1996-97, the increase in the value of the output of this sector was by 71.46% which declined a little in 1997-98. Output of electricity, gas and water supply as well as mining and quarrying showed large and frequent fluctuations throughout this period (1975-76 to 1997-98). Similarly for construction sector, which consistently rose between 1975-76 and 1992-93 increased to a large extent - by 44.12% in 1993-94. But following 1993-94 there has been less growth in the value-added from this sector till 1996-97 and it fell further between 1996-97 and 1997-98.

3.2.2.1.1. Conclusion:

In summary, the industrial sector in the state and particularly the manufacturing sector is characterized by relative backwardness and as lopsided “ with the bulk of industries located in low-value-added industries” (Heller, 1999) and less diversified (Subrahmanian & Pillai, 1986) industrial structure, despite increase in the share of modern industries since 1970s. This sector has been passing through stagnation for the maximum part of the period of analysis and changed a little in the late 80s, but not so in the 90s, as has been suggested by relevant secondary figures for output and a consensual view in the secondary literature.

3.2.2.2. Performance on Employment-generation:

Between 1975-76 and 1995-96 the number of factory sector workers increased from 206122 to 267972 with quite high fluctuations in the years in between. Similar tendency was observed for the number of employees in the sector. As in the case of West Bengal factory sector, in Kerala too, variation in the number of employees and number of workers followed the same pattern, which suggests that the change in the employees was the outcome of the change in the workers alone. These high fluctuations in the number of workers indicate the possibility of prevalence of a large number of casual workers in Kerala also. Between 1975 and 1988, the number of workers employed declined by more than half (56%), with the per capita employment, throughout, remaining almost the same. Between 1988 and 1995 however, number of workers increased.

Almost most of the industries experienced decline in employment for most part of the period of analysis. This happened as the coir factories, mainly employing men and coir-processing units, mainly employing women [Isaac et al 1992 as cited in Kannan 1998], handloom weaving industry reduced its scale of operation in the state, and, beedi-making industry, cashew-producing industry, resorted to the putting out system [Kannan, 1998].

This volume of employment in industry seems very insignificant once we look at the volume of work seekers registering with the employment exchange (see the table 3.2.2.3 below).

TABLE 3.2.2.3.: Total Work-Seekers in Kerala (in thousands)

<i>Year</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>1976</i>	<i>1977</i>	<i>1978</i>	<i>1979</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1983</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1985</i>
No.	691.2	753.6	849.4	1052.7	1249.4	1579.2	1903.7	2086.1	2262.2	2458.2	2574.1
<i>1986</i>	<i>1987</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>
2704.9	2991.0	2901.1	3066.9	3320.2	3638.8	3847.1	4156.9	4168.7	3226.3	3287.5	3550.8

Source: Economic Review, Govt. of Kerala, Different Issues.

But yearly placement through employment exchange as a percentage of total workseekers registered with the exchange has always remained below even one percent. Explanation of the industrial stagnation in the state and the low employment generation in the existing literature

has always hovered around the so-called 'labour problem'. This embraces both high wage and other payment to be made to industrial workers translating itself into high production cost, and, the militancy of trade-unions resulting in low productivity and low control of the employers over the labour process (For example, Tharamangalam, 1998; Heller, 1999; Kannan, 1990, 1998, 1999; Subramanian and Pillai, op cit.; Subramanian op cit.; Subramanian and Azeez, op cit.). This literature, both accepting and refuting "labour" as the problem factor, broadly agrees that labour in organised industries have been able to achieve high money wages compared, specially, to that in the neighbouring states. More importantly, there has been no significant difference between the gains of workers in the unorganised sector from that of the former. Another generally unequivocally accepted fact is that leftist parties have been an important constituent part in this success since through left organized movements workers articulated their demand for higher wages and better condition in a concerted way (Kannan, 1988; Heller, 1999). The left parties are known to have been supporting the movement both from inside or outside the government, reported to be encouraging militant actions on the part of the labour unions. They are known to have been guided by short term objective of protecting current employment, specially in the organized sector, but could not succeed, completely, in doing so after a period of time (Kannan, 1998, 1999). The strategy of forming industrial workers' co-operative went a long way to protect current employment for short and medium term. But probably, this is not true in the long run, as both employment generation and payment of even stipulated wage rate become problematic in loss-making co-operatives such as in coir (Rammohan, 2000) cashew and other co-operatives, (Kannan, 1998) (exception: Kerala Dinesh Beedi co-operative). About wage and therefore labour-cost of production being high, however, there is no unanimity among different scholars. Certain observations regarding this can be made out from contrasting positions. At the aggregate level, efficiency wage and product wage in Kerala is not at all significantly higher than either the all-Indian average or than the same prevailing in the neighbouring states. Heller, (1999) argued that productivity of workers in Kerala, too, is quite high, compared to all-India average or the same in the other states, thereby effectively (other things remaining the same) bringing profitability of industrial operations, in the state, at par with other states. However, efficiency wage and product wage, that are the apparently comparable in the industrial sector of the state, are influenced by the presence in a high proportion of otherwise backward, agro-based, processing industries, which have low employment days (Subramanian & Pillai, op cit; Subramanian, op cit; Subramanian and Azeez, op cit.). It has been argued that the wage is quite high relative to the same in other

states, especially in certain industries in the organized sector (Kannan, 1990). Again, analysis of profitability of industrial operation has to incorporate the cost of transportation, construction and so on, which are generally integral parts of setting up and running industries, in addition to the labour cost in production. Since the former wages are quite high compared to other states, the total wage cost of the industrial operation becomes quite high (ibid.). However, irrespective of these various positions on wage cost, there is consensus on the fact that working in an atmosphere with militant trade union activities, where non-adherence to the working rules set by the management is a constant threat, and the employer can not establish full control over the labour process, inflicts certain psychic costs. Supporting the prevalence of such atmosphere, at present, seems unsustainable from the point of view of maintaining or increasing existing growth rates in industrial output, and thus, the redistributive gains to the workers. Therefore, reconsideration of strategies that can attempt to take care of the problem of employment generation is necessary. The new strategy as is projected is to bring private industrial investment in the state, from both India and abroad, while expansion of industrial activities will generate employment. Implicit in the attempt to make the industrial ambience of the state more private investor-friendly is (in literature and popular discourse) is an effort to change the attitude of workers or mould the trade-union activities so that they accept modernisation or the terms capital would dictate as preconditions for investment. The entire change has been being projected as a conscious stand of 'class compromise' (Heller, 1999).

Basic premises of such a stand are as follows:

1. Labour protection, hitherto provided, has proved unsuccessful so far as growth is concerned. Restrictive labour practices (when market forces are not allowed to interact fully and consequently, market law of supply and demand can not hold), lack of 'responsible unionism'⁴⁰ (Ramaswamy, 1997) eroding the capitalist's control over the labour process and

⁴⁰ Responsible unionism on the part of the workers, here, may, demand their acceptance, of, even unemployment through retrenchment or reduction in wage, if increase in productivity is not easy to achieve on the part of the workers alone and modernisation brings retrenchment. However the other side of the story is that workers have not agreed to link increase in wage with increase in labour productivity till quite recently (George, 1998; Kannan, 1998). In a situation facing the possibility of retrenchment or lay-off such a resistance may have some meaning. But at the same time, every attempt to raise labour productivity need not be looked at sceptically. At least this may be required for a temporary situation of class compromise, keeping with the long-term objectives, when an automatic economic expansion does not occur. It may be specifically necessary for the production in workers' co-operatives. Mere economism, not only has adverse effects on the employers' scope to employ more people, it is a bad politics also, as is evident from the experiences of the labour co-operatives here and the distinguishing feature of left trade-unionism from any other trade unionism, as discussed in the case of West Bengal. But the restrictions in demanding 'responsible trade-unionism.....that wages will not be cut or the other achievements withdrawn, as it would not be socially feasible and as the objective is to maintain the levels of social development already achieved as well as expanding its coverage and quality (Kannan, 1990)

employers' profit share (a situation of conflicting relation between labour and capital, not a co-operative capitalism) leads to restricted capacity expansion (Bhaduri & Maglin, 1994). All this curbs potential employment generation in the state and therefore, the above-mentioned practices can not be sustained.

2. Closely related to the previous point, is the question of the ability of people of the state to secure employment generated from potential investment. The relevant premise, here, is that a surplus of highly skilled manpower provides the necessary social-infrastructure-support for such an industrialisation on the one hand, and is likely to be specially equipped to reap the benefits of such an industrialisation (Kannan, 1999) on the other. The same is also suggested by Yechuri,(2000) where he considers Kerala as the only Indian state capable of benefiting from IT revolution.

3. Existence of a considerably large market created by remittances from Gulf and other foreign countries as well as from other states in India can provide the necessary impetus for such an industrialisation. But, such market is dependent on the external economy and therefore is somewhat vulnerable to shocks outside the economy.

3.2.2.3 Role of the Regime:

In this prescribed process, the state's role and specially the role of left politics has been criticized mainly on the following grounds, even by researchers who argue against high labor cost being a significant constraint for profitable operation of the industries and thus for establishment of new industries.

(a) Lack of pro-active role of the state in terms of creating proper infrastructure, both physical and procedural. (b) The isolated location of the economy and lack of specific advantage of the new industry - in terms of its linkage with already existing industries in the region (which are concentrated in few groups e.g., chemical industries), or to the mainstream economic activities there (Thomas, 2000) requires the state to assume the entrepreneurial role (Subrahmanian & Pillai, op cit.; Subramanian, op cit.). (c) The 'fragile production basis', the 'lopsided manufacturing base with very less proportion of engineering industries, did not offer any significant scope for integration with the national economy, as has been proved for the chemical industries targeting the national market for its product. The state-specific advantage lied in the agro-based processing industries, a development - historically linked to

autonomous export demand, which in an import-substitution-regime, probably, has not got the required policy support (Thomas, 2000).

Thus in this context, as mentioned earlier, the performance of the state, related to the creation of key infrastructure and, related to the public sector industries, become important influential factors in accelerating industrial growth in the state, given the limited investment by both private and central government sources. Review of the performance of the public sector units of industry shows that this sector, while failing to generate surplus, thereby, to finance setting up of new industries or infrastructure, has in fact eroded its capital base. A large number of these units has to be provided with both direct and indirect subsidy (Subramanian & Pillai, op cit.; Kannan, 1990; Subramanian, op cit.) Limited amount of available resources thinly spread across many industries, where the units have to depend on government funds even for necessary working-capital leading to vulnerable financial ratios and loss-making has been provided as the immediate economic explanation for such performances (Pillai, 1990). Lack of sufficient depreciation fund replacing high energy-consuming, backward and uneconomic technologies, difficult, irregular supply of parts and components for production, inefficient inventory and market management creating leakages and economic wastes, were cited as some of the problems facing most of the public sector units (ibid). The same study showed that the insensitivity, of the organizational structure in response to the changing demands of production structure over times, gives rise to technological backwardness. A review of the organizational reforms initiated at different points of time proved that only limited use could be made of it. As the author has suggested, participation of the direct producers i.e., the workers in the Directors' Boards - when the workers have stake in the form of share-holding, representation of a united committee of the recognized labour unions and so on, can be better effective towards the above-mentioned effort. But any initiative, to that effect, from the government-level has not come, even during the period when various concessions were provided to the private investors as well as procedural simplification for smooth investments by private sources were introduced. This objective has not figured much in the government agenda, in recent years. Yet, as the crux of the problem is lower real profitability in Kerala industries - both private and public, raising the same can probably best be done through these organizational reform (an earlier part of our discussion shows their relevance for industrial labor co-operatives also). The resultant growth process may be more participatory, inclusive of the relatively weaker sections. Inter-union rivalry and more economic activities, which have at least partially, led to the trade-off between current employment and generation of

employment in future, have failed to achieve broad-based industrial growth in this process. Again raising real profitability is difficult, given high wage and non-desirability of cutting it down since there are probabilities of increase in the cost of living in future in view of the government's withdrawal from provisioning of crucial social and economic services. Thus the former would require raising labor productivity. This obviously requires a shift in the distribution parameters in favour of the industrialists, demonstrating the limited possibility and potential of co-operative capitalism in an era of globalized production. As Rammohan (op cit.) has argued that even the profits earned in the state are not invested here and this control over investible resources can render even the most militant struggles waged by workers insignificant. So the brief review shows that the initiative regarding a profitable operation of public sector industries and industrial workers' co-operatives (as KDBC stands out as symbol of such an option, an exceptionally well-performing one) has not, probably, obtained a serious treatment as it deserves, specially, in the recent years. On the other hand, there has not been introduced a different norm of trade union activities, with long term objectives of the labour movements in view, reviewing the existing obstacles in the process, as to keep the real profitability high. The possibility of the latter seems limited, at present, than before given the lack of projected long term perspective on and objectives of left movements in general and labor movement in particular (Kannan, 1988, Ommen, 2000) and possible labor market segmentation, consequent to private investments, that is likely to differentiate between workers on the basis of variations in skills, networks etc. (Kannan, 1990).

