



CHRONICLE 8

Quarterly

Newsletter

2006

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The logo for CDS CHRONICLE, with 'CDS' in a stylized blue font above the word 'CHRONICLE' in a blue serif font.

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is widely believed that the quality of social science research in the country has been on the decline in the recent years. The weakening of support from national agencies, which creates greater dependence on external sources, the impact of globalization, which means that research agendas are increasingly set abroad, rather than within the country, the inability to generate links between researchers, policy makers and the public, and the relatively unattractive service conditions in the major social science research institutions, have all been cited as reasons for this. However, the most important reason remains relatively unnoticed. This is the decline in the quality of social science teaching and the lack of invigorating learning environments

for students of social science in colleges and university departments. Apart from inadequate human and physical resources, the failure of these disciplines to attract good students has compounded the problem. We need to reverse these trends by improving the teaching-learning environment of these institutions.

CDS has a significant role to play in this process. In the coming month, we hope to plan and implement a programme for capacity creation in colleges and university departments through promoting research and training programmes.

K.N. Nair

M I L E S T O N E S

I have always felt that CDS is an exceptionally artistic place: a sacred shrine nestling in the middle of a verdant garden, overflowing with buds and flowers. When I joined CDS as a watchman in 1981, it was indeed a beautiful grove, albeit inhabited by snakes, mongooses, foxes and other minor wild creatures. Even in those forbidding nights in which I sat up to keep watch, it still appeared alluring to me, a place of beauty, above all.

I knew that I got this job not just because I had enough work experience but also due to the fact that Sivaji Ganeshan himself had given me an award, and also the certificates from school that acknowledged my proficiency in art. In this job too I pursued art, and a number of the students of those days were keen to join. Together we organised many wonderful events: many of the greatest names in *Kathakali*, classical vocal and

instrumental music have performed at CDS. The students those days used to call me *Sakalakalaavallabhan!*



The first time I got recognised as an artist was at CDS. This was when Prof. T.N. Krishnan was the Director. I had just sung a boat-song on the stage, and he came right up, clasped my hand, and asked me if I had eaten my meal! He then arranged for my food then and there. But I remember most those happy days when the students and I used to sing and dance with gusto, clapping our hands together in glee, like sparrows in the wild. And we needed no occasion for that. Those days, everyone went shopping from CDS at 7 o'clock in the bus and returned together. We would sip tea after shopping, get into the bus and sing boat-songs until we

reached CDS, at 9 o'clock. How sweet is this memory to me!

In the recent years, that spirit has faded somewhat. People are too busy, too absorbed in themselves. But there have been good times too recently — like in 2005, when I teamed up with a group of students to direct a cultural programme, the 'Uthradavanchi', for Onam. Also, I was able to perform on TV and on radio, all because of the encouragement I received from CDS!

But my greatest work of art here has been the little garden I have lovingly nurtured, that adorns the main gate of the CDS Campus. It mirrors the beauty of our campus. I have been fortunate indeed; this institution has fostered my talents, and rewarded my artistic efforts. And endowed me with warm memories. The future beckons, and these memories propel us onward.

(This is a translated and abridged version of a longer note written by P.R. Gopidas)

S E M I N A R S

Ashok V. Desai

(Consultant Editor, *Business World*)

'The Lull Before the Storm' – Telecommunications in India

12 October

The talk was divided into three distinct sections – history, analysis, and policy issues from 1992 to the present-day; this fourteen-year period being divided into four characteristic phases. The pre-1991 phase was marked by constant shortage in supply and growing demand; the post-1991 one, by sweeping frequent changes. The state set up the TRAI in 1997 as regulator, which however was plagued by the usual travails of most state-run organisations. Competition with private players escalated steadily, much to the benefit of the consumer.

Besides this history of the telecom industry's functioning, Prof. Desai made several policy suggestions. He suggested free entry (in limited number) of players at the town or even the national level, as well as a no-discrimination policy between systems. The quality of service, he suggested, may be monitored parallel to costs. He reiterated that the objective should be to provide entire networks

through the village, as well as across villages. He also recommended the termination of the practice of charging inter-network calls much higher than intra-network calls. The independence of BSNL from the ministry above, he argued, is unavoidable if one wants to improve its functioning.

