Whose Independence? Social Impact of Economic Reform in India

Introduction
1997 is the 50\textsuperscript{th} year of India’s independence, an appropriate time to critically assess the social, cultural and economic condition and independence of the country. Viewed from the wide boulevards of its cities, India seems to be thriving. There is an undisputed increase in GDP and the growth rate of the economy and the urban markets appear to be flourishing. Not, however, with the vast diversity of available indigenous products, but increasingly with a plethora of middle class consumables—from kitchen gadgets and washing machines to the latest stereo systems and cars. Over 20 channels of television with a staggering array of national and international programs are beamed into millions of homes. Cellular phones and domestically-assembled Mercedes-Bens cars have become the new status symbols.

Behind the facade of these superficial symbols of consumption, however, lies a story of increasing disparities: a rise in under—and unemployment; a deterioration in the livelihoods of a majority of the population; an increase in critical poverty; a decline in the membership of trade unions; and a phenomenal increase in the number of workers in the informal sectors of the economy and in the extent of the irregular employment. Additionally, there has been an intensification of rampant corruption, particularly by political and economic elites; a staggering increase in environmental degradation in both urban and rural areas; loss of genetic bio-diversity; and growing social unrest arising largely out of greater immiseration. At the same time, there has been an increase in dependence upon international capital and multilateral and transnational institutions, resulting in a critical loss of control—not just by producers, but by the country itself.

This article explores this dualism by looking critically at the impacts of the new package of economic reforms on India’s social and ecological diversity, on the livelihoods and lifestyles of a majority of the people, on the political trends that seek a more rapid “integration” into the global market place and on the capacity of the country to build a pattern of social and economic development that is in consonance with the deepening of democracy, the widening of social justice and the sustainability of the environment.

Background

Industrialism, Planning and Equity in the Post-independence Period
For almost four decades after independence in 1947, India managed to keep largely out of a debt trap, although this post-independence period arguably witnessed the planting of the seeds of economic dependency and debt through industrialisation, militarisation and a move to a chemical input-based agriculture. After the prolonged struggle for freedom throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, widespread aspirations for social and economic justice impelled a constitutional and planning process that initiated a series of dramatic social reforms during the 1940s and 1950s—the abolition of Zamindari (landlordism), the introduction of the reservations system (affirmative action) for scheduled castes and tribes and investment in telecommunications, basic industries and infrastructure. Unfortunately, the colonial structures of administrative control were left relatively intact, as were the structures of private property. Even
the educational system retained its colonial legacy. Dramatic social reform policies thus went hand in hand with structures and institutions that perpetuated power and privilege.

For example, in keeping with the government’s formal commitment to greater social and economic welfare, the first Five Year Plan initiated by the first independent government in 1950 retained a strong dimension of equality with an emphasis on agriculture and on cottage, small and medium-sized industries. At that political and economic juncture, the policy of achieving self-reliance through import substitution and through appropriate trade barriers to protect domestic production from being swamped by powerful foreign and corporate interests seemed to be a prudent and judicious strategy.

By the second Plan (1955-1960), however, the former Finance Minister P.C. Mahalanobis shifted the policy emphasis toward achieving “commanding heights” in industry and agriculture—a strategy that, while stressing the importance of agriculture in attaining self-sufficiency, also saw the first significant food imports. By 1957, Mahalanobis admitted that this growth policy would, in the short run, lead to an increase in inequality. There is no escape from the fact that these strategies heralded a system that favored the corporate sector more than the mass of people and that it laid fresh foundations of uneven and unequal development.

The basic endemic causes of inequality and poverty—grossly inequitable ownership of land and productive resources, entrenched caste hierarchies, and natural resource-intensive industrialism that caused the impoverishment of millions dependent upon resources for subsistence—were only marginally addressed by development plans of the early governments. As the intensification of industrialism and “green revolution” agriculture began to favor the middle and upper classes, the patterns of economic development began to gradually push equity and justice considerations into the background.

It is not that the planning process neglected the rights and aspirations of the poor. Numerous poverty alleviation programmes were designed and much of development planning was justified in the name of the poor. By the 1970s, however, most of the top down programs, yielded, at best, marginal benefits. It was at this juncture that the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was facing a major political challenge from politically mobile middle-class groups as well as the lobbies of the wealthy classes. Anticipating widespread popular agitation and responding to the decline in support for her ruling Congress party, she announced a new populist thrust—the Garibi Hatao (Abolish Poverty) program. Gandhi promised to focus fresh attention on the bottom third of the population and institute policies that would curb the power of the wealthy (i.e. bank nationalisation and the abolition of privy purses—special monetary and other privileges—to erstwhile rulers). However, these programs ran into a wall of endemic social and cultural barriers, most of which were obvious and should have been addressed. The barriers included: entrenched political and economic interests; complex patron-client relations based on ties of kinship, caste, linguistic or religious affinity; official graft inefficiency; and a reluctance by those in power to grant the historically underprivileged classes an equal share in the country’s productive base.

From the fifth Five Year Plan initiated in 1970 onwards top-down efforts to eradicate, abolish or temper poverty reinforced dependency and corruption rather than leading to wide spread asset creation and control by historically underprivileged and marginalised peoples over the industrial
and natural means of production. What vitiated against even minimal success at the national level was the bureaucratic model of implementation “socialist” objectives. A bureaucratic stranglehold on this process and the failure of the ruling Congress party to; on the basis of a well-organised party with strong representation of lower caste and class groups, forge a polity that would have succeeded in implementing and institutionalising more egalitarian, redistributive policies assured the failure of these programs. Despite socialist overtones, the problems of an essentially elitist and colonial administrative system coupled with entrenched political and economic elites with links into the upper echelons of social and cultural hierarchies in rural and urban India remained the most serious limiting factors in the successful planning and implementation of an egalitarian post-independence development model. As a consequence, there was a critical neglect of education for the less privileged, of redistribution of productive resources, of the introduction of land reform. In the end, islands of prosperity were created by the imposition of an economic model that retained its socialist principles without ever seriously challenging the hegemony of pre-existing powerful feudal and capitalist lobbies.