Thus the possibility of participatory growth has been and still is likely to be the neglected issue, even if by default. Lack of sufficient foodgrains production in the state, its dependence on the PDS which has experienced rise in the price of foodgrains under the revamped PDS and possible reduction in pro-poor relief programmes under mounting fiscal problem in the state, and, specially as a consequence of structural adjustment policies render the possibility of a successful co-operative capitalism difficult.

3.2.3. Conclusion:

From the review of experiences of industrialization in these two states, certain factors are observable for the pre-liberalization (including a part of the colonial) period. First, different patterns of industrialisation created different scope of entry of radical politics in the industrial sphere. The agro-based processing industries in Kerala were scattered in different regions of

the state, at least not concentrated in a particular town or city. While in 1920s and in the following decades workers were trying to be organized, first in different regions separately, in spite of meeting repression from the state occasionally, and later on got consolidated under the leadership of radical political forces in the congress party (later Congress Socialist Party and later on Communist Party of India) such organization was not confined to a particular region. The workers' movement all over the state became stronger than before, as the left's mobilization integrated these mostly unorganized sector workers with the overall left movement in the state, actively involved in the agrarian politics of that time, as mentioned in the previous section. The industrial employers' attempt to stultify the workers' mobilization by dispersing the production units further in remote areas of rural Kerala at that time was also met with mobilized resistance of the workers. The latter continued its organized activities demanding better wage and better working conditions, in the new production sites. So, inherent in the way the workers' movement developed in the state, given the then prevailing industrial structure and the associated repressive conditions of work, was an attempt to incorporate the maximum number of working units and, workers from even the remotest regions, into the industrial structure. Building of workers' co-operatives, similarly, could be seen as an organizational response, to the repressive working condition in industries of that time that was, also, in close conformity to the ideological guidelines of the party. Thus the unorganised sector, scattered across different regions, being the entry point of worker's movement under left politics, the success achieved from the movement also was evenly spread across many regions of the state, which created scope for a more participatory industrial growth process than before, a success attributable to the mobilized politics of the left.

On the contrary, the beginning of workers' movement in West Bengal was mostly concentrated in the jute industry and few other organised sector industries in and around Calcutta, as industrialisation throughout the pre-liberalisation period in the state, exhibited an uneven pattern, with a few organised industries being located away from Calcutta (Coal and Steel for example). In the 1950s and, specially, in the 1960s when this movement gained momentum, it moved around the specific demands of the organised sector workers and employees viz., against the widespread retrenchment of the existing workers, rise in food prices lowering real wage drastically and so on. While the industrial stagnation beginning in the 1960s was a common cause of the problems facing the employed, both in organised and unorganised sectors and unemployed in the state, unorganised sector could not be successfully

included within the fold of such organised movement. The continuous influx of workers from outside the state as well as from the rural areas of West Bengal, adding to the volume of unemployed in the state, the heterogeneity of workers across their background, the activities they are employed in etc., are cited as factors making it difficult for the dominant left unions to organise these workers (Mukhopadhyay, op cit.). But such a failure, even during the continuous left rule in the state has eliminated the option of the significant improvement of distributive shares of the workers arising from the growth process.

Secondly, lack of sufficient growth in the industrial activities in both the states, during this period has posed additional constraints on the scope of even maintaining the same distribution pattern as before.

Thirdly, in the liberalisation years, given the above-described diversities relating to unionisation in the two states, we find similarity in union activities in the organized sector becoming economistic with the only objective of protecting current employment without any concern about the workers' productivity there. This attitude, of labour unions in particular and the left parties supporting them in general, has assumed importance in the explanation of poor performance of public sector enterprises of both the states, at least partially. There is indication in the literature on industrial sector in each, of dissociation of trade union activities from the broader political movement, the latter probably absent to any meaningful extent due to the lack of long term perspective of development (Kannan, 1988; Dasgupta, 1985; Dasgupta, 1998 for example), the left politics in general aiming at short term demand management activities. Probably this lies behind the unions taking a narrow approach to the protection of workers interests⁴¹.

In the post liberalisation period, thus, left parties in both the states - even while in power, have taken to the discourse of co-operative capitalism treating private investment as the key factor capable of causing industrial expansion with creation of employment. Our observations in

⁴¹ On the contrary there is no guarantee that fast and employment-intensive industrialization would take place otherwise also, as, the aspect of labor union activities is only one among the myriad factors deciding the course of industrialization. Besides one can not ignore the fact that the discourse of development of labor, for which labor union ideally is supposed to be one important instrument, is likely to be different from the discourse of development of capital, the dominant development discourse under capitalist production structure (Ram Mohan, 2000). This brings the issue of need for an alternative development perspective to the fore, which left in both the states did not probably find relevant in assessing the past experience of labour union movements, in the given structure of economy and society. This reinforces the idea that the left politics has confined itself to the successful short-term management of popular demand.

this section however did not give any definite impression that even if private investment takes place in the states, to any considerable extent, that would ensure an initiation of a participatory growth process, in the absence of which the entire idea of 'class compromise' (Heller 1999) becomes less effective. So the above discussion highlights the fact that in the era of development of capital where the state can be demonstrated to work in the persuasion – coercion framework, constraints are formidable to pursue an alternative perspective on development, by a provincial government, even to retain some of the significant short-term economic gains to certain relatively deprived sections, the workers, in this particular context.

The possibility of significant improvement in the educational and health achievements in both the states given earnings of the groups which was to be made participatory in the growth process, would depend on the effectiveness of public intervention directly creating social opportunities in those spheres. The next chapter would discuss that in detail.

CHAPTER 4

Interventions under Radical Political Regimes Directly Influencing Social Opportunities

In this chapter, we attempt to understand how, given the character of the growth process, the change in the public provisioning of educational and health care infrastructure in Kerala and West Bengal during the study-period, has affected the accessibility and utilization of these services specially by sections of population with relatively lower achievement in the respective sphere. Specifically, here we ask the question: how Kerala could achieve comparatively high social development with less-impressive growth performance of the state where West Bengal could not progress in social development, despite the recently experienced and consistent improvement in growth, specially in the agricultural sector after early 1980s.

In Chapter 2 of this study we identified certain sections of population that were found to be more disadvantaged than others. In the sphere of education, for example, rural women, mainly from the SCs and the STs in both Kerala and West Bengal were the groups with one of the lowest achievements in the respective state. In the sphere of health the rural population of West Bengal as well as sections of total population of the state with relatively low purchasing power seemed to be maximum disadvantaged in terms of health status. Given the relative improvement in the earnings and the consumption by some of these groups along these social developments, brings to the fore the importance of public provisioning for both education and health.

In the following sections, therefore, we discuss whether there has been any change in the structure of these provisioning, making it more favourable to suit the need of the deprived sections, as already identified in the study. This is attempted through examination of various aspects of specific interventions by the left regime – to create or affect existing social opportunities. In the comparative analysis we reflect upon the much-acclaimed success in educational and health achievements in Kerala, to contextualise West Bengal experiences.

The chapter is divided in two sections: the former trying to explain the comparative educational achievements and the latter trying to analyse the achievements pertaining to

health, while concentrating on specific relevant interventions, with the findings of the earlier chapters on the background.

4.1 The Link between Efforts and Achievement in the Educational Sphere:

In this section, an attempt is made to explain the educational achievements of each state by the intervention in the educational sphere. We concentrate on the change in the access to educational infrastructure especially by the sections hitherto excluded from availing it during the period of analysis.

4.1.1. The Diverse History of Educational Development in the Two States:

In this section we try to argue that the pattern of educational achievements of these two states in 1977-78 that we observed in Section 2.4, is a continuation of the developments in this sphere of the respective state that took place prior to and during the British rule in India.

West Bengal along with Kerala is known to be a state where education, historically, got high priority in the development agenda. But the histories of educational development in the two States are very different. The higher level and better spread of educational achievements in Kerala than in WB are attributed mainly to these different histories.

In Kerala, there was higher participation of mass in education and particularly in basic education. In contrast, State of Travancore and, to a lower extent State of Cochin in Kerala in the nineteenth and early twentieth century took active initiative in spread of education among all the subjects of the respective state. Such efforts to spread education in this manner were speeded up when different social organizations, through Social Reforms Movements (SRMs), demanded to improve their access to education. The missionaries' effort to ensure their entry as a dominant institution, through intervention in the sphere of education in terms of spreading basic education among certain hitherto excluded sections, in a society with rigid caste structure also had a similar effect. Almost all the communities found education instrumental in improving their social position vis-à-vis other communities and, achieving important government jobs was considered crucial determining the latter. Rural areas, well connected with the urban area - through considerably developed transport system (Panikar and

Soman, 1984), and the relatively backward castes, too, were not left out of this process. But, the changing occupational structure of different castes with increasing commercialization on the one hand, and, the SRMs and the above-mentioned interventions on the other, decided the emerging power configuration and the relative gains of different castes from the educational effort. But, the hierarchical caste-structure continued to exist, despite the success of the educational effort at the average level, as is reflected in the relatively low benefits of the sections, lower on the hierarchy, such as Parayans and Pulayas. Even, the Ezhavas benefited less from this effort than the other beneficiaries of the SRMs did, on account of the former's relatively lower position in the occupational structure. Thus, some of the weakest castes, such as Parayans and Pulayas, did not have any significant achievement, and Ezhavas and Thiyyas, had less of it than the other beneficiary sections of the SRMs (Tharakan, 1997). The communist movement of the 1930s and subsequent decades targeted, specifically to improve the quality of life of these sections (ibid.) As has been observed by Ramachandran (op cit.), it took almost 150 years to reach near total literacy in the state after the Royal Proclamation of Travancore (1817) announced this as one of the important aims of development. So the role of left politics in this context, especially in the post-independence period, was to maintain the initiatives to develop education while incorporating all hitherto excluded groups within the planned agenda of development, particularly with respect to basic education.

But, in West Bengal, since the colonial period, all educational efforts were centered on the development of a particular kind of education, basically secondary and collegiate education, for a limited section of urban society (Mukhopadhyay, 1984; Roychowdhuri, 1985). Migrants from rural areas, generally belonging to the landed gentry, mostly group of beneficiaries of the Permanent Settlement, but gradually losing their link with the rural society, and increasingly getting absorbed in trading activities and government jobs, were one major group benefiting from such education (Chatterjee, 1997). All these sections belonged mostly to the upper castes. Majority of the population in the rural areas of WB, and the socially and economically backward classes in urban areas, were weakly connected to these developments occurring, mainly, in the urban areas (Mukhopadhyay, 1984). There was no comparable indication of demand for education from below in the society of West Bengal as in Kerala. The organizational efforts as well as the individual based efforts¹, to spread education, had limited

¹ Their efforts were based on the premise that common people were ignorant and irrational who had to be introduced to Modern Education. (Chatterjee, 1997)

impact on the spread of educational development. The idea of women and other backward sections accessing education did not seem sensible to much of the privileged sections, in general, and probably considered unnecessary by the British government. Specially, women's education was looked down upon. Except within a particular Vaishnav tradition - not a very acceptable one to the dominant and privileged upper castes, where women's literacy was valued for a particular purpose and informal attainment of literacy was not opposed (Tatvabhushan, 1982), women's education was generally looked down upon. This was reflected in the resistance against the introduction of both general and professional courses, for e.g. medical education, which did not receive any positive response from the upper stratum of the society for a long time (ibid. and Deb, 1990). Strikingly, around the same time, women from particular castes in Kerala were well-accepted in certain professions, medical profession being the most prominent among them (Deb, op cit. & Kabir and Krishnan, 1996).