Anant Kamath

T.M.Thomas Isaac

(Hon. Minister of Finance, Government of Kerala)
&

R.Ramakumar

(Assistant Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai)

Why do the States not Spend? An Exploration into the Phenomenon of Cash Surpluses of States and FRBM Acts

20 October

This presentation could indeed be called a Keynesian response to a neo-liberal act. It took issue with the Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram's claim that Indian States are cash rich, but the lack of 'absorptive capacity' was preventing them from incurring social sector expenditure. The talk began with some thoughts



on the emergence of surpluses in State government coffers. Deficit State finances were common in the 1980s, but within two years from 2002, the treasury cash deficit was gradually transformed into a surplus. However, a situation of ‘reverse transfer of resources’ from the States to the Centre seems to have been developing. Analysing the reasons from the States’ receipt side, the presenter showed that the high-interest-carrying NSSF loans increased faster than other receipts. The States’ expenditure declined alarmingly, with largely social sector spending getting axed. The presenter delineated the broader economic context of the deterioration of the States’ finances, within which they were forced to adopt fiscal consolidating programmes.

The need for amending the present targets of the FRBM act was stressed, with illustrations from the case of Kerala. In conclusion, several ideas that could possibly alleviate the severe restraint on social and developmental expenditure were mooted.

Nirmal Roy V. P

D. Narayana & T.R. Dilip
(Centre for Development Studies)

Universal Health Care Scheme, Kerala 2006

30 October

This talk laid out a possible new healthcare scheme for Kerala in the context of failure to implement the Kerala Health Insurance Scheme.

Given that healthcare is comparatively expensive and that the utilisation of healthcare is higher in the State, state provision of universal healthcare was noted to be difficult. The suggestion was that the state should concentrate on the poorest 30 per cent of the population, as catastrophic healthcare expenditure pushed a significant percent of households below the poverty line each year. Noting the perception that a focus on health insurance leads to the deterioration of public healthcare provisions, the presenter proposed a healthcare scheme for the poorest, and a community-based health insurance scheme for others. The possible stages of implementation and the possibility of gradual accommodation of both inpatient and outpatient care within the scheme, and the reimbursement of health expenditure incurred in private institutions were also discussed. The appointment of an independent commissioner to monitor the scheme and the establishment of a centralised drug procurement system were recommended.

During the discussion, some questioned the adequacy of this scheme, and its implications for bureaucratisation. Other questions were related to the empirical validation of the arguments.

Sunitha A.S

Hrushikesh Mallick
(Centre for Development Studies)

Examining the Linkage between Energy Consumption and Economic Growth in India

3 November

The presentation examined the nature of the linkage between different forms of energy consumption (crude oil, natural gas, petroleum and electricity) and economic growth in India. It suggested that while economic growth fuels the demand for crude oil and electricity consumption, only the growth of coal consumption spurred

economic growth. When the influence of the different components of energy on two major components of economic growth is investigated with the same causality test, none of them were found to significantly influence any of those components (private consumption and private investment). The present study arrived at mixed and contradictory results in contrast to previous ones. However, the presenter argued that the use of econometric tools made it possible to suggest with greater conviction that oil and natural gas consumption should be restricted in India as they do not contribute to economic growth. Rather, their use is driven by economic growth. The existence of subsidies for public consumption of imported gas may imply greater financial burdens for the government.

Questions from the floor highlighted two issues: energy use in different sectors and their contributions to sectoral growth, and the complementarity and substitutability relationships among different components of energy.

(Reported by the presenter)

Henny Romijn

(Associate Professor, Eindhoven Centre for Innovation Studies (ECIS), The Netherlands)

Assessing Potential for Biofuels with Strategic Niche Management: An Analysis of *Jatropha* in Tanzania

9 November

The talk revolved around research in Tanzania about the scope for developing biofuels from an oilseed bearing plant called *Jatropha Curcas Linnaeus*. Using the 'Strategic Niche management' (SNM) tool, the study analyzed the scope for an energy transition influenced by factors at three societal levels, the overarching 'landscape', the sectoral setting or 'regime' and the 'niche' level,

where the innovation develops and diffuses. Though valuable niche processes were found in a few areas, the presenter argued that the development of *Jatropha* biofuels in Tanzania was in an early phase and there were many obstacles in the prevailing energy regime. They included structural and infrastructure problems, lack of actor network, technical skill and knowledge gaps, price disadvantages of *Jatropha* oil, and insufficient government intervention. Higher levels of participation of small-scale growers and active local women's groups in the sector, interconnections of university and grass-roots research and innovation for the promotion of production-chain management and the urgent need for higher learning dissemination, were recommended as remedial measures.