Undoubtedly, as the economy expanded in the years after independence, many people from poorer classes and classes are able to benefit from increased opportunities. Their numbers, ever, were marginal in comparison to the overall population in the country. Instead, the license-permit raj became the means through which small groups of business people, landed farmers and politicians were able to accumulate wealth at the expense of the majority.⁴ Even more important was the nexus that developed between state officials and business people, as well as between the state officials and the landed interests in the hinterland. Some researchers have argued that this system lowered productivity and “dampened the possible multiplier effects on employment and incomes from expanded production, thereby denying the underprivileged sections of society opportunities to improve their economic and social conditions.”⁵

While some trickle down effects did take place, the basic causes of poverty deprivation and discrimination remained largely’ untouched. The policy of reservations helped make some jobs available to those in the scheduled castes and tribes, but the expansion of employment in government relied heavily upon access to influential persons through patron-client relations. Patronage was also extended by local political leaders, who used poverty alleviation programs and infrastructure development monies to advance their patronage networks. In the process, most programs sustained dependency of the recipient on the donor rather than creating wider social and economic security.

The experience of the first 40 years of independence thus highlight the fact that despite the idealism and the stated commitment to the establishment of an egalitarian order—sentiments that were so pervasive in the post-colonial period—those with power and privilege in urban and rural areas contributed little to the establishment of a dynamic and decentralised society and economy. In fact, the government became increasingly dependent upon internal and external borrowing, while programs to transfer land and resources to the deprived and excluded populations were weakly executed. It must be acknowledged that post-independence idealism as well as a diversity of progressive and radical political parties and other representative bodies at the national and state level led to the adoption of several major welfare measures. Progressive labor legislation, limited land legislation, the public distribution system, the public health system and subsidies to farmers became major programs of successive governments. Yet, except in a few notable cases,
most of these schemes were unable to significantly address the reality of social and cultural exclusion and economic marginalisation.

During this 40-year period, given the thrust of industrial and agricultural development, a slow and limited policy of opening up to international finance began to unfold. With the first major International Monetary Fund loan of $3.5 billion in 1981, selective economic liberalisation was introduced. Bureaucratic regulations were diluted and state intervention reduced so that market forces could play a “freer” role in steering the economy. What is more important, however, and not often acknowledged, is this program also introduced increasingly indiscriminate borrowing practices, creating a situation that brought India into a sustained, debilitating and subservient relationship with international institutions, corporations and capital markets.

1991: The Unfolding of Globalisation

Nothing was as dramatic, however, as the introduction of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank/Trans-National Corporation inspired New Economic Policy of 1991 that heralded the present phase of globalisation, represented by the Structural Adjustment Program! Loan (SAP/SAL) from the World Bank India also applied for and secured a loan of $5.3 billion from the IMF. The new package was outlined in a memorandum presented by the World Bank to the Indian government in 1990. The immediate justification was the serious balance of payments crisis and the critical fiscal situation in the country.

Since then, the government has initiated sweeping changes in economic policy, and the speed and penetration of some of these reforms have created an impression that many of them are irreversible. Significant shifts have taken place in the structure and ownership pattern of business enterprises, and there has been an unprecedented entry of transnational corporations and policy reforms to encourage foreign capital. What is significant here are the political and re-colonising impacts of the conditions imposed by the IMF and the World Bank in the context of their loans, as well as the social consequences of those requirements. It is these changes that have defined the latest phase of globalisation and economic reform, and it is to these that we now turn.

Economic and Political Consequences

The New Phase and the Politics of Adjustment

The main thrust of the 1991 reforms was to allow for the operation of a so-called free market, where the forces of demand and supply could freely compete and the local and the national economy could be integrated into the global economy By dismantling the elaborate structure of licenses, controls and regulations that had evolved during the four decades of independence, it was thus hoped that not only would production increase, but that prices would decline due to an increase in efficiency and demand.

At the suggestion of the IMF and the World Bank, import restrictions were relaxed and the Indian Rupee was devalued and made partially convertible. The SAP also included targets for concrete steps toward the liberalisation of foreign trade and investments, a severe reduction in custom duties, an increase in the pace of privatisation and a progressively increasing bundle of incentives and policy changes to attract foreign capital.
These changes heralded a virtual explosion in the import of capital goods with three main consequences: a widening of the gap between the imports and exports; a crisis in the capital goods industry in the public sector; and a more rapid export of primary resources, which led to a further deterioration in the living standards of millions of people. The following six years saw most the imports and fresh investments in the productive economy oriented not toward meeting the basic needs of a majority, but primarily toward satisfying the consumption patterns of the elite.

A wide array of foreign cars, televisions, washing machines, air-conditioners, processed foods, perfumes, fancy toiletries and the like became freely available and have become symbolic of the new status-conscious climate. The stimulus for the recovery of industrial production has come primarily from these demand. It is not cereals, beans, fish and other protein sources, improve access and control over productive resources, low-cost and decentralised energy sources, or sustainable water harvesting systems that have come of the new program, but rather product and services that are mostly beyond the means of the majority. For instance, a little more than one percent of households own cars and almost half of these are in 23 cities. Only 6 percent of households have a refrigerator. Elitist policies favoring the more affluent sections of the society have also contributed to the compounding of the balance of payments situation—from 17 billion Rupees ($470 million) in 1981 to over 100 billion Rupees ($2.7 billion) in 1996.

**The Debt Trap**

In addition to the balance of payments problem, India’s external debt trebled from about 1 trillion Rupees ($27 billion) in 1990 to 3.3 trillion Rupees ($92.2 billion) in March 1997, giving it the distinction of being the world’s third-most indebted country. According to estimates presented to Parliament in February 1996, the total annual debt repayment liability in 1996/97 was 1.3 trillion Rupees ($35 billion)—almost 99.6 percent of the expected revenue receipts. Equally pressing but rarely acknowledged is the size of the internal debt, which at the end of March 1995 stood at 4.8 trillion Rupees ($134 billion). The burden of external debt thus amounts to 3,800 Rupees ($105) per capita and of the internal debt to 5,400 Rupees ($150) per capita. The critical extent of India’s vulnerability and dependency is evident in these figures, since even for current administrative expenses, let alone any development expenditure, the government will have to borrow more. In a recent article on India’s macroeconomic situation, Indian economist Arun Ghosh stated that, “like the proverbial Indian cultivator, mortgaging all his assets (and his future labor) to the indigenous moneylender, the Indian state is indebted to the hilt, its entire revenue being earmarked for debt repayment.” India’s level of debt is making it imperative for the government to grant insulting concessions and dilute protective legislation in the name of attracting foreign capital and continued loans from the IMF and the World Bank”. As Ghosh once commented, “The management of the economy over July 1991 to December 1995 appears to have increased the country’s economic vulnerability and significantly reduced future policy options and maneuverability.