4.1.2. The Interventions During the Study Period:

There was no evidence of reversal the above-mentioned pattern of educational achievements in West Bengal during the rule neither of Pre-1967 Congress government nor during the United Front rule. Thus we examine whether, the above-mentioned trend changed in the post 1977 period, with the help of reflections made upon the success of Kerala in this regard. The following discussion is centered on the observation that the above-mentioned pattern in West Bengal has not changed to a very significant extent, especially in comparison to what has been achieved in Kerala.

4.1.2.1. Reported Causes Behind the Main Aspects of Failure in Educational Experience:

There have been nation-wide initiatives to encourage attainment of literacy (National Literacy Mission, for example) and, basic education, particularly after 1970s. In the context of adult literacy missions, the non-availability of voluntary instructors, declining involvement of the active instructors (very meager economic as well as other benefits accruing to them, cited as a factor not inducing such participation) in the programmes, partisan attitude of the major political parties were seen to hinder the progress of the programmes. The available evidences of success in certain districts suggest that the extent of success depends on the involvement of local level organizations, mainly panchayats, in the context of West Bengal, their effective

monitoring of the implementation of the programmes and the efficiency of the bureaucracy involved. This was possible in many regions in Kerala especially during 1930s and 1940s, through the integration of informal learning by the adults with other aspects of struggle for change. Presence of large voluntary organisations directing their developmental effort towards the relatively backward sections, and, an electorate well aware of their democratic rights, led to monitoring, thereby ensuring better provisioning of educational infrastructure and educational services in the later decades. Notable in this regard is the role played by the above-mentioned voluntary organisations in institutionalising such informal learning process in Kerala, working for the follow-up programme for neo-literates, in sharp contrast to the case in West Bengal (see Ramachandran, op cit., for example). However, this progress failed to reach certain sections of Kerala such as fisher folk, which can be reasonably associated with the absence of public action from those communities in the form of mobilized articulation of their demands (see, for example, Kurien 1994).

As we have seen in chapter 2 that enrolment has increased in West Bengal, though at a varying degree for different groups, but drop out rates did not report any significant decline. So, despite considerable effort to develop basic education, lesser and lesser number of students joins the next higher level of education. In Section 2.4., we found that it is the children belonging to the relatively poor sections (in terms of various socio-economic indicators) of both rural and urban areas, who leave school first. The National Sample Survey reports on the causes of discontinuation of studying or, not attending school at all also support this observation. The main reasons cited as reasons for discontinuations were mostly economic and financial problems and, longer time spent to attend the domestic chores (especially for girls) and also, lack of interest on the part of the student in further studies nor school education as a whole.

4.1.2.2. Examining the Creation of Educational Infrastructure in the Two States During the Study Period:

Now, let us examine to what extent the improvement in the public infrastructure for education has been able to compensate for the economic disadvantage or problems of incentive at the individual level, by linking the change in public provisioning for education and change in educational achievements. Here, educational infrastructure includes the number and

distribution of educational institutions, the type of ancillary facilities available there, the incentive schemes provided for the students attending the school and so on.

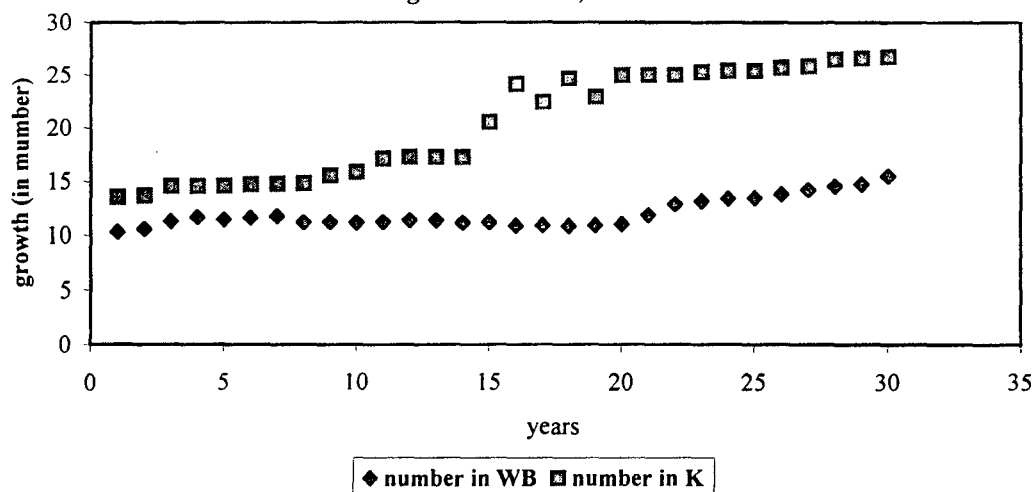
We use the information on the number of schools and the expenditure on education, provided by the government sources. In addition, to get the specific details of the infrastructure, we use the results of All India Education Surveys by the NCERT for the years 1986 and 1994. This gives information on various incentive schemes, provided by the government to the students for participating in education. Only these two years are considered, as any effort on the part of the LFG to improve educational achievement of the state is likely to show its impact by 1986, nine years after they had assumed power there and 1994 is the last year for which the results were available.

The data on the number of schools at different stages for the period between 1966-67 and 1997-98 in both Kerala and WB showed that the difference between the number of primary schools and the same for the next higher level of education is much higher in WB. High schools of Kerala, as a percentage of lower and upper primary schools clubbed together grew at a higher rate and by a greater extent (from 13 to 27 percent) than the combined total of 'junior high' and 'high and higher secondary' schools did in West Bengal as a percentage of the total of primary and junior basic schools there (17 to 21 percent). This implies a higher proportion of effort to set up schools at higher education than in West Bengal.

It is interesting to note that the total number of 'primary and junior basic' schools in West Bengal was almost three times higher than the number of lower and upper primary schools in 1966-67 where the population there was near half the population in the former. In the following period, the number of 'primary and junior basic' schools in West Bengal has increased by another 50 percent where rate of increase in the 'lower primary' and 'upper primary' schools, taken together, in Kerala was comparatively low (30 percent). The number of high and higher school doubled in both the states during this period, and the growth of the same in West Bengal after 1977-78 was also significantly high. The relative gap between the numbers of schools at different levels of education widened during the 1980s but reduced thereafter, from the 1966-67 level. The following figure (Figure 4.1.2.1) showing the growth of high schools relative to that of the primary schools during this period demonstrates that

number of high school in West Bengal has widened its difference with the number of primary schools.

Figure 4.1.2.1: Growth of High Schools Relative to Primary School in West Bengal and Kerala, 1966-67 to 1997-98



Thus, the above discussion implies that in terms of growth in the number of schools, both primary and high, in West Bengal has been at least comparable with that in Kerala and the progress was sustained in the former state during the left rule also. Though there was a sharper tendency of higher growth in the number of high schools compared to the number of primary schools there than in Kerala, the number of primary schools seemed to keep pace with the population growth. So, in terms of number of schools the differential outcome cannot be explained. Now we look at the distribution of the given infrastructure, specially to examine their accessibility to the sections population with lower achievements. For this, we make use of the NCERT data on provisioning of educational infrastructure in the rural areas and especially those predominantly inhabited by the SCs and STs.

In the rural areas, the percentages of habitations without a primary school within the distance of 2 kilometers were quite less in both Kerala and WB (the latter having even better performance than the former) for both the years. The same for the rural habitations predominated by the SC population and those by ST population were higher in both the states. Rural habitations predominated by ST population were seen to have the highest disadvantage in this regard. But, here also, WB had fared relatively better than Kerala for both the years.

For the provisioning of upper primary schools we find a similar pattern as above in both the states, except that Kerala showed a better performance here for both 1986 and 1994. Regarding the provisioning of secondary schools we find that the overall percentages of rural habitations having no school, within the distance of 8 kms., were quite low in these two states compared to the all-India percentage. These percentages for the ST population in Kerala were strikingly higher than the respective overall percentages for 1986 and 1994, which also showed an increasing disadvantage for rural habitations predominated by both SC and ST population between these two years. Interestingly, WB recorded quite an improvement in this regard during the same period, the trend exhibited at the national level, too. Except for the SC population in 1986, Kerala generally had a less advantageous (in terms of having a school close by) provisioning structure than West Bengal, though overall percentages show the opposite.

Kerala's performance regarding the accessibility to the provisioning of the higher secondary/ intermediate/ junior college/ pre-university courses significantly lagged behind that of WB and did more so than all-India percentages. Although between 1986 and 1994, the performance improved significantly, it still was worse than the all-India or West Bengal's performance in 1986 in this regard.

Thus, the typical pattern of habitations predominated by ST population falling behind those predominated by SC population and finally behind those predominated by the non-SC and non-ST population is evident at all three levels of education. West Bengal did not experience improvement in the access, by SC and ST population, to provisioning of higher secondary schools as it did for the provisioning of secondary schools. So, the higher the level of education, the greater is the disadvantage associated with provisioning of educational infrastructure for the rural habitations inhabited mostly by the ST and SC population respectively, relative to that of the habitations predominated by others in both the states. This can reasonably associated with the poorer participation of these communities in education and their poorer record of continuing higher studies. Better transportation facilities in Kerala may, to some extent, improve the possibility of accessing the existing provisioning than in West Bengal.

On the whole there is a clear indication that in terms of distribution of the existing educational facilities to the relatively backward sections West Bengal has compared more favourably with Kerala though Kerala has a higher value of overall achievement.

WB had higher percentage of 'kaccha' building at all levels of school education, where Kerala had a higher rate of 'thatched huts', except at the primary level. In both the states primary schools were seen to be more lacking in this particular infrastructure than the schools at any other level of education, and in both the states the extent of such infrastructural problems has come down in 1994. Still disadvantage related to this aspect is quite considerable in WB relative to that in Kerala. This was reflected by the fact that Percentages of primary schools in on open space, without any building for it were 5.65 and 3.29 in 1986 and 1994, respectively, where very insignificant percentage of primary schools in Kerala was so in 1994 (0.5) and none was so in 1986.

From other information on ancillary facilities in schools we find the same pattern of initial stages of education suffering the maximum in both the states. While at secondary and higher secondary levels the ancillary facilities (e.g. drinking water, urinal, separate urinal facilities for girls, lavatory in general and those separately for girls) in West Bengal schools are better, even if marginally, than in Kerala, the latter has much better facilities of the same at primary and upper-primary schools. Thus, certain ancillary but essential facilities are distributed towards the schools at higher stages in a skewed manner in West Bengal.

In fact the data on recurring expenditures (which were 99.57% and 97.89% of the total expenditures on education in Kerala and West Bengal respectively) showed that, at the absolute level, in Kerala, the overall recurring expenditure was higher than West Bengal in 1994. Again an unprecedented higher proportion of the total expenditure on education was seen to be spent on salaries of teaching staff (92.15% and 93.12% in Kerala and West Bengal) and non-teaching staff (4.81% and 5.9%), taken together. Per student expenditure was much higher in government schools than in the private-aided ones in Kerala and exactly the opposite is true for West Bengal.