Questions about the prospects of *Jatropha* as a major energy-source were raised by the floor, along with comments about the possibilities of recycling, standardization problems, international support, and cost-effectiveness of electricity in the process.

Harilal M.S

M. Parameswaran

(Centre for Development Studies)

International Trade and R&D Investment: Evidence from Manufacturing Firms in India

17 November

The presentation examined the effect of international trade on R&D investment of Indian manufacturing firms. The influence of international trade on R&D expenditure and economic growth manifests along three channels: import competition, export and import of technology. The presentation explored India's experience using firm-level data for the period from 1994-95 to 1999-2000. The analysis showed that

exports have a positive effect on R&D investment. Technology imports have a positive effect only in sectors with relatively low levels of engineering and technological capability. Import competition encourages R&D investment only in those industries for which the domestic market is highly concentrated. In a less concentrated market, import competition has a negative effect.

The discussant raised the issue whether in-house R&D was necessary for firms at all. Further, it was argued that within global production networks, import competition need not reduce the market share of domestic firms, if the market is taken to be global. Comments from the floor brought out issues relating to government concessions for R&D, the possibility of rivalry among firms increasing R&D activity, and the difference between formal and informal R&D.

Nandana Baruah

J. Devika

(Centre for Development Studies)

**'A People United in Development':
Developmentalism in Modern
Malayalee Identity**

1 December

Relections on the historical roots of Developmentalism in Kerala and its influence in shaping modern Malayalee identity formed the core of this thought-provoking presentation. It began with a historical account of Developmentalism in Kerala, tracing it from the pre-independence Malayalee society, to the late 19th century public debates about the need for state intervention in the economy and society. Developmentalism was characteristic of the leftist construction of 'United Kerala' in post-independence India, which evoked the conception of a 'new Kerala' defined by development, posed

against brahminical constructions. Yet the selective rehabilitation of upper caste culture as the 'common legacy of Malayalees' by the former contributed to a new elitism. On the other hand, anxieties of marginalisation and backwardness, already aired by the 1930s, also led to an energetic advocacy of development as the panacea to sub-national ills. The vicissitudes of Developmentalism across the late 20th century decades were traced. The talk concluded with reflections on researching the region and diasporic identities in the times of globalisation.

In the discussion, questions were raised about the historical role of non-state institutions in influencing perceptions of development. It was also remarked that the conception of Developmentalism in Kerala was not an imported one, and that it had evolved indigenously.

Alice Sebastian

Venugopal Maddipatti

(Fellow, American Institute of Indian Studies,
Dept. of Art History, University of Minnesota)

**"The Crowd and the Conscience Collective" -
The Hinduism of Gandhi's Funeral**

18 December

The talk examined media projections of political leaders. It was based on the reporting of Gandhi's funeral by *Life* magazine in 1948 (mainly photographs). It examined the manner of emergence of the crowd in 1948, through a journalistic courting of Hinduism as the inescapable theatre for an imagined resolution between the contradictions over births, lives, and deaths of the diversity of peoples in India. Such proselytisation occurred primarily in the realm of journalistic imagination that sought to infuse an event with metaphors, inclinations and contexts that extended far beyond the facticity of that event. A comparison of the photographs of Henri Cartier Bresson and

Margaret Bourke White with the writings of the American journalist Vincent Shean on Gandhi was also attempted. The author pointed out that unlike Shean, the others did not necessarily portray Gandhi as an agent or a dream of salvation. Further, he went on to analyse the extent to which Cartier-Bresson's and White's photographs are mutually commensurable.

The general discussion encompassed methodological issues and the possibility of enriching analysis through reading different kinds of media reporting and the secular views of Indian leaders.

Harilal M. S

Vinod Thomas

(Senior Vice President, World Bank, Washington)

Kerala: Consensus on Development Issues?