**Extending Corporate Hegemony and Introducing Capital Speculation**

Despite these measures, foreign investors and transnational corporations have been reticent to make long-term investments in India, highlighting how global capital is mostly moving to gain control over profitable state-owned enterprises or to invest in the stock market under new reforms that require no lock-in period. Trends so far suggest very little investment in productive activity...
except in light industrial sectors such as food processing, medicines, soft drinks, seeds and assembly of electronic goods—all of which ensure a rapid and secure return. Similarly other sectors that have seen significant investment are the banking sector (including the speculative market) and the insurance sector, in which the latest budget has proposed permitting foreign interests. In this undoubtedly reckless process, there seems to be little concern that the country is being made dependent on highly volatile short-term capital flows.\(^9\)

This may sound extreme, given the confidence exuded planners and the media. Yet, one of the most important source of economic instability is coming from the portfolio capital inflows from foreign institutional investors and non-resident Indians who see the emerging Indian market as a source of both speculative capital gain and cheap productive assets. Most of these investors not only have little or no stake in the country beyond private accumulation, but also have no concern whatsoever for the social and ecological impacts of their investment. Over seven percent of the capital that has entered the Indian market has been in the form of portfolio investment, and its role has been to claim a share of the profits made by Indian enterprises. A major study by three economists of the Florida International University concluded that the scale of the capital flight from India the United States alone was a staggering $15.7 billion, primarily achieved through the over-invoicing of imports and under-invoicing of exports. Other estimates place the annual capital outflow to the OECD countries at 400 billion Rupees ($12 billion).\(^{10}\)

Other foreign inflows have been aimed at the privatisation process, in which several socially detrimental trends have emerged The euphemism of efficiency and profitability is leading to the closure of many public services, causing higher rates for health services, education, electricity, etc. This means that an increasing number of people are losing access to these social services. There is also increasing pressure to abandon or dilute public education programs and the policy of reservations in education and public sector jobs, which had provided a way to combat the structural disadvantage that less privileged sectors of Indian society have historically suffered.

However, privatisation has brought a whole range of new subsidies to the private sector, including concessions in the provision and price of electricity and infrastructure, concessions on the purchase of land, easier credit on guarantees, even as profitable state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are habitually undervalued when sold. The wholly reprehensible effort by the government to divest shares of profit-making SOEs when over 200,000 private sector enterprises are “sick” only reinforces the belief that governments are under pressure from an alliance of domestic and transnational capital to privatise profitable companies so that private accumulation can be furthered. Rather than address the problems of loss-making SOEs and the need to give these companies greater autonomy, a comprehensive plan for the closure and disinvestment of many SOEs has been implemented by the government. These reforms are clearly not leading to the reduction of graft or to more egalitarian interventions. Indeed, what is of concern is that these kind of economic interventions further centralise economic power, with fewer people benefiting from the economic intervention. Left alone, many SOEs like the Bharat Heavy Electricals and the Steel Authority of India have upgraded their technology, expanded and remained competitive. Indigenous production need not mean stagnation, as there is adequate innovation and creativity among the workforce in India.

The growing influence of transnational corporations is also beginning to affect the rural areas,
since transnationals are becoming a dominant factor in building major infrastructure projects and in the international trade in food, seeds and inputs. Infrastructure construction, including hydroelectric and irrigation projects, mines (particularly open cast mines), super-thermal and nuclear power plants, industrial complexes, military installations, weapons testing grounds and superhighways cause an annual displacement of over 500,000 people.\textsuperscript{11} If the numbers of adversely affected artisan communities and other self-employed people were added to this, we would have close to a million people forcibly uprooted every year from their habitats and sources of livelihood.

The development process is profoundly stacked against the capacities of these marginalised people to subsist, since the industrial system is itself in recession or is incapable of providing a secure job to those who are displaced. As for agriculture itself, the growing commodification and commercialisation of natural resources is creating a serious crisis for hundreds of millions of people whose lives are critically dependent upon the availability and sustainability of these resources. Their capacities to negotiate a relationship with the market and make decisions regarding their choice of resource use and social organisation are all linked to this symbiotic relationship. However, with liberalisation and the entry of transnational corporations, there has not only been a more rapacious exploitation of national natural resources, there has also been a loss of commons, an increase in the pollution on life sustaining bodies and increasing focus on export-bound cash crop production.

The government is now considering passing a grossly inequitable international property rights regime supported by transnational corporations that would undoubtedly allow these corporations access to what domestic farmers can grow, as long it is competitive in the international market. Trends suggest that by and large, this measure will devalue and eventually marginalise traditional knowledge systems, which would particularly affect the women who have been socialised for generations into traditional systems. However, what is of particular concern it is not just the loss of these interdependent human-nature relationship, but also how women are increasingly being rendered obsolete an unwanted in the new agrarian structure as a result of the new definition of property rights. The argument that they will benefit by the intensification of agriculture controlled by large farmers or transnational corporations belies the experience of the past 30 years. There will undoubtedly be some exceptions, but there is little evidence in the past six years to suggest that women, particularly those belonging to the less-privileged Dalit and tribal communities, benefit from the changes that liberalisation has brought into agriculture.\textsuperscript{12}

Also, given that 76 percent of women workers are in the agricultural sector, the overwhelming proportion of whom are vulnerable to small shifts in productivity, wages and climate, the new vulnerabilities brought by economic reform are distinctly felt.\textsuperscript{13} A wide range of traditional occupations that have a higher component of female labor—handloom handicrafts, cashew and coir—are in crisis. The domestic silk industry has been adversely hit by a policy decision to free imports of silk, directly affecting women.\textsuperscript{14} It must be acknowledged that new agricultural technologies do improve some employment opportunities for women, but given the national scale of impoverishment and displacement, these gains are probably minuscule.