Between 1986 and 1994, the percentage of primary and upper primary schools offering various incentive schemes as well as the number of beneficiaries from those schemes have

declined in both the states. In Kerala, mid-day meals programmes have been the dominant scheme, though the indicators recorded a decline in 1994. The regular and sustained effort in continuing this programme, which proved to be an appropriate incentive scheme in a society with considerable prevalence of people with low socio-economic status, contributed to the near-universal enrolment in the state (Kannan, 1995, for example). The other programme increasingly being pursued, in primary schools but not in the upper primary ones, are the schemes of providing free textbooks. On the other hand, in West Bengal all the schemes experienced decline in 1994. The most important scheme being offered in that year was the one providing free textbooks, where 21.41 % primary schools and 44.1 % of upper primary schools offer this scheme and 14.4 and 13.6 lakh students benefit from this.

4.1.2.3. Quality of the Available Educational Services:

The absence of effectively working incentive schemes in West Bengal as in Kerala, alone cannot sufficiently explain the poor educational performance in the state. This seems to follow from the observation of growing awareness of the usefulness of literacy, as has been demonstrated by the enthusiastic participation of people from the disadvantaged sections in the mass literacy campaigns, and comparable physical access to the educational institutions in the state as in Kerala. Thus an enquiry into the quality of services provided in the institutions as well as the socio-economic factors restricting their participation become essential. In this section we attempt such a review.

There are available instances from West Bengal that even in a school providing free textbooks, cannot make the same available in practice till a few months after the classes had started for the specific academic year (Roychowdhuri, op cit.; various newspaper reports, for example). Evidence of not having sufficient number of teachers in the school or irregular teaching by the posted teachers is widespread. The first factor, particularly, is an outcome of the complicated procedures of appointment of teachers since the time of Congress government ruling in the state, which have been retained during the left regime also. Rather evidences of malpractices such as making bribing as a necessary criterion for getting appointment in a school became increasingly widespread (Basu, 1987). The teacher, upon being charged, often exorbitantly, tries to cover the cost by private tuition (of course, paying bribe for the appointment is not either necessary or sufficient condition for undertaking private tuition),

more often than not at the neglect of teaching in school, thus leading to even non-teaching by the posted teacher. Thus quality of teaching deteriorates (ibid.). Since private tuition, as a part of the process of educating children right from the primary level, has become accepted as an indispensable component of learning the perceived cost of educating a child has risen, for households having school-going children (ibid. & Banerjee, 1992). This is expected to have reinforced the forces of economic inequality disadvantaging the relatively economically weaker sections of the society (for e.g. the agricultural labourers and industrial workers, given the evidence of not significantly improving earnings opportunity, as we have seen in chapter 3).

Moreover, against this increase in the perceived private average cost of providing education, sending a child from these households to school involves higher opportunity cost by forgoing the money the student can earn at least as a daily labourer. Given relatively low wage, especially for children, earning even a minimum amount of money requires working for a relatively high number of days. In a situation when a child takes part both in school education as well as works as wage labourer, the duration and quality of time that child is able to devote for education is, generally, bound to be inferior to that devoted by the school-going children from well-off households. In all probabilities the former is likely to start feeling disinterested in studies as has been reflected in a considerable proportion of discontinuing students citing 'lack of interest in further studies' as a reason for discontinuation. On such a background, the perception of limited employment possibilities and other expected gains could deter continuation of education beyond a level, if not the participation itself, of those sections of the society who traditionally had been excluded from the sphere of so-called modern education or secured government jobs.

The introduction of automatic promotion system in the primary education by the LFG did not require any learning by the children to be declared as 'primary educated'. This system surely had its specific objectives to be valued, but, the other systemic factors, by affecting the quality of education, may not be conducive to attainment of those objectives as has been evident in West Bengal.

To be able to study in the vernacular medium (introduced in the early 1980s but withdrawn later) is a reasonable goal to be set for any educational system at present. But the poor quality

of teaching and other obstacles make late learning of English difficult, which puts the children, belonging to relatively backward sections of the society, at disadvantage in the competition, for jobs or higher education, with children from privileged sections of urban society (the upper middle or middle classes, for example) who are educated in schools with better facilities (where educating in English also has a 'modern' aura about it).

Recent drives to privatise education, decision to increase educational fees and withdraw from free education have been in the agenda of educational development for both the states, especially after 1980s, mostly on the ground of financial constraints facing both the States. A careful examination of the expenditure pattern can indicate certain misallocation of resources spent for the sector. For example, in Kerala, there is no reason on the part of the government to bear the financial burden of the private schools also, which consumes considerable proportion of total expenditure in education. On the other hand, it has neglected the professional educational sector altogether, notwithstanding certain improvements in this regard in the recent years, which has been a profitable venture of the private investors. In West Bengal, the revealed priority for higher education at the cost of primary education, and encouraging indiscriminate privatisation in all levels of education, basic as well as professional, as suggested by the Ashok Mitra Commission on education (1992) indicate a clear bias towards higher education and, therefore, mostly towards the already privileged classes². Such a trend, even by a government that was formed with a view to strengthen popular movement from below by using the institutions of even a provincial state to create awareness among the mass i.e., the relatively deprived sections in the prevailing social order, was justified on the ground of easing the financial constraints in the context of growing fiscal crisis.

4.1.3. Conclusion:

In the absence of significant improvement in the economic status of the deprived sections and increasing perceived cost of education well-targeted incentive schemes become important as was clear from the review of Kerala experience. Thus, this brings us to the point of major difference in the educational experiences, as well as for the health achievements-as will be

² for example, see the Report of 'Shahid Saroj Datta Smritiraksha' Committee, 1994.

seen in the next section, of the two states. The active involvement of statewide voluntary organisations aiming at the improvement in the social development of the relatively deprived sections of the society in the literacy efforts and other follow-up programmes in the history of educational effort in Kerala is well known. The cumulative effect of these efforts manifested in people's consciousness of their civil rights sets a uniform development agenda based on the principle of maintaining the incremental effort in this sector, evidentially, irrespective of the political affiliation of the regime ruling the state. But in West Bengal except in a few districts the literacy effort, which requires a sustained action for a considerable period has not significantly gained ground. And this can, reasonably associated with the differential involvement of the local level organisations in the above-mentioned programme. Panchayats, which are the most visible organisation of such a character and the site through which the developmental activities in the rural areas of the state are implemented (Chatterjee, 1997) are basically dominated by the political organizations and therefore amenable to pressure from differing interests. Accommodation of interests that may inhibit the development of the deprived sections within its development programmes cannot be ruled out.

Thus in the absence of demand from below through organized articulation projecting education as a constitutive right - for minimum reasonable standard of living -has not necessitated any significant change in the educational effort of the regime, uniformly throughout the state.

Another factor not causing wide participation in basic education, in absence of effective incentive schemes, relates to the specific content of education – the materials taught, mode of teaching etc. In this aspect, both States showed similarity. Education system in Kerala is known for having attained reasonable success in terms of level of achievements but has been criticized for the neglect of deteriorating quality. In both the states educational system, probably due to the way education is delivered, projects it as alien to the learner's realities (Roychowdhuri, op cit; Basu, op cit; Oommen, 2000) and do not enable them to translate the learning into an overall development for the individual and thus for the society.

4.2 Health Action under the Radical Political Regime

In this section, we attempt to explain the change in health status of an average individual during the decided period of analysis, as had been discussed in chapter 2. While health achievements are influenced by multiplicity of factors and are determined as a result of interaction of health action³ with various socio-economic and political factors, here we confine our discussion to a few of those actions which are considered important in this context.

4.2.1. Conceptualisation of the Link Between Health Achievement and Health Intervention, and the Scope of the Analysis:

An individual's health achievement directly depends on the extent and effectiveness of utilization of health care services that are already provided, in addition to other important factors such as improvement in nutrition or environmental condition of the habitation of that individual under consideration. Utilization, in its turn, depends on the extent to which health care facilities are available, the individual is aware of it (physical access to such facilities) as well as aware of the need⁴-satisfying power of those facilities so that if necessary she/he is able to make use of it, provided the individual's purchasing power or state's subsidy enables her/him to financially access it. Again, given utilization, achievement will depend on the socio-economic and political factors facing the individual, the surrounding environmental condition at the micro level and on the suitability of the health infrastructure to the prevalent morbidity pattern at the aggregate level.

Now, given this brief introduction, we look at change in health-status outcome as arising from change in provisioning, given utilization or change in utilization given provisioning or change

³ Health action is defined by Murray and Frenk (2000) as any set of activities that primarily aims at improvement or maintenance of health, though it may have other secondary objectives to attain.

⁴ Health needs of an individual – to be satisfied by utilization of health care facilities are: i) getting treated and cured in case of catchment and getting protected from possible further ailment, ii) better treatment from eg. a staff in a medical institution that does not affect the service receiving individual's sense of dignity receives necessary response eg. Prompt action for ailment etc. iii) not becoming completely or increasingly dependent on the health services produces.

in both. Change in provisioning i.e., change in the volume of health services or in their mix may take place in response to i. change in morbidity pattern, ii. change in the goal the society seeks to attain through such provisioning, due to a change in regime with a different stated development perspective (in case of both Kerala and West Bengal) or existing regime adopting a different perspective of development, more likely as a result of change in the nature of popular mobilization; iii. change in the availability of resources. Similarly, change in utilization can arise from change in the awareness of the above-mentioned factors supposed to be affecting the former that is again dependent on educational achievements and extent of mobilization. Utilization definitely changes with the change in access also. Overall change is socio-economic and environmental aspects will determine as to what extent utilization of a particular health service will ensure the achievement of the goal aimed at by the utilization. For example, an improvement in income distribution among poorer sections, improved educational achievement for them may enable an individual, with particular physical characteristics, belonging to that section, with same level of provisioning and quantity of utilization as before, to achieve better health-status than before. Here, depending on the availability of data and information of different items in this regard, we choose to examine the level of provisioning of health-care facilities as well as their distribution across specific functional categories of health (family welfare, nutrition etc.) across areas (rural-urban) etc. We have used both expenditure data indicating the amount of resources directed to each as well as the data on physical availability of such infrastructure. This is supplemented by the information on actual use of different health care facilities by different sections of population. Available information on responsiveness of the health care facility to the needs and expectations of the receivers of health services i.e., quality of health care facilities have been used, in an intersperse manner, to explain the effectiveness of a given provisioning to cater to the target population as the former affects the individual's preference for a particular mode of health services.

A systematic analysis on how different sections of population share the cost of resources spent on health infrastructure has not been possible due to lack of the required data. However, from the information on actual private medical expenditure at household level, as well as some general information on how the medical infrastructure created at public cost is used and which section benefits from that are used sure to indicate the fairness in the distribution of financial burden from creation and maintenance of health infrastructure.

The discussion on change in educational achievements made earlier in chapter 2 and on possible changes in the earnings condition, of relatively deprived sections in both the states, in the previous chapter, are recalled at different points to reflect upon the possibilities of change in health achievements that can broadly be associated with the development efforts of the respective governments.

4.2.2. Factors in the History of Health Sector Development Causing Different Health Outcomes:

We start the comparative analysis with this section in order to stress on the historically specified differences in the development of the health sector that the left regimes had to reckon with in the two states and to place the role of the respective regimes in a proper comparative perspective.

The success in attaining better health status in Kerala is often attributed to the efficient functioning of the primary health care system. The development of such a system can be traced back to the history of 'social intermediation' in the state prior to its formation that facilitated the health transition in the state (Kabir and Krishnan, 1996). In an analysis of the changes in institutional, social and economic forces and the role of the then government to initiate and sustain those processes, the authors suggested the Travancore royal government's attempt to change the social and behavioural attitudes under the then prevailing social and behavioural environment to be the most important initiating factor, that probably caused the transition. However, the agency of change in this case was not the mentioned government alone, as social intermediation did not initiate always at that level. For example, while in the initial phases of health development, government took initiative to change the attitude and behaviour of the upper caste and class regarding use of modern or western medicine, lower castes and lower classes, having become aware of the existence of this medicine system by the changes in the social environment, increasingly demanded access to health care by the late nineteenth century.

Thus, according to the authors, the 'fostering of an appropriate social environment for nurturing the health transformation' by the monarchy in Travancore made the difference

between the health sector achievements here and that of the other regions in present-day Kerala.