22 December

In this seminar, the speaker focussed on the unique development experience of Kerala. The persistence of public action has generated a model distinct from Indian and global experience, with high levels of achievement in social and demographic indicators. This has indeed attracted considerable attention. The necessity of sustaining Kerala's developmental achievements within the present context of institutional changes occurring due to globalisation was stressed. The high level of human potential in Kerala developed through an education system evolved through collective action is, ironically enough, accompanied by a lack of an environment conducive to investment in the State. Various social and political constraints ensure that hardly any fresh investment takes place here. Also rates of return on the existing investments are far below global standards.

In the discussion that followed, issues related to the quality of governance in Kerala, and the trade-off between economic prospects and social

objectives were raised. It was pointed out that better institutional mechanisms in Kerala might facilitate the mobilisation of the large pool of available skilled resources for productive activities. The presenter responded by stressing that there is a need to evolve new criteria for the allocation of funds by the World Bank.

Syam Prasad, Rijesh. R

Seminar under LSG Unit

30 December

The Research Unit on Local Self-Governments under CDS, presently engaged in an Action Research project involving ten panchayats in Kasargod district, organised a one-day Seminar on 30 December 2006 at Kasargod. Representatives from 39 grama panchayats and three block panchayats of the district, experts from various fields, and officials from the district administration attended the seminar. K.N.Nair, Director, CDS, welcomed the participants. P.Karunakaran, MP, inaugurated the seminar. K.V.Kunhiraman, MLA, chaired the session. C.P.Narayanan, Member, Kerala State Planning Board, gave the keynote address.

The inaugural session was followed by parallel sessions on Productive and Housing sectors. Representatives from Madikkai, Nileshwaram, Bedadka, Kumbala, and Chemnad grama panchayats made presentations on their activities connected with the CDS project, and on their draft plans in priority sectors for the 11th five-year plan. The session on housing emphasised the gravity of the housing problem, amply evident from the surveys conducted in the panchayats. An elaborate plan of action to solve the problem based on lessons from 9th and 10th five-year plans was put forth by the panchayats.

Sreedharan T.P

CONFERENCES / WORKSHOPS

The Fourth International GLOBELICS Conference**4-7 October****CDS and IIM, Bangalore****Coordinators: K.J. Joseph and Sunil Mani**

GLOBELICS - Global Network for Economics of Learning, Innovation, and Competence Building Systems- is an international network of scholars who apply the concept of "learning, innovation, and competence building system" (LICS) as their framework. GLOBELICS is dedicated to the strengthening of LICS in the South. With regional chapters in Asia, Africa and Latin America, it provides research training for doctoral students at the GLOBELICS Academy at Lisbon, organises annual conferences, and annual regional meetings. The first of its conferences was held in Rio de Janeiro (2003), the second at Beijing (2004) and the third at South Africa (2005).

The fourth GLOBELICS conference was organised by CDS and IIM, Bangalore, at Thiruvananthapuram. It was sponsored by major multilateral organisations like South-South Cooperation division of UNDP, UNCTAD India office, several Departments of the Government of India, and institutions like the ICSSR, the Institute of Financial Management and Research, Chennai, and Exim Bank of India. Jairam Ramesh Minister of State for Commerce, Government of India inaugurated the conference. Prof. N.R. Madhava Menon, Chairman, CDS, presided. The sessions opened with an address by Prof. Bengt Ake Lundall, Chairman, GLOBELICS. Over 200 delegates from 43 countries attended.

The three-day conference had six parallel sessions, five plenary sessions, and an industry conclave wherein leading businessmen reflected on challenges to India in the 21st century. The plenary themes included issues like the relevance of innovation policy in enhancing competitiveness and



economic development, the role of South-South cooperation, comparative analysis of the performance of India and China, and the role of innovation in ameliorating the growing rural-urban divide in developing countries. One of these also explored the role of innovation systems in resolving Kerala's ongoing 'development paradox'.

Papers presented in the parallel sessions addressed theoretical as well as policy issues on innovation systems and technology in the contexts of developing countries. Broadly, the sessions covered conceptual issues, sectoral innovation systems in different countries, innovations in emerging technologies, comparative analysis of the performance of developing countries, regional innovation systems and rural transformation, the bearing of the new IPR regime on innovation, country experiences and comparative analysis of FDI inflows and spillovers, ways and means of promoting innovation capacity of SMEs, innovation in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and its relevance for promotion of South-South cooperation, industry-academia interaction, and R&D outsourcing.