The argument here is not only about the diversification of what is produced, but rather about whose interests are served by these changes in property and production relations in the agrarian
sector, who controls the diversification, who benefits and whether it is ecologically sustainable. As long as the demand is for land consolidation and handing over control to agro-processing and food processing companies, small, marginal and less and particularly women among them will be severely affected. Whether in the age of colonisation or the unfolding age of globalisation, India seems to have been unable to prevent its economy from becoming a subservient actor in the global economy.\(^{15}\)

**Black Money, Scams and Corruption**

The 1991 reforms, besides affecting production, have also had a definite impact on the way business is transacted. Arguably the most important reason for the continuing inflation (7 percent to 11 percent) and increasing internal and external debt is the sustenance and increasing scale of the “black,” unregulated economy.\(^{16}\) Evidence that illegal activity is steadily finding its way into the public domain is suggested by a dramatic increase in tax evasion, graft and financial speculation, as well as an increase in the illegal traffic in weapons and drugs. Black money is used extensively for political patronage and economic gains. It is spirited abroad through the *hawala* markets, where foreign currency is exchanged for Rupees at higher than the official rates, and is also cleared through the under-invoicing of exports and over-invoicing of imports. Some black money becomes legitimate through amnesty schemes announced periodically by the government attract black money. Much of it, however, is used to purchase gold, arms, drugs, electronic goods and gems, which are smuggle into the country and purchased by others flush with black money. The actions of smugglers, Hawala market racketeers and import-export manipulators are leading to an estimated loss of about $10 to $15 billions annually, contributing to the serious balance of payments situation. Black incomes are estimated to make up a staggering 20 percent to 25 percent of the national income.\(^{17}\)

Obviously, some of this is not the consequence of SAP, but rather part of an elite-oriented process of economic development. The Indian economic scene was neither truly oriented toward people but was all along dualistic with major benefits going to the rich. The SAP only takes that process much further and introduces totally new element of foreign exploitation. Undoubtedly, those who acquired vested economic interests under the regimes of licenses and controls will lose privilege, patronage and influence if these regimes are reformed. Advantages and privileges historically enjoyed by domestic capital and landed farmers will also be challenged. However, the system that is taking the place of the earlier regime is not leading toward greater decentralisation and accountability, but rather legitimising new structures of centralised power. This point is crucial. As a result of the SAP policies, we are now witnessing a continuation of the accentuation of poverty among those who had succeeded under state sponsored development, depriving them of the ability to remain politically active and pressurise those at the top. This translates into a significant loss by the majority over the gains of increasing productivity, however skewed initially, and of sovereignty.

The systematic violation of laws and regulations that perpetuates black money has partially been made possible by a grand symbiosis between businesspeople, politicians and bureaucrats who have entrenched themselves in the political system. The Joint Parliamentary Committee investigating irregularities in securities and banking transactions from July 1991 to May 1992 which amounted to a staggering $1.3 billion, exposed the involvement of a large number of public agencies, big industrial houses and the highest levels of government in illegal transactions.
The all-party Committee was categorical in stating that the irregularities it uncovered were a result of liberalisation without adequate safeguards. These safeguards have not yet been put into place, and the country continues to rock with regular exposes of massive scams, diversion of funds from public sources into private hands, flight of capital and endemic corruption. It is true that the blame for all this cannot be placed on the doors of the liberalisation program, but as numerous deals with foreign corporations progress, the practice has been further reinforced and institutionalised. Indian Institute for Public Administration economist Kamla Narayan Kabra summarises: “The capital market liberalisation contributed in a variety of ways to the perpetration of the worst and the most complex bank fraud committed since independence. Without these policy changes and a permissive growth-at-any-cost environment of business associated with liberalisation, neither the motor power, nor the amounts involved nor the stock market’s wild hull run would have been available to the scamsters.”

**Rising Prices and the consequences of Inflation**

India’s economic health has also been affected by the 1991 reforms, and not always in the way policymakers had envisioned. For example, the restructuring has led to spiraling price issues, particularly in the case of essential commodities. Within a year of the New Economic Policy, grain prices increased by 96 percent and those of coarse cereals by over 50 percent. Between 1991 and 1994, the issue price of the common variety of rice increased 85.8 percent and of wheat 71.8 percent. During the same period, the wholesale price index increased 44.4 percent. Between 1990/91 and 1994/95, the consumer price index for agricultural laborers increased 53.1 percent. The cuts in social spending, hikes in food prices supplied through Fair Price shops, steep increases in public transport fares, increases in fees for public services and growing unemployment seriously hit workers in the informal sector as well as agricultural laborers.

Government data graphically illustrate this point. In 1990-91, the general price level represented by the wholesale price index was 185 (1980/81=100). It increased to approximately 300 by the end of 1995, an increase of over 60 percent. Similarly, price of food items increased from 201 to 340, an increase almost 70 percent. It follows that an extremely small percentage of people have not been affected by inflation, since a miniscule slice of the population have had their earnings rise by that amount. While the rate of inflation may have come down somewhat in 1997, prices have soared alarmingly high and continue to rise, especially those of essential commodities that directly affect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable people. Studies of the small scale sector, which accounts for a substantial quantity of goods and provides significant employment, have shown that this sector has been adversely affected by the new economic policies. As one report noted regarding economic strategy, “The present policies are oblivious to the problems of small farmers and other primary producers, especially in the semi-arid regions.”

**Social Impact**

**Employment Under Liberalisation**

In 1991, when the New Economic Policy began, India ready had a massive unemployment burden of about 11 million people. Without the SAP, it was expected to rise to 15 million 1994. However, with the SAP, the number of unemployed people is increasing more rapidly because of the decline in the rate new recruitment due to curtailment in development expenditure,
withdrawal of budgetary support for state-owned enterprises, decline in industrial production due to import liberalisation, the speeding up the computerisation plans in the name of efficiency, privatisation and the closure of state-owned enterprises.

It may be argued that six years is not enough to assess the consequences of the new package of SAP reforms. Yet, some visible impacts can be highlighted. A comprehensive survey of employment in the post-1991 phase suggests, counter to the clam in the government’s Economic Survey of 1995, that this period has been one of “jobless growth” and that whatever employment has been generated has been through poverty alleviation programs, which have little impact on either asset creation for the poor or on aggregate economic growth. Simultaneously, there has also been a reduction in (real) public investment and government expenditures on health, education and welfare. For those who depend on a daily wage to survive, these trends have had disastrous consequences. Undoubtedly, a few will adapt to find new or better—paying employment and others will find alternative, often non-legal ways to earn a living. The overall unemployment trend, however, suggests a net adverse impact on access and control over productive resources.

One estimate suggests that restructuring the economy through privatisation, import liberalisation and deflationary fiscal policy will lead to an increase in unemployment by at least several million people per year over the next two years. Another study states that there will also be growing unemployment in the organised sector, owing to increasing capital intensity that will push workers into the informal and agricultural sectors. Over the past five years, employment in the organised sector has in fact increased by 1.2 million people (0.5 million in the private sector and 0.7 million in the public sector.) However, compared to the 35 million added to the labor stock in this period, the extent of the crisis in employment is obvious.