But this account seems to be incomplete for the following reasons. Obviously a complex process such as the health transition cannot be explained by one factor. First of all, the same Travancore government encouraged caste-based exclusive practices, either by directly promoting it or by avoiding legislations against such practices (Tharakan, 1997). So what factors made the monarchy embrace such a participatory view of development is a question not addressed in the work. Secondly, the complementary but competing role of the SRMs and subsequently the different community-based social organizations as well as the missionaries in the development effort in the state (ibid) did not get the required attention. In fact this is important as it brings home the point that probably without public action from below based on mobilization on the basis of caste or some other identity, public action from above cannot be ensured. Thirdly, there was no mention of how the social intermediation related to the factors whose change must have influenced its dynamics, such as the then ongoing process of commercialisation of the entire economy with predominance of activities related to foreign trade, a system of developed land, credit and output markets (ibid.) and a labour market with pre-capitalist modes of exploitation (ibid & Ramachandran, 1997). Fourthly, in a society the fact that all the available improved facilities may not be accessible to the relatively deprived sections, who consider the given order as unchangeable and accept it, raises the question as to why they started demanding those facilities. The most probable answer lies in the explanation that the SRMs imparted them with the confidence and awareness that change is possible and they deserve the benefits of improvements in any aspects of living as any other section of society. It challenged the tenet that particular sections in a society, who were hitherto underdeveloped were bound to remain underdeveloped, and demanded developmental actions towards them.

So the social reform movements, followed by the communist movements integrating these demands with a broad development perspective, contributed towards the changing perception about social change accompanied by the increasing articulation of the newly formed or already perceived demands for better health care infrastructure that can improve their health status. The organised health action, since late 1930s till 1960s, and to a lesser extent, till 1970s, must have had its positive impact on the level and distribution as well as the quality of health-

services available in the society. Such an integration of health, education or other social aspects has not been documented to take place in West Bengal, at least in the pre-1977 period.

4.2.3. Attempts to Create Health Care Infrastructure in the Post-1977 Period:

We start the discussion on level and distribution of health care expenditure at different points of time. As no micro level data on expenditure on private health care infrastructure is available, we focus on the public health expenditure.

The first pattern we notice is that for a considerable period of time share of health care expenditure in the private sector, at the national level, has been as high as above 80% till recently (Duggal, et al, 1995). Given the overall poor purchasing capacity of the relatively deprived sections, this implies a heavy financial burden on them. Secondly, total health expenditure in the public sector of health in India, for a huge but inadequate public health infrastructure, includes curative or medical care (hospitals and dispensaries), preventive and promotive programmes, medical education, family planning and Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESIS), Central Government Health Services (CGHS) etc., and excludes water supply and sanitation after 1974-75 (Duggal, et al 1986; Duggal et al, 1995). The high percentage of curative health care in total health expenditure with a high proportion of the former being concentrated in the urban areas were another aspect of national pattern of health expenditure. This constrains the access to the medical facilities especially by the rural people and also by the relatively income-poor in urban areas, as long as there is no improvement in the provisioning of preventive aspect of public health care facilities. Thirdly, both private and public sector health institutions consume the resources spent for education and training of the medical professionals. For three doctors trained to be absorbed in the public sector health institutions seven doctors for private sector are also trained, all at public cost (Duggal et al, 1986), and most of these doctors either work in urban areas (as much of the private allopathic facilities are available in the urban areas) or migrate out of the country.

Thus these are the few main aspects viz., the predominantly effective presence of curative health-care facilities, mostly concentrated in the private sector with expensive modes of treatment in the urban areas, with respect to which we examine the changes in health actions in the respective states, affecting the access to health care during the period of analysis. Due to

the lack of data availability, the first aspect cannot be justifiably analysed, leaving only the other two aspects for analysing. However, we start with a review of the absolute level of health expenditure under different headings.

4.2.3.1. Change in the Absolute Level of Per Capita Health Expenditure for Different Headings in the Two States:

Percentage of health expenditure in total govt. revenue expenditure did not differ much between the two states. The percentage has declined in both the states after 1980-81 and especially after 1985-86. The declining trend is clearer for West Bengal than for Kerala. Given the varying population in these states, per capita health expenditure becomes more important indicator of health resources directed at improvement of health. Till 1994-95, the current value of this indicator was higher in Kerala, since 1960-61 and especially since 1985-86. The same is true for rural per capita health expenditure (at 1980-81 prices) after 1974-75 till 1990-91, (although percentage increase in WB was higher between 1974-75 and 1990-91). In 1990-91, in terms of real per capita health expenditure Kerala ranked 2nd among major Indian states while West Bengal ranked 9th. A separate study (Narayana, 2000), however, showed that between 1987-88 and 1995-96, real per capita expenditure on medical and public health has increased at higher rate in Kerala and was higher than the same in WB.

If water supply and sanitation are included, difference in growth becomes less. Among the components, the difference was more prominent when we compare the real per capita money spent on family-welfare than the same on medical and public health. Kerala had a higher real per capita expenditure on family welfare than West Bengal. The difference is seen to have widened after 1986-87. Between 1974-75 and 1990-91, where the real per capita expenditure on this head has increased by 562.45% in Kerala it has increased only by 298.62% in West Bengal. Real per capita expenditure on water supply and sanitation has increased in Kerala by 19.17% between 1974-75 and 1990-91, while for WB it has increased by 123.93%, (though at the absolute value of the former was at least two and half times higher than the later). The position of West Bengal in this regard came down from 10th in 1974-75 to 15th in 1990-91, the last among the major Indian states.

On nutrition, the expenditures, except for the year 1978-79, have moved close to each other during the period, though in terms of percentage increase, West Bengal has slightly improved

from 1974-75 levels. However between 1978-79 and 1986-87, West Bengal had much better ranking than in 1990-91 (Duggal, 1986; Duggal et al 1995; Reddy & Selvaraju, 1994; GOWB, 1998-99).

To compare the change in per capita expenditure in the recent years on the above-mentioned items of the health sector, however, we confine the comparison to one based on only the current value of per capita expenditure on various heads, in view of the complications involved in selection of appropriate deflators about which there is no consensus. Per capita expenditure on medical and public health including family welfare in Kerala has grown at a much higher rate than the same in West Bengal. Kerala saw the highest growth during 1980s (185%), where percentage growth during 1970s and 1990s was also quite high (129% & 141% respectively). In West Bengal, there was an increase in average annual rate of growth in the per capita expenditure after 1977-78 from what it was before, but the same was true for Kerala also, and in the latter average annual rate of growth was much higher than the same in WB. This is evident even in terms of elasticity of expenditure on this head with respect to NSDP of the respective states. For medical and public health as well as family welfare, the above-mentioned elasticity is significantly higher for Kerala than in WB.

Thus the growth in the absolutely high medical and public health expenditure of Kerala has been higher than that of West Bengal, for almost all the items, although like in Kerala it has increased at a higher rate in the post-1977 period than before in West Bengal also. Next we try to analyse the distribution of this overall health expenditure across different types of programmes to check whether there has been any change in the pattern of health expenditure, described at the beginning of this section.

4.2.3.2. High Curative Content of the Given Health Expenditure:

The per capita curative health care expenditure, that is, expenditure on hospitals and dispensaries has increased in Kerala, though the proportion of the same in total health expenditure has declined over the period (between 1955-56 till 1994-95). Percentage increase in the per capita expenditure on this item has been of the order 7249% in Kerala and 6754% in West Bengal. In West Bengal, however, the proportion of expenditure on this head in total health expenditure has increased during the same period, contrary to the all India trend. Rate of increase in the expenditure after 1975-76 is definitely higher than the same before 1975-76.

Now, given the higher concentration of curative medical care expenditure in urban areas and very high percentage of curative expenditure in the public health expenditure, it is clear that maximum percentage of the latter is invested in the urban areas. The overall trend of expenditure in health sector, common to both the states is matched by the pattern prevailing in the country.

That such a high proportion of curative expenditure does not always uniformly favour people living in urban areas, too, can be easily noted as in the cases of urban poor, specially in West Bengal. A survey (Sapir, 1996) on the health conditions in the urban slums in Calcutta, also showed that low utilization of existing health care facilities was constrained by the lack of awareness of their existence, even in 1988, after 11 years of continuous left rule in the state. A TISS study (Yesudian et al, as cited in Sapir, op cit) on the utilization of health-care facilities by the slum-dwellers in the city revealed that only 85% of the people did not use the MCH facilities. Women were found to use more of the traditional and cheap modes of treatment and availed of allopathic facilities only in the occasions of emergency, and therefore met with less chance of getting cured. Conversely, the men from the same section were found to utilize relatively expensive, mostly private sector modern health-care facilities. In terms of nutrition, too, women were found to be more disadvantaged, probably, by both the limits imposed by the limited availability of resources at the disposal of these households as well as by the conscious decision at the household level to spend less on women, even at the time of pregnancy (which must be the manifestation of the generally perceived status of women, compared to men, in the society). Very low mean age at marriage of women from these households, as reported by the survey, and nutritional deficiencies imply a very high risk of maternal mortality, and infant mortality. Importantly, though deliveries are mostly done in the hospitals, which enable these households to avail free post-natal services, the highly unhygienic conditions of these hospitals do not ensure safe delivery. The increase in the IMR in the urban areas of WB in the recent years, despite high concentration of medical care facilities there, may be explained by (i.) the lack of improvement in the overall conditions of living of the urban poor, (ii). increasing shift of preference for costlier modes of treatment, at least among the men from these sections and consequent greater extent of nutritional requirements that is forgone, (iii). the increasing fertility rate among women from these groups (as reported in different surveys, cited in Sapir, op cit) raising the proportion of these groups, disadvantaged with respect to maternal health, in the total incidences of pregnancies

in the urban areas, and (iv.) probable deterioration of the public sector health services in Calcutta (it seems likely considering the pressure of health-service-seekers from rural and suburban areas and without any significant efforts to improve on it), which, alone can be accessed by these groups, etc. The deterioration in the health achievements of these groups seems to be capable of affecting the achievements of the urban areas as a whole in view of the fact that significant proportion of urban population lives in the slums or are significantly poor (much above 35% of Calcutta's population were slum-dwellers in 1988), living mostly in unhygienic condition, highly vulnerable to environmental pollution, who do not have financial access to better curative care facilities.

Given the effect of other influencing factors, such a pattern is likely to adversely affect the health achievements by reducing the availability of the preventive health care facilities that competes for the same resources allocated to the health sector. But provision of preventive health care facilities is very essential, specially, in West Bengal, given the predominance of communicable and infectious diseases in the morbidity pattern in the rural areas even till quite recently (as is evident from different morbidity surveys by the NSS (1973-74, 1986-87 and 1995-96; NCAER, 1993-94).

In fact, alongside, we notice deterioration in the quality of preventive and promotive health care, depending on the quantum of expenditure on preventive health care services in both the states, although to a varying extent. This item assumes importance as in the long run these facilities promote health and make the individual independent of the curative health care facilities where 'health' is treated as a commodity. But health, as a right, as constitutive of the right to live, recognized within a development perspective that aims at improvement in the health and other conditions of living of hitherto underprivileged sections of the society requires installation of preventive and promotive health care facilities that could be accessible to those sections (Basu 1987; Banerji, op cit). In India, a major part of the public health expenditure is injected in rural areas by the central government (though health is a state subject) in the form of various National Disease Control Programmes. In West Bengal it has been observed that the absolute level of primary health care expenditures has increased after left front came to power, but its ratio to curative care expenditure remained almost the same during the 1980s, and fell after 1990-91 till 1994-95 (Duggal et al, 1995). Till 1994-95, Kerala spent lower proportion of health expenditure on this head, except in 1985-86. The high

curative content of health care expenditure (generally relatively expensive) vis-à-vis the preventive content in Kerala has been mentioned in various studies (Panikar & Soman, 1984 for example) and is manifested in high private medical care expenditure by households in the state. But one has to simultaneously take into account the already established wide network of public health infrastructure before independence since late nineteenth century in the state which might render the implementation of such programmes more cost-effective and economic than in other states at that point of time. Expenditure on family welfare has seen a phenomenal increase in both the states with a higher proportion spent in Kerala than in West Bengal since 1975-76 (though percentage increase was much higher in West Bengal). It is a well-known fact that family welfare expenditure is incurred in rural areas, and it has been observed by many (Duggal op cit; Banerji op cit) that this programme not only uses the primary health infrastructure in rural areas but does so, often at the cost of neglecting primary health care facilities. Reach of Family Welfare services are basically limited to population control measures (mainly sterilization) and use of indirect coercion for this purpose is prevalent in West Bengal, violating individual dignity, where Kerala's success in lowering fertility is commended more because it was achieved without use of any coercive measures (Dreze & Sen, 1995). But West Bengal's performance in improvement of maternal and child health care is not impressive at all, though it forms a part of Family Welfare, as seen in Section 2.4.). On the contrary, utilization of maternal and child health care (MCH) services seems to be better in Kerala, as has been briefly shown below.