The valedictory session was chaired by K. Narayanan Nair, Director, CDS. Prof. Luc Soete presented a summary of the deliberations. T.M. Thomas Isaac, Honorary Fellow, CDS, and Finance Minister, Government of Kerala, gave the valedictory address.

On the whole, this conference was a wonderful opportunity for learning, as it provided a forum for the active exchange of ideas and debate between younger and senior scholars in the areas concerned. (Details are available at www.globelicsindia2006.org)

Joseph K.J

**ILO Workshop on Protecting the Rights of
Migrant Workers and Networking Tripartite and
Social Patterns in Kerala**

26-27 October

Coordinator: S. Irudaya Rajan



The inaugural session of this two-day workshop hosted by CDS was chaired by V. Krishnakumar, former Chief Secretary, Government of Kerala. Prof. N.R. Madhava Menon, Chairman, CDS, inaugurated the session. There were six technical sessions and a panel discussion.

The trends and characteristics of migration from India and Kerala were examined in the first session. Systematic analysis of the effects of migration was recommended, so also, the need to consider the links between increasing migration and growing internal inequalities in the sending regions. Another issue discussed was the creation of national and international instruments for effective management of labour migration and protection of migrants' rights. It was suggested that efforts should be made to make the process of migration simple and transparent, by institutionalizing the process.

Welfare and social protection for workers and their families in Kerala was another focal point of discussion. The need to make participation of migrants in the social security process statutory and involving the return migrants in the process was emphasised. Gender issues that came up included providing safety nets to the migrating women and addressing issues faced by women who fail in their efforts to migrate. It was also recommended that institutional mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure that recruitment practices are firmly under state control, and that they should be supplemented with awareness programmes. There should also be efforts to ratify and implement ILO conventions on the rights of migrant workers.

In general, the effort made in the workshop was towards the identification of specific interventions that may serve as inputs for policy-making agencies.

Remyaprabha G

Women, Politics and Decentralisation in Kerala

10-12 November

**Coordinators: S. Irudaya Rajan and
J. Devika**

This three-day inception workshop of the project 'Gendering Governance or Governing Women? Gender, Patriarchy and Democratic Decentralisation in Kerala' funded by IDRC, Canada aimed at presenting the idea of the project before a gathering of invited participants, who were largely civil social activists, researchers, and administrators. Researchers contributing to the project were introduced to qualitative research methods. Further, they were invited to make presentations on their respective areas of interest within the project, which were closely discussed.

K. Narayanan Nair, Director, CDS, inaugurated the workshop. J. Devika, CDS, presented the comprehensive research proposal. It was followed

by a feedback session, in which several invitees aired their views on the proposed research.

On the second day, Vineetha Menon, anthropologist and Visiting Fellow, CDS, led a discussion on the nature of qualitative research. She cleared common misconceptions about qualitative research, and laid out the epistemological foundations of such inquiry. She then discussed the methods of qualitative research, and the dilemmas that the qualitative researcher faces. In the afternoon session, issues

in interviewing specific to the proposed research were taken up. Members of the team made presentations on the third day on their specific research ideas, and also shared thoughts on methodological issues specific to their areas. Each presentation was discussed in detail, and overlapping areas, in which two or three researchers may require to do joint interviews were identified. The common questionnaire was also presented and discussed in detail in the last session.

Binitha V. Thampi

Outreach

- Sunil Mani was a discussant at the Inter-Agency Technical Reference Group Meeting held at the United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Development Co-operation Policy Branch, New York, USA, on October 26-27, 2006. He also presented a seminar titled "The Emerging High Tech Competitors from Asia: Contrasts between the innovative activities of China and India", at the United Nations University-MERIT, Maastricht, The Netherlands, on December 13, 2006. He has been invited to join the editorial board of the journal, *Research Policy* (Elsevier Science).
- Vijayamohan Pillai. N attended a Workshop on the Project on "The Challenge of Social Security in Rural India and China" on October 30, 2006 at the Rural Development Institute (RDI) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing. He also made field visits on November 1 - 3 in Hongxian village and Xiguan village in Wei Yuan County of Gansu Province in China. This is in connection with the CDS-RDI

collaborative Project on Social Security, sponsored by the Ford Foundation.