The decline in private sector employment has come despite growth in production, partially due to computerisation plans that are being accelerated in the name of efficiency and profits. The employment situation also has deteriorated due to the retrenchment, privatisation and closure of SOEs. Several estimates indicate that, with a decline in the number of salaried persons with salaries/wages protected partially against inflation, there will be a sharp fall in the demand for consumer goods and services, which in turn will result in a fall in the employment opportunities in the informal sector. The expected number of unemployed would therefore be 30 million by 1997, an addition of over 10 million people due to the SAP. Meanwhile, the unorganised sector which provides employment to 90 percent of workers, has seen its share in the national income decline from 70 percent in 1981 to 63 percent in 1991.

Among the communities most adversely affected are artisans and handloom weavers, who suffer the gravest consequences from SAP-induced inflation and squeeze in credit supply. A significant percentage of the almost 20 million handloom weavers across the country have been affected by the export of raw cotton and cotton yarn, which has resulted in a shortage of yarn and a rise in its domestic price. For those living in a fragile subsistence economy, these changes—in some cases reducing incomes by as much as 50 percent—can mean hunger and starvation. There seems to be little concern that with each death, a slice of India’s unique heritage of remarkable textile tradition inches towards extinction.

The situation also affects the young, as available evidence suggests that the rise in unemployment...
is driving young people into underworld activities in larger and larger numbers including young girls engaging in prostitution. AIDS is spreading India and it might be assumed that epidemic proportions of prostitution, drug trafficking and crime will grow as expected as a consequence of the compounding of unemployment and increasingly materialist values under the SAP regime. The plight of India’s children has also received little attention from policymakers. Estimates of the number of child workers range from 70 million to 100 million, with India having the distinction of having half the world’s child workers. The past six years have generated little change for child welfare in India. In fact, growing impoverishment and displacement has only increased the vulnerability at insecurity of children. Current data show that expenditures on social sectors—particularly health and education for the lower half of society including child welfare—is stagnant or in decline. According to the U.N. Development Program, India spends lower share of public expenditure on health and education than nine of the least developed countries, most of which have per capita incomes much lower than India’s.

Unemployment in the rural areas is also a problem. C.H. Hanumantha Rao, who as chairperson of the National Commission on Rural Labor gathered extensive evidence on conditions in rural India, unambiguously made the linkage between SAP and the deterioration of livelihoods of rural labor. According to Rao, SAP measures affect rural labor through the reduction of public investment in both agriculture and social sectors, including primary education, health care and drinking water. Since investments in agriculture, rural development, irrigation and social sectors are basically financed by state revenues, these have become first victims of the new economic measures.

Although central outlays on poverty alleviation programs have by and large been protected, Rao argues that since the resources of states have been eroded, expenditures on essential outlays for agriculture have declined, with adverse consequences for the social sector and rural employment. Second, Rao holds that the increase in the prices of essential commodities like food grains is a consequence of the SAP and that this has substantially impacted the poor. For instance, if the National Commission on Rural Labor had recommended a daily minimum agricultural wage of 20 Rupees at mid-1991 prices, within two years it had to recommend a 40 percent increase in order for wages to accommodate the rising cost of basic needs.24

Poverty and the Polarisation of Wealth
A relatively conservative scholar concluded that “... while economic liberalisation may have accentuated economic disparities, sharpened caste divisions and promoted patriarchy and fundamentalism, it is important to note that the market has released undercurrents which may eventually suppress and overwhelm the divisive forces.”25 Unfortunately, here the author has not carried the honesty of an acknowledgment of the massive social, cultural and economic disarray the New Economic Policy has caused forward into an analysis of the structural root causes. instead, the author uses a convenient escape route in the hope of a possible reversal at some unspecified period in the future.

However, the poverty line in India is fixed at such a low level that crossing it by no means ensures dignified living conditions for a household. The contentious debate over the number of people in poverty line was somewhat stilled by a startling yet sobering comprehensive survey by the National Council of Applied Economic Research released by the deputy chairman of the
Planning Commission in January 1997. The survey showed that over 40 percent of India’s people were still below the poverty line and that another 30 percent are just above it. Thus, according to the criterion under which citizens are guaranteed the right to live in dignity, an overwhelming majority would be classified as belonging to the category of those whose right to life is being violated..

A social scientist, commenting on the seemingly endless preoccupation with “poverty studies said “...it is a tragedy of human efforts that, despite an enormous investment in social capital on the creation of equitable conditions of existence, we continue to be involved in developing cognitive tools for understanding distress.” The debates and studies on poverty are marked by a distancing from any engagement with the need for political change to positively alter the conditions of the poor. Witness the continuing dependence among planners and donors on technical fixes, despite 50 years of evidence that they are, at best, superficial and, at worst, an insult to the poor. The past four decades of developmental planning and poverty alleviation programs suggest that not only is trickle down not working but that economic growth does not yield a deeper process of democratisation, the realisation of more egalitarian control or access to natural and financial productive resources. The abandoning of any serious equity thrust is reflected not just in statistics showing that income disparities between the poorest 20 percent of the population and the wealthiest 20 percent have doubled in India in the last 30 years, but also in a country where salaries in many corporate sectors exceed $300,000. In a national situation where the minimum daily wage is less than $2 and half the working population does not even earn that much, serious ethical and political issues arise.

In 1995, the then-ruling Congress party responded to growing unrest over poverty issues in an election year by announcing a wide range of welfare and rural development programs and financial allocations in the yearly budget. These safety nets were designed to mitigate only the short-term effects of stabilisation and structural adjustment, without consideration of the long-term adverse impacts of economic reforms on the rural areas and the rural poor. One of the much-touted safety nets is the Public Distribution System, which is aimed at providing food security for the poor. Evidence suggests, however, that this is far from the case. Not only has there been a net decline in the purchasing power of the bottom 40 percent of the population, but the recent data suggest that only 2 percent of the poor population in rural Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Punjab are able to obtain supplies. In the urban areas of eight states, less than 10 percent of the people buy from the Fair Price Shops (outlets for food from the Public Distribution System) and 88 percent of the people covered by the survey reported that they do not get supplies when they need them.