In the NFHS, 1998-99, only 43.8% of the children aged 12-23 months, received specific vaccinations in the state, compared to a 79.7% of them in Kerala, in 1998-99. It signified an improvement in the coverage of children's vaccination in both the states than in 1992-93, the improvement being more significant in Kerala. Percentage of deliveries assisted by a health professional is the highest in Kerala and West Bengal ranks at somewhere at the midway among the major Indian states. Among the ever-married women who visited a health care facility in the 12 months preceding the survey, less proportion of women in West Bengal felt that the staffs talked to them nicely, spent enough time with them, respected their need for privacy than in Kerala. The commonly expected pattern of utilization behaviour is visible, in the information provided by the survey results, among women belonging to different social, religious groups and also related to groups with different educational qualification. Most of the allopathic, modern medical facilities and institutions provided by them (different pre-natal

cares, or institutional birth with assistance by a health professional, for example) are relatively highly utilized by the relatively highly educated, non-Muslim, non-SC and non-ST women living in urban areas. The difference in the experiences in the two states in these regards arises from the relatively high average level of and relatively low inter-group differences in utilization of these in Kerala. This is possibly attributable to higher availability of the facilities, the consciousness among the households regarding the need for using them drawn from the relatively long tradition of improved maternal health-care (NFHS, 1998-99).

The discussion however will remain incomplete until we compare the curative/preventive composition of medical care facilities created as a result of that expenditure. To find a distinct pattern of health-infrastructure development, if any, in the post-1977 period we, first, look at the physical infrastructural facilities in these two states before 1977 (Nag, 1983). Till 1965 West Bengal had relative advantage compared to Kerala with respect to beds in government and private allopathic hospitals and dispensaries per 1,00, 000 population, but by 1971 this tendency reverted. In the allopathic system West Bengal had lower population-doctor ratio and Kerala had a better population-nurse ratio. But in Ayurveda system Kerala had a more favourable doctor-population ratio than West Bengal, and opposite was true for homeopathic system of treatment, by 1977-78. But Kerala had 163 PHCs in 144 blocks and West Bengal had 316 PHCs in 335 blocks. But more striking was the contrast between the two states in terms of fulfilling the requirement of having at least two doctors per PHC. All the PHCs in Kerala satisfied this requirement even by 1973, but only 30% of PHCs in 1970 and 90% of them in 1977 did the same in West Bengal. One has to remember that this improvement in West Bengal was accompanied by general increase in the health expenditures in India as a whole. By 1977 Kerala had 11 sub centers per PHC whereas West Bengal had only 62. Another interesting observation of the study by Nag (1983) was that indigenous medical facilities, which were quite popular in rural areas of both the states (specially in the absence of other medical facilities in rural West Bengal) got very little support from the government, reflected in the insignificant proportion of government expenditures on these systems.

Matching with the better provisioning of primary health care facilities (PHCs and sub-centers) there are evidences that show higher use of medical care facilities that people in Kerala accessed than people in West Bengal before 1977-78. Absolute number of patients admitted to hospitals and dispensaries (including institutions in both private and public sector of health)

was far higher in Kerala in 1959 and 1964 than in West Bengal (though its population was almost double of the same in Kerala). This was specially true for women outpatients in connection with pregnancy and childbirth and diseases of early infancy. Obviously, this is likely to contribute to the fast reduction of infant mortality rate in Kerala relative to that in West Bengal⁵. Nag (1983, 1989) argued that better utilization of health care facilities in Kerala is promoted significantly by the rural population's easy access to health centers as these in rural Kerala were much more evenly distributed than in rural West Bengal. Significant difference was found between the catchments areas of the sub centers in the two states. While the average catchments area of a sub-center in Kerala was 22 sq.km it was 99 sq.km in West Bengal. Rural Kerala having better transport facilities for visiting these centers promoted better interaction between the health service receivers and the medical personnel.

The increasing trend in the number of PHCs and dispensaries continued till 1990 in Kerala, after which, till 1996-97, it remained almost the same. Similar trend is observed for the beds in PHCs. Number of government hospitals also did not increase much after mid 1980s for West Bengal. Between 1975 and 1998 there has been above 33% increase in the number of hospitals, though the increase took place only between 1975 and 1982 following which there has hardly been any net addition to the number. Number of health centers, however, increased from 901 in 1975 to 1263 in 1998 and increased slowly but continuously. Total number of medical institutions in the states also followed the same pattern. Number of hospitals increased almost at the same rate as population or at a lower rate in West Bengal, as reflected in near constant or declining number of hospitals per 100,000 population. But the same ratio increased at a very high rate in Kerala during the same period (for example from 49 in 1961 to 2.52 in 1976 and then to above 7 by 1988). However, to indicate physical availability of medical care infrastructure, a look at the number of beds available in different medical institutions will be more meaningful. While total number of beds has increased in both the states, in West Bengal, number of beds per 100,000 population increased at a slower rate than in Kerala as well as the absolute value of the former was much lower than the same in Kerala. Till 1971, the number of dispensaries per 100,00 population was more or less comparable

⁵ Percentage of institutionalized births in rural areas was much higher in 1964-65 in Kerala than in WB, though the same was higher in urban WB than in urban Kerala. Same pattern was found for births attended by trained personnel for trained midwife in rural and urban households in the two states, except that total births attended by trained midwives in rural areas of both the states were the same.

between the two states, but afterwards the difference between two was very wide and which did not narrow down till 1991. The number of hospitals and dispensaries per 100,000 population had decreased in both the states between 1988 and 1998. For all these indicators the values for the rural areas is much below the same in urban areas of West Bengal. In most of the cases, these indicators were further below the corresponding urban values for Kerala in the respective years. Rural – urban gap in provisioning of hospitals was much higher in West Bengal, which remained almost same or increased slightly over the years till 1991, but showed a declining trend in Kerala. For dispensaries, the rural – urban gap in Kerala declined much more significantly than the same in West Bengal. But Kerala exhibited a closure of this gap, over the years (till 1991), in availability of beds per lakh population, which showed either an increasing or constant trend in West Bengal during the same period, and such a trend instead of being arrested, was strengthened after 1976. In fact in 1991, Kerala had one of the lowest rural-urban disparity in this respect among major Indian states where West Bengal was one among the states with disparity between rural and urban areas on the higher side. This is striking, also because, in terms of rural-urban disparity in spending, the two states do not differ much, which implies higher efficiency in provisioning of health infrastructure in rural Kerala than in rural West Bengal (relative to the urban areas of the respective states).

Better provisioning of both curative and preventive health care facilities in the rural areas of Kerala was evident in the lower median distance of the nearest health care facilities than in West Bengal. It was observed that the median distance from the nearest town, even with the minimum health-care facilities, is 10.6 kms. away, and the nearest bus-station 3.2 kms. away. The median distances in West Bengal are, either as high in Kerala or higher than what it had been earlier (NFHS, 1992). The same survey showed that the median distances of a village from the nearest health-care facility were 5.5 kms., 2.7 kms., and 2.4 kms., 8.5 kms., and 2.3 kms., for any sub-center, PHCs, and either of these two, hospitals and dispensaries, respectively. The same was, however, negligible for Kerala villages.

Another commonly observed trend at the national level is that people use private health institutions for curative health care facilities, but, use both private and public infrastructure for hospitalization quite significantly. Those, whose livelihood and life are generally confined in rural areas in general and rural poor (e.g., the poor in agricultural sector) in particular, are even potentially worse-off than those inhabiting in urban areas or have at least regular contact

with the urban areas. But, given that the private health care facilities are generally more expensive than public facilities, sections of urban society having low purchasing power, as described above, are likely to be adversely hit (Duggal, et al 1986; Duggal, et al 1995; Reddy & Selvaraju, 1994; Banerji, 1996).

4.2.3.3. High Concentration of Medical Personnel Trained at Public Cost in a More Skewed in West Bengal:

For Medical Education Training and Research, Kerala's proportion of health expenditure has increased and at a higher rate than the rate of increase in the all – India proportion. In WB, the same has increased at a lower rate though it started at a higher percentage of health expenditure for the purpose than in Kerala. Though the absolute expenditure in West Bengal increased at a higher rate after 1975-76 than the preceding years, the same as a percentage of total expenditure increased at quite low rate. However, the availability of doctors per lakh population, West Bengal, especially after 1971, was higher than the overall ratio of doctors to population in Kerala. Still, the rural-urban disparity in the availability of doctors was much higher in West Bengal such as when urban-rural ratio of doctor-population ratio was 6 there, compared to the value of 3 in Kerala for the year 1990. This showed a more uneven distribution of even medical personnel in West Bengal and this can reasonably be associated with the lower health achievements for rural areas in the state than urban areas compared to the relatively low rural-urban gap in achievements in Kerala, the most prominent observation from the comparison of achievements.

Except in 1961, the availability of nurses per lakh population has been much higher in Kerala than West Bengal. In fact, the growth in the number of nurses in West Bengal has not kept in pace with the growth in the number of doctors. The doctor-nurse ratio in the state has increased very little : from 1.11 in 1988 to 1.18 in 1996.

4.2.3.4. Conclusion:

The availability of PHCs per lakh population was comparable in both the states between 1966 and 1986, after which Kerala had a higher availability of PHCs than West Bengal. The number of sub-centers per PHC was also always higher in Kerala and therefore the referral system was more cost-effective there than in West Bengal. As we have already mentioned,

considerably large proportion of total health expenditure is directed to non-plan expenditure including maintenance of the administration, and, salaries. Such a top-heavy staff-structure makes the administration highly complicated, as, finally, the service has to be provided at the ground level, and, also renders the salary-bill high. Though it is a common feature of the health-service delivery system of India, West Bengal seems to follow this pattern more closely than Kerala. The pattern of availability of health-infrastructure in the two states indicates an evenly distributed preventive-health-care infrastructure having easy physical accessibility to rural population in Kerala, compared to the distribution in West Bengal. This is notwithstanding the fact that Kerala has a high curative-care content relative to the preventive and promotive facilities.

4.2.4. Quality of the Medical Services Available to Rural Areas:

The high probability of 'no availability of medical services' playing a crucial role in corroborating the financial disadvantage related to the availing of treatment, especially in the rural areas, observed in Section 2.5. of this study, as one of the important findings on health achievement in West Bengal, prompts the need for this section. We find the constraint of non-availability of medical facilities becoming more binding in 1995-96 than before in the rural and urban areas of all the units compared, except in urban West Bengal. In both rural and urban Kerala no case of 'no treatment' was attributed to this factor in 1986-87, whereas in the latter year in 57 out of 1000 cases in rural areas and 11 out of 1000 cases in urban areas this factor was cited as the relevant constraint. In both rural West Bengal and rural India non-availability aggravated, and importance of this factor in both the cases was more than the same for rural Kerala in 1995-96. This is true for urban India also, though it was similarly binding as in the case of urban Kerala. In urban areas of West Bengal, however, this factor was never cited as a significant constraint in either of the two years. Probably the state of provisioning can be associated with higher availability of medical treatment there. This disadvantage associated with rural West Bengal becomes more prominent compared to other units. This leads to the observation that in West Bengal, the rural-urban gap was the highest, though in all the units of comparison the non-availability of medical facilities poses a more serious problem in the rural areas than in the urban areas.