- Mythri Prasad, a doctoral student at CDS, presented a paper titled 'Spatial Strategies and Sojourner Workers: Building Urban Infrastructure in Kerala' in a workshop on Migrant Workers and Social Protection at Dhaka, Bangladesh organized by Dhaka University in collaboration with University of Sussex, UK during October 7-9 2006

R. Albert Christopher Dhas, and Subrata Mukherjee have been awarded Ph.D Degrees by JNU. Christopher is currently Lecturer in Economics at the American College, Madurai and Subrata is with the Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata, as Lecturer in Economics.

Christopher's doctoral work at CDS was titled 'Dynamics of Bovine Economy of Tamil Nadu: An Analysis of Factors, Processes and Implications'. Subrata's was on 'The Importance of Quality and Price in Choice of Health Care: A Study of West Bengal'.

Warm congratulations to both our students!

LIBRARY NEWS

C.K. Sankaran, Senior Assistant Librarian, retired on October 31, 2006 after 31 years of service. A quiet and soft-spoken person, always willing to lend a helping hand, he made his presence felt everywhere in the Library. We will miss him for a long time to come. We wish him all the best in his retired life.

During the past quarter, 24 external memberships and 98 reference memberships were granted to new users. We added 196 books, 360 working papers and 3 CDs to our database. All the catalogued books in our Library have been processed and barcoded. The barcoding process began in May 2006 and was completed by November 2006. The old census publications housed presently in the sixth floor of the Library form a major portion of the non-catalogued publications. As it is not feasible to carry down all these bulky volumes to the work area on the second floor, we have shifted our workstation to the sixth floor. These volumes are now being catalogued and barcoded simultaneously through the concerted labour of some of the staff members. This is time-consuming work indeed, as class numbers and subject headings have to be assigned to each volume and the bibliographic details have to be entered into the Libsys database. The sixth floor is not really a comfortable place to work; it is hot and stuffy! That has slowed down our pace, somewhat.

The circulation process is now computerised. But full automation of the circulation activities is possible only after all documents have been barcoded. The revised rules regarding membership and annual subscription fee for external members have come into force. The fine system for overdue books for external members also was implemented from 3 October 2006. A third round of reminders was sent to defaulters. While this has had some impact, many books remain yet to be recovered.

The Information Products and Services Division of the CDS Library has started a New Economic

Papers Alert Service. The updating of our database is also in progress. We have started loading multimedia files in the Libsys database, so that the full text can be accessed through the OPAC. Information on recent arrivals of journals and books and online access to some of the journals are also available through our web OPAC.

The CDS Library offered practical training to six CLISC students from the Kerala State Library Council, Thiruvananthapuram. The training programme was held during 10 October - 31 October 2006.

Chidambaram Pillai M

CAMPUS NEWS

The CDS community had a pleasant opportunity on 13 October 2006, to interact with C. Rammanohar Reddy, a former student of CDS, and currently the editor of *Economic and Political Weekly*. He presented his thoughts on the future of this esteemed and popular journal, in which generations of students and faculty at CDS have aired their views to a wider academic community. One could not help being impressed by the marvel that is *EPW*, which, as Reddy's account clearly brought out, is run on a shoestring budget and the labours of a small, dedicated, intrepid editorial team!

The students' discussion club organised three events. A debate was organised on 9 October on the rationale and implications of the constitutional provision of reservation to OBC students in higher learning institutions, led by Binu Roshni, Mythri Prasad, William Joe and Anant Kamath. Prabhu Dass made a presentation on the work of the Nobel Prize-winning economist E. Phelps on "Education, Technical Change, and Growth" on 8 November. Alex Philip spoke on the 'Legacy of Friedman: Is It Economic or Political?' on 30 November.

Christmas was celebrated with an impromptu carol group going around the houses on the campus, with Braja Swain decked up as Santa Claus, and Nadhanael making a brave effort to keep up the (increasingly hoarse) singing! On New Year's eve, the students cooked a community dinner, and the New Year was cheered in with a campfire and dancing, which lasted almost until dawn!