Persistent undernutrition and malnutrition, as well as an increase in starvation deaths compounded by growing under- and unemployment and rising food prices, are inexcusable when the country food buffers are overflowing. Recently, a more targeted program has been proposed to halve the prices that are charged to those below the poverty line. Given the experience of the past several decades, unless concomitant institutional reforms are also put into place with appropriate mechanisms for accountability and monitoring, even this effort will fail to even partially alleviate the poor’s access to affordable food.

All this should not be construed as a critique of the Public Distribution System organisation itself,
since there continues be a critical need to provide subsidised food in the short run those who are really poor, but rather a recognition that centralised storage and distribution systems are not a substitute for four-pronged strategy that includes the following: i) improving the productivity and availability of enough food locally; ii) recovering and restoring the productivity of degraded agricultural land and distributing them to the poor; iii) creating conditions for the democratisation of access and control over productive natural resources; and it’s increasing incomes of the bottom 40-50 p. cent of the population.

Likewise, it is not enough to blame the corporate world the SAP regime for engendering unethical practices and for legitimising the polarisation of wealth. The Fifth Pay Commission has recommended massive increases in the salaries of bureaucrats and elected representatives. In the past few years, NGOs are also being increasingly corporatised and commercialised, with little accountability and commitment to challenge entrenched economic and political interests. To the contrary, they have become increasingly pliable agents for the priorities and programs of bilateral and multilateral donors and in the perpetuation of fragmentation and competition in what needs to be a truly “voluntary spirit.” In this way, a multiplicity of actors and sectors society are responsible for perpetuating poverty and the stratification of wealth.

A relationship between liberalisation, corrupt lifestyles, the criminalisation of the poor, growing civil strife including cast wars,” commercialisation of expectations and the resultant cultural disarray and breakdown of civil society is slowly becoming clear. The task of concerned researchers and activists is in making this intermeshing clearer as the dominant, top-down doctrine of globalisation and liberalisation cum-marketisation unfolds itself.

**Exports and Environmental Degradation**

In addition to the unsustainability of capital-intensity methods of agriculture and natural resource extraction globalisation has also brought about an increase in the exploitation of natural resources that are the basis of subsistence for nomads, artisans, fisher folk and agricultural laborers—mostly in the name of boosting exports. The past six years have witnessed an intensification of unsustainable practices on the land, in rivers, in oceans and in forests with a consequent erosion of the country’s bio-genetic diversity.

In keeping with the thrust of the economic reforms, the past three years has seen growing pressure on the government to reverse existing land reform legislation and lift or relax laws that place a ceiling on rural and urban land holding. Various businesses and their associations, as well as editors of financial newspapers, have been at the forefront of this demand to relax ceiling laws and grant long-term leases so as to encourage agro-industries on large captive farms. A related demand is that oil palm, cashew, mango and pineapple be classified as plantation crops so that entrepreneurs can grow these crops on a large scale without concern about various land legislation. Large businesses have also demanded increased access to forest land in order to promote agro-forestry and horticulture.

Capitulation to these types of demands, however, inevitably causes severe environmental and economic damage. In one case, the government from 1991 to 1994 gave 82 companies clearance for joint (foreign and Indian) venture marine fisheries, which meant the introduction of 255 deep sea fishing trawlers. Consequently, exports of fish and fish products increased from 159,000 tons
(9.6 billion Rupees, or $266 million) in 1990/91 to 321,000 tons (35.4 billion Rupees/$1 billion), in 1994/95. The trawling joint ventures were predominantly export-oriented, and what motivated the government in granting the licenses was not the long-term sustainability of the fish stocks nor the rights of millions of traditional fisherfolk to their only source of protein, but rather the prospect of one more source of foreign exchange.

Defenders of trawling claim that they fish in waters where the traditional fishworker does not fish. Unfortunately, past experience has shown that trawlers violate this boundary and undertake practices that destroy the sustainability of diverse fish stocks. Fortunately, there has been massive sustained resistance from traditional fisherfolk to trawling (mobilised nationally under the banner of the National Fishworkers Federation), which resulted in a dramatic decision by the Indian government in March 1997 to suspend and eventually phase out all joint venture fishing licenses.

Cash cropping for exports has also generated severe ecological vulnerability. The popular argument in favor of cash cropping is that the practice will bring more surplus revenue to local farmers, who would then be able to exercise more economic and consumption options. Some activists from women’s movements have also pointed out that this value addition would give a women greater capacity to become economically independent.

Unfortunately, the experience so far suggests that cash cropping places greater emphasis on maximising production with little consideration for ecological sustainability or equity. As a result, more chemical and water-intensive methods are used and a shift in cropping from food crops to non-food crops (floriculture, tea, tobacco, sugarcane, etc.) takes place with the benefits accruing primarily to middle-class and wealthy farmers. The process of displacement of smaller farmers and in some cases of agricultural labor is compounded.

Another example of the threat to India’s future posed by the focus on exports is the explosion of aquaculture on India’s coasts. Intensive prawn and shrimp farming ventures have disrupted the delicate salinity balance of coastal areas, caused pollution, depleted the groundwater and led to a reduction in rice production. Coastal farmers and traditional fishing families have been displaced by aquaculture production, which has provided less than half the employment that farming previously did. Yet, both the private and public sectors have drawn up ambitious plans to expand aquaculture in the country. According to a recent article, the head of the Aqua Foundation of India was quoted as projecting a jump in shrimp exports from 70,000 tons at present to 2,000,000 tons by 2000, and stating that “the world is looking to India to meet its shrimp requirements.” The Gujarat Fisheries Development Corporation and other agencies have signed an agreement to develop 250,000 acres of the state’s coasts for aquaculture. Both these strategies have therefore made millions of farmers and fisherfolk, as well as their ecosystems, more vulnerable.