Mere presence of public health centers does not ensure their regular functioning and thus may remain inaccessible to the catchment area. The medical staffs in West Bengal reportedly have a tendency to take transfer from the rural areas most often even without the access to basic amenities necessary for living, to the urban areas with modern and improved facilities for living, as soon as possible, after they get posting in the latter areas. As a consequence, in the PHCs, sub-centers even minimum necessary staffs such as doctors, trained nurses or even the GDAs are not provided. According to the referral system, the doctor-inpatient ratio should be 1 : 10. In the rural areas seldom such a ratio is maintained, which quite often becomes even less than 1 : 50, where the same ratio for urban areas more than fulfils that criterion (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 1996 as cited in Banerjee and Nag, 1998). Such an urban bias in the public health structure and in the government provisioning has been at least been accommodated in the implicit health development agenda of the left government. Absence of doctors and other required staffs, lack of necessary equipments and preventive drugs in the PHCs, lack of committed and respectful response from the medical staffs towards the service-receivers often violating the sense of self-dignity of the latter continue to be dominant feature of West Bengal public health infrastructure even after 1977 (Basu, 1987; Banerjee and Nag op cit, for e.g.). Evidence of widespread corruption at the PHCs and the sub-centers indicates the misallocation of even the scanty resources that reach the relatively backward rural areas. Private practice by the doctors serving in the government hospitals, the business-nexus between the medical personnel and the drug sellers, and, the private clinics running to maximize profit, compel even the relatively poorer sections of receivers of health-service in both rural and urban areas to purchase the required service from the private health care facilities repeatedly, and, often, at a relatively high cost of treatment. A health-care system so pronouncedly biased towards urban area as well as private health-service providers neither promotes the objective of attaining fairness in the distribution of financial burden associated with health care expenditure nor can recognize the intrinsic importance of the right to live a long and healthy life in achieving desired quality of life.

In the recent years, the evidences of deterioration in the quality of health care services are prevalent⁶. The increasing corruption and the shortage of specialists and medicine are

⁶ It is striking but probably not surprising that the period that experienced this deterioration roughly matches with the period that also signifies the one during which clarity about long term perspective on development and necessary strategies was reportedly lacking particularly in left politics.

commonly known in Kerala today and also in the literature on health sector there. The reasons cited for this are: the general financial constraints facing the state, like most of the others in India, the likely effect of such a constraint being the cutting down health expenditure on those items, such as capital expenditure, reduction in which would not immediately provoke any controversy (Panikar and Ramankutty, 1995) (a manifestation of attaching higher priority to managing demands in the short-term and to success in electoral policy than to the development issues). Another often-cited problem is that of inefficient functioning of public sector health institutions due, mainly, to moral hazard problems, raising the private cost of expenditure and the extent of utilization of health care facilities in the private sector.

A study (Jeucken, 1994), for example, on the attitude and behaviour towards utilization of health services among a relatively backward (in terms of different socio-economic indicators) section of Kerala population such as fisher folk (Kurien, 1994) observed that money did not seem to be a limiting factor in the choice between free government or expensive private Ayurvedic or allopathic health care. So revealed priority in choosing a particular mode of treatment is on the quality of treatment and given perception of inferior quality of health services available in the public sector implies a higher utilization of the private services. The observed tendency to equate expensive treatment with superior quality and relatively inelastic demand for health services drain out from them large amount of resources. An increase in water and air-borne infections does not lead to revaluation of the popular and folk medical tradition. All this requires the shift in the priority of the state health sector from quantitative to qualitative dimensions Panikar and Soman (op cit), Kannan et al (1991), as well as the direct support of the government to promote the alternative system of medicines which may be more cost-effective and appropriate for the hygienic and environmental conditions (Jeucken, 1994). Again such a high curative content can, to a particular extent be justified on the ground that improvement in it is important in the context of higher morbidity among sections with relatively low socio-economic status, high cost of curative treatment specially in the private sector and the high number of average number of man-days lost due to illness. But the fact of such an approach leading to the neglect of the preventive aspect of health services, are likely not to have been beneficial for the relatively deprived sections, as lack of improvement in the public sector medical institutions may inflict positive opportunity cost on the society as well as at the private household level by forgoing high utilization of the health services in the public sector. This can be most meaningfully attempted through the intervention in both the

health and non-health sector and therefore requires a broad-based economic development strategy (Kannan, et al, op cit). In the chapter 3 of this study, we have seen that with shrinking volume of employment and lack of any significant growth for most of the years during the period of analysis, probably has restricted the possibility of a relatively participatory growth. Thus specific interventions to improve the nutrition status and water supply and sanitary condition assume importance.

4.2.5. Conclusion:

Relatively high level of literacy and, exposure to mass media especially newspapers in Kerala, compared to the same in many other States including West Bengal (NFHS, 1992, 1997-98), and active monitoring by voluntary organizations, in addition to high and even distribution of health care facilities are likely to have been crucial in making the difference with the health performance of, for example, West Bengal. The panchayats in West Bengal have fared well in many aspects of rural development. In rural areas, as we have mentioned in Section 4.1., panchayats dominated by the party organisations provide the only forum for being organized to articulate popular demands. In the absence of any viable political alternative for a long period, voicing one's demand through panchayats or not expressing the same are roughly the two available options before rural inhabitants at present. Panchayats are not known to have taken any significant steps towards issues on health and lack of health infrastructure in the rural areas, except for the family planning programmes. The fact that inadequate health care facilities in rural areas are distributed more or less uniformly across different sections—rich and poor—the sense of relative deprivation among the weaker sections in this regard probably is not significant and does not prompt the relatively underserved of the rural health sector to be united, at least for articulation of the experienced gap between their need and existing provisioning there. There has not been any significant effort from above, too, to introduce these issues with a holistic approach, nor is there any specific agenda explicated by them other than the often talked-about privatisation of health care system or charging user fees in the government hospitals to tackle the problems of free-riding as well as tight financial condition, and, setting up better hospitals for the better-off sections. As a result, if we assume away the possibility of alignment between panchayat and various profiteering agents in the private health sector, it can be inferred that the possibility of checking corruption at the level of public health institutions with active intervention of panchayats or formation of separate organisation

for that purpose has not yet been realized in the state. Therefore, if not by action, by its inaction in some fields, the health sector in West Bengal is privileging certain sections while not preventing certain other sections from being marginalized.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

This study attempted to analyse some broad patterns in the social and economic development of West Bengal relative to the same observed in the state of Kerala between 1977-78 and 1996-97. The objective was to analyse the impact of similar political regimes on achievements relating to reduction of income-poverty, education and health specially of the underprivileged sections of the two states over the entire period of analysis, despite all the historically given initial differences in development experiences. In Chapter 2 of this study, we found that the usual indicators of income-poverty in these two states give the impression of a definite reduction. Kerala had, to a greater extent, been able to reduce the absolute incidence of poverty for the entire population and especially for those sections that formed the majority among poor, than West Bengal. The reduction of poverty in West Bengal, however, was quite significant compared to the state's earlier experience of poverty reduction, especially in the rural areas where much of the overall poverty of the state was concentrated.

Comparison of the achievements relating to basic education of the two states showed that there has been improvement in both level and distribution of educational achievements in Kerala and West Bengal. In most cases the former state experienced better performance than West Bengal in terms of the incremental achievements, again, for the entire population and those sections, which had lower educational achievements in terms of most of the indicators. In fact the better progress of education among these sections seemed to have enabled Kerala to maintain its better overall performance than West Bengal. Women from the rural areas and especially from the SCs and the STs formed such sections in both the states. A notable achievement of West Bengal relates to the improvement in literacy and enrolment performances of these sections. However, discontinuation still plagues the educational achievements of both the states and to a much higher extent and at a lower level of education for West Bengal, which affects the relatively low-income groups and social groups like SC and ST more than proportionately.

Discussing the health achievements, we found improvement in the health-status indicators in the two states and again, Kerala faring better in incremental achievements in all regards. But, simultaneously we find a decline in the proportion of people availing of treatment in both the states and especially in the rural areas. The reasons stated by the respondents for not doing so

indicates possible deterioration in the physical or financial access to health care facilities in the urban areas of both the states and rural West Bengal. Financial constraint seemed to gain higher importance in 1995-96, as a limiting factor especially in rural West Bengal.

The general evidence of high agricultural production in West Bengal and not so impressive growth in Kerala poses the above observations as a paradox. Explaining this will necessitate, as a minimum, the examination of the participatory nature of the observed growth. So in Chapter 3 we examined the change in the nature of economic growth in the two states. The agrarian structure in each state, prior to the left interventions was mostly characterized by diverse tenancy systems where the dominant mode of surplus appropriation was pre-capitalistic. This system promoted neither growth nor equity. Given this context, the programme on redistribution of land has not been very extensive in both the states. Though West Bengal had a better record compared to the national standard, especially in terms of the number of beneficiaries, in the absence of further lowering of the ceiling limit, the tiny size of the assigned plots and generally inferior quality of the vested land constrained the scope of an extensive land redistribution programme, on consideration of the viability problem. The absence of successful initiatives on co-operativisation and collectivisation of cultivation further limits the potential scope of this programme.

For tenancy reforms, leftist parties organised, in addition to the tenants already protected by law, the whole lot of inferior tenants in Kerala and sharecroppers and other tenants in West Bengal who were directly in conflict with the feudal landlords. In terms of implementation also, both the regimes demonstrated considerable relative autonomy in this regard, in addition to abolition of feudal landlordism that was attempted at the national level. However, the specific course, which each measure took, differs between these two states. While abolition of intermediary interests related to production is known to be an accomplished fact in Kerala, in West Bengal, tenancy reforms were limited to improvement in the terms of contract and providing security against wilful eviction. Explanation of the initial success of these programmes under the left regimes, hinges on the critical role of organised mass mobilization, either, directly through party organisations (as in Kerala) or through involving local level organisations like Panchayats (as in West Bengal).

With the retention of sharecropping arrangements, as in West Bengal, there can be two sources of potential loss of agricultural output. The first arises from sharecropping being observed as a sub-optimal solution, in terms of efficiency and productivity, to the problem of

inequality in the distribution of ownership in land and other resources, in some primary survey results in the particular context of the agricultural economy of West Bengal. The second might occur with imposition of a uniform set of regulations for the diverse cost-sharing and crop-sharing arrangements that prevailed in different regions of West Bengal for different crops prior to the reforms. In this context it seems counterintuitive that Kerala, with no intermediary interest on land, did not have a better growth performance in agricultural production than West Bengal, where still intermediary interests on land prevail. In West Bengal, along with development of private irrigation and provision of cheap credit facilities - though to a less than sufficient extent, the delivery of subsidized and regular supply of the inputs, water management and land development projects were ensured through panchayats' intervention. These factors facilitated conversion of considerable amount of arable land into those under High Yielding Varieties cultivation at least in the districts where higher growth has taken place than in the others. Besides, registration also has led to replacement of share-tenancy contracts by fixed tenancy contracts, which, too, might have added incentive to the lessees achieving higher productivity.