P U B L I C A T I O N S

Books

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In Focus

Tales of Rice: Kuttanad, Southwest India (Thiruvananthapuram, Monograph Series, Centre for Development Studies, 2006) suggests a new framework for economic history which moves away from large national and regional economies to study micro-regions and brings into view the workings of human agency in economic change. It situates the emergence of Kuttanad, the rice-lands of the princely state of Travancore in southwestern India, within the capitalist world-economy between the mid-19th and the mid-20th centuries. It brings to life the changes in material living through exploring the ecology, the ethnography, and the cultural geography of rice production in the area. Further, the traces within traces are also reclaimed: the nether economies of piracy and theft, and the technology of human sacrifice.

The author, K.T. Rammohan, is a former student of CDS, and was recently a Visiting Scholar here. He is currently Reader in Political Economy and Economic History at School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala.



From the Administrator's Desk

On completion of his two-year term as Visiting Scholar, K.T. Rammohan, returned to his parent institution, the School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, on 30 September, 2006.

The Government of Kerala has nominated Mridul Eapen, Honorary Fellow and K.N. Harilal, Associate Fellow, CDS, as full-time members to the reconstituted State Planning Board in August 2006.

The Government of Kerala appointed K.K. Subramanian, Honorary Fellow, CDS, as Advisor to the reconstituted State Planning Board effective from August 2006.

C.K. Sankaran, Senior Assistant Librarian, retired from service on 31 October 2006.

The services of K. Ravi Raman, Associate Fellow, CDS, have been repatriated to the Kerala Agricultural University on his decision to continue his lien with the University.

The 'CDS Chronicle' will miss one of its firmest friends with K.T. Rammohan's return to the School of Social Sciences, MGU. He has been a member of the editorial committee since the first issue and has contributed immensely to giving CDS Chronicle its present shape and style. We wish him intellectual excitement, success and happiness in his parent institution.

I N T E R F A C E

Henny Romijn, Associate Professor, Eindhoven Technical University, The Netherlands, was on sabbatical with the Planning Commission Unit on Development Economics at CDS for over two months beginning September 16, 2006. Here she in conversation with **Sunil Mani** over her experiences at CDS.



SM: What were your objectives and were these fulfilled?

HR: The objectives of my visit to CDS were essentially to do what one is supposed to do during a sabbatical. I wanted to write up a couple of papers for publication, edit three chapters for a book about community development that a South African colleague of mine is producing, and relax a bit. Last but not the least, I wanted to be invisible to my students and colleagues at Eindhoven University for a while. I am more than satisfied with the progress I made with my publications at CDS. It was a wonderful experience to be able to concentrate on one task at the time, without being disturbed by all kinds of petty administrative issues, departmental conspiracies and depressing talk of financial cutbacks. I almost began to feel as if I was on vacation; it was so relaxing!

SM: How did you find the human and the physical infrastructure at CDS? Was it conducive to your research?

HR: Yes, the infrastructure at CDS was definitely conducive to my research. For me, the human aspect was the most important. I greatly enjoyed living on the campus among the CDS staff and students. It felt like being a member of a community bound together by similar interests. Being a night owl, I liked to go to my office late at night to use the internet, finding the main door wide open, and several PhD students still working and talking in the PhD room. It reminded me of Oxford, where I spent some years working with Sanjaya Lall in the 1990s. This kind of atmosphere really encourages

people to produce good research output. The physical infrastructure at CDS was good in some ways, a bit less in other ways. The library impressed me and I made good use of the computer and Internet facilities. I also valued the fact that the canteen ladies were always feeding us, providing three meals a day, seven days a week. The food quality was somewhat basic, but then, one cannot expect wonders at such low prices! And the food is still much better and healthier than the canteen food served in my home university. The only things I really missed at CDS were a fridge and a tea-making facility in the guesthouse. I also had to get used to doing my own laundry, but I quickly got used to that.

SM: What are your impressions of living in Kerala?

HR: Kerala was wonderful! The people are friendly and courteous without exception. There is none of the aggressive curiosity that is so common in northern India. It also appears to be very safe. I was highly impressed by the medical and schooling facilities in the State. It was surprising to discover that the medical care is in some ways more developed than in my own country. I was also pleased to find a thriving indigenous Ayurvedic system functioning alongside the western medical system. And then there is Kerala's scenic beauty. I cherish the memory of the coconut trees stretching as far as the eye can see, and the cackling sounds of crows that I enjoyed from my guesthouse balcony every day. The big fruit-eating bats in the tree above the guesthouse were awe-inspiring. And most of all, I still sorely miss the company of the two little canteen cats.



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