The introduction of the demands of an international agricultural market is also increasing ecological vulnerability through a loss of genetic diversity as India’s indigenous products are standardised and made uniform. As Ashish Kothari notes: A single variety of Basmati rice, favored by foreign consumers, has replaced dozens, possibly hundreds of other local varieties of rice. Pepsi’s subsidiary, Pepsi Foods, has reportedly encouraged farmers to grow one particular variety of tomato, which is suited to its production process. Kentucky Fried Chicken is reported to have delayed the start of its operation in India because it wants maize-fed chicken, which it will introduce to replace the local
Indian breeds of poultry.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Political Impact}

\textbf{Undermining Democracy}

As we have seen, economic policy making is becoming more and more centralised and secretive, which has resulted in the undermining of democratic institutions and the democratic process itself. Most agreements with transnational corporations have shown complete disregard for environmental impact assessments; consultations with communities likely to be affected by project plans and public accountability about these projects are lacking. In fact, when communities in Maharashtra peacefully sought more public debate about the proposed Enron (a U. S. based transnational corporation) power project, they were brutally attacked by the police and hundreds (including women and children) were jailed.\textsuperscript{39} Another instance of backtracking on the democratic process occurred when the national budget for 1992/93 and the Eight plan documents were first revealed to the World Bank before they were presented in the Indian Parliament. Similarly, the GATT agreement was signed with not only little consultation with the states and with elected representatives, but with almost no popular debate on its consequences for a wide range of sectors as well as on the sovereignty of the country itself. In fact, since 1991, most economic policy changes have been adopted without any public debate or any effort by the state and central governments to explain the social, ecological and cultural implications and consequences of the Structural Adjustment Program.

Another critical failure of the reform package that has a bearing on the question of democratisation is the persistence of a growing and grossly inequitable society in which there continues to be even greater mystification of economic policies and instruments. A reflection of the unrepresentative and infirm democracy in India may be seen in the following statement of former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, in the context of a comprehensive social audit of the economic policy changes since 1991. According to a report in the newspaper, Rao began his speech by “delineating the social structures into three segments. The crust, according to him, consists of about six crore (1 crore = 10 million) people, who do not need to be canvassed about economic reforms. The next layer contains 25-30 crore people belonging to the middle classes, who are beginning to appreciate the benefits of liberalisation. It is the next segment, of 55-60 crore of lower income and poor people who remain unappreciative of the changes in the economy.”\textsuperscript{40}

Even if the reforms were improving the lives of a majority, it is indeed a sad commentary of our times and of the actions of our policymakers that dramatic economic changes are cynically heralded by bypassing a majority in the citizenry. Taking a majority for granted in the design and imposition of the reform package is one of the most profound failures of the reforms. Most of this majority is comprised of those who are engaged in primary production, whether in the field, factory or household. Tribal members, traditional fisherfolk, artisans, and marginal and small peasants comprise these millions who are so callously expected to either survive on crumbs or to fend for themselves. In fact, it is on longer that poor are being taken for granted, but rather deliberately excluded and considered dispensable under a political and economic regime that legitimises poverty and destitution.
Can we be so arrogant, so insensitive to the plight of a majority who are scattered across the country and who cannot have their voices heard in the shallow and faulty representative electoral processes in the country? Can they be discarded or bypassed as necessary “social costs” of the liberalisation process, in much the same way as millions have been displaced in the name of “national interest” and progress? In this context, it is surely callous and immoral to confine analysis to aggregate gains in growth, GDP, foreign exchange reserves, stockpiles of food and the like. It should be reprehensible to promote elitist consumption when and discrimination. This itself is reflective of a critical lack of democratic process in the defining economic policy.

Alternatives to the 1991 Reforms
In many ways, the question of whether there are any alternatives to the present package of reforms is moot. Given the social, cultural and ecological impacts of these reforms and their contribution to making the country more economically dependent, alternatives will have to be defined, however marginal they may seem in the present climate of superficially consensual, elite-led development. In numerous sites across the country, often despite overwhelming odds, those who have been neglected or excluded by dominant policies are attempting to define small incremental changes that can give greater meaning to their lives.

From asserting control over systems of governance and productive resources to organizing public hearings and resisting destructive developmental projects, people all over the country are becoming part of a democratic stirring from the bottom up. Grassroot campaigns against economic reforms have so far been scattered and in most cases not sustained.

It is also true that the formal political space to critique the New Economic Policy is shrinking as political parties across the ideological spectrum have reached a tacit consensus in seeing the reforms through. In the early years of reform, several important strikes by workers as well as other initiatives such as the preparation of an Alternative Budget took place, but in the past two years debates on the Structural Adjustment Program have increasingly been confined along sectional or single issue lines. Even so, organisations like the Association of Rural Poor in Tamil Nadu have been successful in waging struggles against moves to deprive peasants of land and to protect tenants and make them owners or land. Several crucial actions against specific transnational corporations such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, DuPont and Cargill or against specific projects supported by bilateral and multilateral organisations like British Overseas Development Agency or the World Bank have witnessed significant mobilisation. While Kentucky Fried Chicken was forced to considerably scale down its operations, Cargill and DuPont had to cancel or relocate their activities.

Recent initiatives like the National Alliance of Peoples Movement or the National Forum for Tribal Self-or the much older National Fishworkers Federation have launched sustained agitations against undemocratic and unjust development interventions that have come in the wake of liberalisation. Their campaigns point to the need to widen approaches and sensitise peasants against seed imperialism, cultural imperialism and the short-term interests pursued by the political and economic elites, be their foreign or domestic. The National Alliance of Women and other women’s groups have also played a significant role in defining a progressive plan of action that has been included in a preliminary approach paper for the government’s ninth Five-Year Plan, and complex strategies are being forged to pursue its implementation.
Grassroots organisations are also underscoring the need for a coordinated platform to build awareness regarding the alternatives for a production system that nurtures cultural pluralism and fulfills the diverse needs of a majority of people. There are modest efforts underway to build strategies to gain equitable control over productive resources through an alliance among workers, peasants, scientists, intellectuals and women across the country. These movements also point to the need to respect the growing support for further democratisation. The content of these movements may seem utopian given the “triumphalism” that pervades the new package of reforms. Nevertheless, in a slow but ever expanding rumble, grassroots efforts are spreading to a wider range of locales. Growing demands for autonomy and the formation of autonomous councils in several regions as well as the resurgence of sub-nationalist movements are all reflective of the growing frustration with centralised control that legitimises wealth accumulation by a minority at the expense of a majority.

Managing Dissent
Simultaneously, of course, political and economic regimes are either becoming more sophisticated in their management of consent and dissent—or in their capacities to suppress dissent—by labeling opposing groups as “corrupt,” “anti-development,” or even “anti-national.” Numerous anti-democratic laws like the Maintenance of Internal Security Act and the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act, as well as the colonial Official Secrets Act, have been used to control the activities and protests of trade unions, farmers organisations and grassroots movements. Thus, while the democratic space of upper-and the middle-classes has expanded with growing wealth and influence, there has simultaneously been a definite shrinking in the democratic space of those victimised by the New Economic Policy. Witness the significant expansion in the security forces to “deal” with internal dissent or to facilitate domestic capital or foreign exchange-bearing entrepreneurs.