The other very important factor causing the differential growth performances in the two states, as is suggested by the comparison, is the differential labour-cost of production. We found that in most of the years since 1974-75 the minimum and maximum real daily wage rates for a field labour, both male and female, in Kerala were higher than the corresponding minimum and maximum rates respectively in West Bengal (at 1960-61 prices). In Kerala, which is increasingly a small farmer's economy as West Bengal, the high wage as well as the movement for higher wages mostly supported by the leftist parties, while alienating the small and marginal farmers, have led to the decline in food grains production and thus, also in the total volume of agricultural production during the first half of the study period. The accompanying strategy of substitution of labour-saving crops, conversion of land to non-agricultural use, abandoning of cultivation or the capitalist landowners' migration to regions outside the state with lower wage rate but similar labour productivity have put the economy back to the phase of considerably high agricultural growth in the second half of the study period while, lowering the labour cost of production as well as food grains production. But with increased wage and observed non-decreasing number of employment-days after 1983 and particularly 1987-88 in the state, the workers of this sector may not have experienced decrease in earnings, as has been reflected in the better reduction in poverty among the agricultural labour households in Kerala. The effective working of the Public Distribution

System in Kerala must have cushioned the adverse effect of a general food-deficit economy. On the contrary, in West Bengal, there has not been evidence of any significant worsening income distribution in agriculture in the recent years. But, evidences on the distribution of the benefits from the improved agricultural production indicate that agricultural labourers and marginal peasants, predominantly depending on the wage-earnings, have benefited less proportionately than other beneficiary groups in the rural society. This observation conforms to the pattern of poverty reduction in rural West Bengal, where there was evidence of reduction in the proportion of agricultural labour households in rural poor, but which nevertheless, was quite high, compared to the share of other groups in incidence of rural poverty. This outcome seems puzzling given the dominance of left politics as well as high growth in agricultural production in West Bengal, and, the possibility of a successful wage movement as has been demonstrated in Kerala.

The different history of agricultural labourers' movements in the two states can partially explain this divergence. Agricultural labour union in Kerala, comprised of individuals from certain deprived castes, was supported by the industrial workers and tenants who were also from deprived castes. The deprived castes had become aware of the need for articulating demands and organised mobilisation from the social reform movements, which subsequently aided the mobilisation along class-line. They could, in practice, be highly effective in doing so due to the absence of any conflicting interests in the organisation, and also, due to the communist movement's attempt to challenge the prevailing economic order through organised movement in many spheres of the society. However, the conflict of interests between the agricultural labourers and peasants outside the labour organisation in the sphere of production, which the left party could successfully contain due to external factors such as increasing international labour migration, prompted changes in decisions of the landowners regarding cultivation leading finally to fall in production of foodgrains, specially for the latter half of the study period.

In West Bengal, in the absence of scope for such consolidation along caste-line (except localized dominance of specific castes in the rural society) as was experienced in Kerala, communist leaders, generally from outside the agrarian society, attempted to organize the agricultural movements along class-line, representing landless labourers, and, peasants. Later, following a series of agrarian movements and leftist parties' formation of the Left Front Government, a separate organisation for the agricultural labourers was ruled out because of the acceptance of 'peasant-unity' (after late 1960s) as the guideline for action. The evidence

of the party's role in negotiating agricultural labourers' demand, while keeping the appearance of class struggle, was successful in not alienating either the agricultural labourers or the landed employers of those workers. Thus, the negotiations for agricultural labourers have not always resulted in outcomes significantly favourable to them, though accompanied by improvement in the earnings of a large section of rural poor and particularly, of agricultural labour households, even to a very small extent. But not taking a dynamic view of the process of peasant differentiation, along with the absence of an explicated perspective on agrarian reforms, characterise the present interventions in the agricultural sector of both the states. With a relatively increasing and higher importance of agriculture in West Bengal than in Kerala, change in the agrarian structure requires further study.

From the review of experiences of industrialisation in these two states, certain factors are observable for the pre-liberalization (including a part of the colonial) period. First, different patterns of industrialisation created different scope of entry of radical politics. The separate movements of the workers in Kerala in the 1920s from most of the agro-based processing industries, scattered in different regions, was consolidated, under the Communist party's leadership, which continued even on the face of repression from the state and the employers. Given the then prevailing industrial structure and the associated repressive conditions of work, incorporation of the maximum number of working units and workers into the movement, from even the remotest regions was necessary and, the unorganised sector was critical as the entry point. Thus, the success achieved from the movement, in terms of improvement in the payment and other conditions of employment (e.g. strict enforcement of the Minimum Wage Act and so on), was evenly spread across many regions of the state, which created scope for a more participatory industrialisation than before. In West Bengal, unlike Kerala's experience, building of workers' co-operatives, similarly, could be seen as another way of institutionalising such a growth.

On the contrary, industries in West Bengal and thus the workers' movement there, from the very beginning, were mostly concentrated in specific industries in the organised sector in Calcutta and in few other districts nearby. In the 1950s and, specially, in the 1960s when this movement gained momentum, it held up specific demands of the organised sector workers and employees, viz., against the widespread retrenchment of the existing workers, rise in food prices lowering real wage drastically and so on. While the industrial stagnation of the 1960s provided a common cause of movement for the employed, both in organised and unorganised sectors and unemployed in the state, unorganised sector remained outside the fold of such

organised movement. But, failure to organize these expanding volume of workers, from heterogeneous background and involvement in diverse activities, even during the continuous rule of a left regime, has severely limited the scope of a significant improvement of distributive shares of the workers arising from the growth process.

Secondly, lack of sufficient growth in the industrial activities in both the states, during this period has limited the scope of even maintaining the same distribution pattern as before. Thirdly, given the above-described diversities relating to unionisation in the two states, we find similarity in union activities in the organised sector being concerned only with the objective of protecting current employment and demanding higher wages, without any concern about the workers' productivity there. This attitude, of labour unions in particular and the left parties supporting them in general, has assumed importance in the explanation of poor performance of public sector industries of both the states, at least partially. The dissociation of trade union activities from the broader political movement, as observed by many researchers, and, the left politics, in general, aiming at short-term demand management activities, could be associated with the unions taking a narrow approach to the protection of workers interests.

In the post liberalisation period, we find a tendency of shift in the union's attitude, even while in power, as left parties in both the states have taken to the discourse of co-operative capitalism treating private investment as the key factor capable of causing industrial expansion with creation of employment. Our observations in this section however did not give any definite impression that private investment to a considerable extent in the states would ensure an initiation or acceleration of a participatory growth process, and thus, improvement in the gains to the workers. In fact, there are evidences that the economic gains achieved so far are difficult to be maintained, exemplified by the poor performance of some of the industrial co-operatives in Kerala, and, significantly high lock-outs and retrenchments, almost on a regular basis in West Bengal, which the ruling government had failed to curb.

Given the indication of slight improvement in the earnings of the poorer households engaged in agriculture in both the states, and, almost no improvement of real earnings of the urban poor especially in informal sector in general, and particularly, industrial workers, in West Bengal or slight improvement of the same in Kerala, the possibility of significant improvement in the educational and health achievements in both the states depends on the effectiveness of public intervention directly creating social opportunities in those spheres. The evidences of failure, especially of the West Bengal government to reduce early

discontinuation in school education, decline in the proportion of ailing people availing treatment, and, increase in the importance of financial constraints contributing to such a choice make the enquiry into the change in the structure of public provisioning in education and health essential.

In the sphere of education, the significant success in spread of literacy, especially for women in Kerala, and, to a lesser extent, in West Bengal in the recent years, could be associated with the increased initiatives by the state in promoting adult literacy programmes. While better literacy achievement in West Bengal has been concentrated in a few districts, Kerala had experienced more even pattern of literacy achievements spatially, across gender and across social groups. The diverse experiences of the two states, in this regard, can be explained partly, by very different history of educational development and partly, by subsequent organisational efforts around spread of literacy in each. While in Kerala the change in the pattern of economic development in the given social structure of the colonial period required education to be spread more evenly than before, educational effort in the then West Bengal was directed only towards the school and college education of the upper castes, especially in urban areas. In the post independence period, Kerala has maintained its incremental effort to provide sufficient infrastructure to provide education to a greater number of population, especially from the relatively deprived sections. During the study period also there is evidence of improvement in creation of educational infrastructure in the state. In post 1977-78 period, West Bengal also has experienced improvement in this respect. From the analysis, we found that between 1980s and 1990s the relative gap in the public provisioning of educational facilities in both the states has reduced, especially for the SCs and STs in rural areas. This can be considered to have reduced the relative gap between the enrolment performances of the two states in the recent years. But, the failure to check discontinuation among school students specially in West Bengal can be attributed to the relatively higher effort towards promoting higher education on the one hand, and, failure to improve real earnings of the identified deprived sections, while providing them incentives for attending educational institutions, in the state, on the other. In this context, specifically, the better performance of Kerala in providing incentive schemes to the school-going students appeared to have checked discontinuation in the state to a large extent.

In addition to better public provisioning in Kerala, the involvement of organisations like the Kerala Shashtra Sahitya Parishad in the literacy campaign in the recent years is another factor causing differential outcomes. In fact, the main constraint facing the mass literacy programme

in West Bengal was reported as the lack of involvement of any active group or organisation in the effort, which rendered the programme successful in certain districts.

In the health sector we found that comparable percentages of total revenue expenditure are spent on health after 1974-75 till 1990-91, although historically Kerala had a higher proportional spending in this sector. But Kerala had experienced higher absolute expenditure and higher rate of increase on different heads of medical expenditure than in West Bengal after 1970s. That high proportion of health expenditure spent on curative medical care facilities, mostly concentrated in the urban areas, makes access difficult for rural population and urban poor is evident from the increasing per capita medical expenditure by the households in both the states. The morbidity type of a significant part of the population requires more of preventive facilities in both the states, and, especially for West Bengal. Thus, we could infer that absence of any significant increase in the expenditure on preventive health care facilities restricts the scope for making the health care system more responsive to the needs of the identified deprived sections.

In West Bengal, Family Planning has experienced significantly high rate of increase in expenditure, directed towards the rural areas. Family welfare services in both the states use the Primary Health Care infrastructure in the rural areas, and there are evidences of the rural health infrastructure mostly serving this purpose alone, in West Bengal. But there has been no significant improvement in maternal and child health status or in reducing the gap between different groups in this respect in the state, as is true of Kerala. This implies relative inefficiency of the programme receiving maximum attention in West Bengal.

The choice of the cheap and non-institutional moes of treatment by women, contrary to the choice of costly allopathic treatment by men from poorer sections of the urban areas, e.g. the slum population, has been observed in urban West Bengal. Less number of hospitalised or attended birth, low mean age at marriage, high increase in fertility rate among such sections, and, finally, the increase in their percentage in the total urban population may explain the deteriorating maternal and child health status observed in the urban areas of the state.

On the other hand, despite the recent improvement in Primary Health Centres in West Bengal, the infrastructure has been less effective in attending the need of the rural population, given the low bed population ratio and doctor population ratio there. This, too, failed to make the system responsive to the morbidity needs of the poor, specially given the low presence of

private medical care facilities in rural West Bengal. Kerala, historically, had more evenly distributed medical institutions and medical personnel, which was sustained in terms of incremental effort even in rural areas, positively affecting both physical and financial access there.

However, a higher preference for costlier curative treatment, even in rural areas of Kerala, along with deteriorating public health care facilities have been recently observed. Given the relatively low socio-economic status of a significant proportion of the population, the reduction in the more essential expenditure in health implied greater financial burden on the deprived, in this state too.

Thus, from the comparison, the better provided infrastructural facilities in education and health in Kerala, irrespective of the growth performances, seemed to be the dominant explanatory factor behind the differential social developments in the two states. Higher literacy and awareness aiding articulation of demands in Kerala seemed to explain the better incremental effort in public provisioning maintained by the state. This supports the conclusion of the earlier studies explaining the difference. However, the review of West Bengal experience in this regard, suggests that improvement in both quality and quantity of public provisioning, alone, does not necessarily ensure improved achievements. Such an outcome requires intervention in the sphere of economic growth that increases the real earnings of the relatively deprived sections or other incentive schemes specifically targeted to the improvement in the economic benefits accruing to these sections, on the one hand. On the other, as this comparative analysis suggests, the most crucial factor causing the differential development performance of the two states is the organised articulation from below of the needs of the relatively deprived sections. The effective presence and involvement of state-wide large voluntary organisations in Kerala seem to have aided achieving this organised articulation which has not made its presence felt in West Bengal till the end of the study period.

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