In fact, increasing, business interests have become associated with national interests, while social and cultural interests are relegated to a secondary position if not sacrificed altogether. One former finance minister, echoing this spirit of policy focus, stated recently that power should increasingly move from the state to the boardroom.\textsuperscript{45} Worse still, a recent official announcement stated that the Indian police would be trained by Western security experts to protect the “life and property of foreign investors.”\textsuperscript{46} This growing convergence between the state and the market to promote narrow interests is one of the unfolding and unfortunate outcomes of the New Economic Policy.

Conclusion
Much of discussion of alternatives to the present patterns of economic liberalisation and reform are either labeled as being utopian or dismissed as a package of romantic Gandhian or socialist ideas. The argument from those on the side of democratic and egalitarian development is that the values of justice and equality can no longer be neglected at the altar of national security and these patterns of development. Millions who have been historically subjugated or marginalised by caste or class oppression are today, in increasing numbers, demanding justice from and within an inequitable system. In many ways these sentiments are more crucial than the scattered campaigns and fragmented “movements” or a bunch of policy alternatives. Various “Andolans” (social and political movements), socialists, radical Gandhians and other concerned people can contribute to
the potential changes by giving focus to these stirrings, by sounding warning signals when the oppressed get divided and fight among themselves and by providing ideological and intellectual inputs. The success of the struggles of the poor to act as equal citizens may seem more difficult at the present juncture than ever, given the mystification, centralisation and power of economic institutions nationally. It is therefore an even more profound challenge not to abandon the struggle for justice and equity.

Political parties will have to contend increasingly with this emerging sense of self-confidence among the poorer classes and castes as they assert their rights to greater dignity. The party system has so far contributed to raising awareness, but has largely failed to address the endemic root causes of economic subservience and impoverishment. With this failure of elites to address real economic and social problems, the only hope of a resolution lies in the further strengthening of grassroots democracy. Dreze and Sen reflect a similar sensibility when they argue that:

It is in terms of these broader egalitarian concerns that India’s record has been most disappointing and that the scope for action may be particularly extensive…. The importance of local democracy is not confined, of course, to this issue of public services, or other instrumental roles of intrinsic value for the quality of life. Indeed being able to do something not only for oneself is one of the elementary freedoms which people have reason to value. The popular appeal of many social movements in India confirms that this basic capability is highly valued even among people who had very deprived lives in material terms.

Given the fact that we live on a finite planet and that our needs. Should not expand beyond what can be sustainably provided by the natural cycles of regeneration, any continuation of an ethic of satisfying unlimited wants will only continue to justify the exploitation of resources as well as those dependent upon these resources for their subsistence. This argument should not be considered anti-market, but rather pose the important questions of: Which market? Who controls the market? And at what cost? Democratisation is important in this context. While the democratisation of regional and global institutions and economic and political processes is imperative, the primary struggle is within India with follow-up support in the globalisation of resistance. The enemy within—what has been called the “Resident non-Indians”—has to be confronted and challenged. This internal political process must not be neglected, particularly in a climate of depoliticisation brought about by economic developmentalists and a majority of NGOs.

As already indicated, democratisation is important. It is clear that growth is not a sufficient condition for the poor to acquire greater control over their lives and achieve economic and social security. Relying on the market to bring benefits to all devalues those courageous efforts that respect values and ethical principles that are not subordinated to the cold-calculus of growth. In addition to the need for a continuing struggle to democratise and restructure all global and local institutions and to change the root causes of underdevelopment and discrimination, this essay has tried to argue that the concerns of equity, social justice, gender and ecology cannot be subordinated to the logic of the market. The Indian case clearly demonstrates that the political goal of self-reliance, political independence, national sovereignty and a marked commitment to the poor needs to be brought back into the center of political concern and action.
References:

1. When I began working on this essay. I realised that while there was a fair amount of material on specific social sectors, there were almost no articles or books that presented a comprehensive view of the social and ecological impacts of the NEP. It has been a gratifying challenge to have attempted this task and hope others can take it forward. An essay like this would not have been possible without the assistance and support of many people. My gratitude to them is immense. I would, however, like to specifically thank Kamal Narayan Kabra, Dalip Swamy and Ashish Kothari for their detailed comments. In addition, I would like to thank Amy Auster and H.K. Park for their editorial support and remarkable patience. The usual caveats apply.

2. In general there has been an increase in the vulnerability of labor as the organised sector retrenches labor or hands their labor needs to contractors who in turn squeeze them more by failing to enter into employment contracts.

3. The Indian Constitution made specific provisions for members belonging to tribal communities and lowest caste groups, especially the ex-untouchable castes. These and directives were defined it two special schedules (5th and 6th) in the constitution hence the name “Scheduled Castes and Tribes.”

4. The term “license-permit raj” refers to the bureaucratic web that institutionalised inefficiency and patronage by requiring elaborate procedures to seek licenses for almost any commercial activity and legitimated a huge, slothful governmental apparatus.


6. The exchange rate at the time of writing this article is 35 Rupees to $1.


25. Panini.


38. Ibid.


41. The literature on alternatives is vast. While any representative list will exclude important contributions, there is a more serious problem. Significant analysis and case studies are not in English and there continues to be an assumption that non-English political spaces are “backward.” Nevertheless, some indicative publications are C.T. Kurien, *Economic Reforms and the People* (New Delhi); Madhyam Books, 1996; Srilata Batliwala, *Transforming Political Culture,* *Economic and Political Weekly* (25 May 1996); Amit Bhaduri, “Alternative Development in the Rural Sector,” Ajit Singh and Hamid Tabatabai, eds., *Economic Crisis in the Third World Agriculture,* (Cambridge, U.K., Cambridge University press, 1993); Romesh Diwan, “Economic Reforms, Untenable Assumptions and Alternatives,” *Economic and Political Weekly* (24 February 1996); Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India-Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (Mumbai: Oxford University Press, 1995). The Singh/Tabatabai article neglects ecological limits and the increasing vulnerability of Indian agriculture under the regime of GATT and the WTO but is nevertheless an important contribution to the debate. Also see the significant worked done by the Planning Commission during the Janata Government in 1990 to further a self-reliant, decentralised and more just society. The journal *Lokayan Bulletin*, among many others, regularly presents analysis and reports of critical activities in the non-party political process and its relationship with the formal political process.


45. *Hindu* (1 October 1995)

46. *Indian Express* (25 August 1995)


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