



CHRONICLE 5

Quarterly

Newsletter

2006

FROM THE DIRECTOR / MILESTONES	01
PUBLIC LECTURE / WORKSHOPS	02
SEMINARS	04
TRAINING PROGRAMMES	07
FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR'S DESK	07
LIBRARY NEWS / CAMPUS NEWS	08
PUBLICATIONS	09
OUTREACH	10
COOLING OFF - A PICNIC	11
POLICY POINTERS / ADMISSION 2006	12
INTERFACE	13

CHRONICLE

Volume 2. Issue 1. January - March 2006

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

This issue of the *CDS Chronicle* carries reports of the workshops and seminars we have been organising around the research projects recently undertaken. They were well-attended by both the external collaborators and the local stake-holders. Such workshops not only sharpen the outcomes of the projects, but also help us to effectively disseminate the findings of the researchers to wider, non-academic circles. We intend to hold such workshops on a regular basis.

Many of the areas explored by researchers at CDS have been recognised as vitally important by national and international agencies. Our research on international migration is a good example. Recently, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has extended financial support to set up a research

unit on International Migration at CDS. We hope to attract such support from other government agencies in the future.

We have been trying to put together a directory of our former students and faculty. The address list is already available on the website. I appeal to all the alumni and former colleagues to visit the website and check your address. You are welcome to make your corrections there. In case you know of the address of other alumni, perhaps missing from the list, or whose address has changed, please help us by entering the relevant information. This will help us to keep you informed of life at CDS by sending you at least the electronic version of the *CDS Chronicle*.

K.N. Nair

M I L E S T O N E S

It was the eighties, and a centuries-old issue, variously referred to as the ‘Woman Question’, or ‘the problem without a name’, was beginning to be actively explored by women activists and academics in India. Women’s groups who called themselves ‘feminists’ raised issues such as violence against women and dowry payments leading to ‘bride burning’ (that had not till then figured in any social movement), heralding the birth of a new politics.

The echoes of this movement rumbled everywhere, including a hilltop in Prasanth Nagar, Thiruvananthapuram. The year: 1982. Women at CDS – faculty, M Phil and Ph D students, students on fieldwork from universities within India and abroad – started a women’s group on the campus, with a view to explore and identify some issues for research and action through readings, presentations and discussions. It was an open forum that welcomed all women, and therefore I joined the group along with some women activists. At that time, I was working for SEWA (Self Employed Women’s Association), mobilising and federating

women’s groups from 16 villages of the fishing community along the Thiruvananthapuram coast for negotiating a better deal for women in the unorganised sector.

My memories of the group (which remained deliberately unchristened in consonance with its flexible, exploratory and informal character) remain vivid. We used to meet once every week in the guesthouse lobby, in a hostel room or in a faculty member’s home in the campus. The agendas were multifarious and ‘meetings’ lasted for over three hours, even when we had planned to meet for one and half! We had a long reading list of books and articles. Each of them was analysed and discussed. In some meetings, we shared our personal lives as women, our experiences in our families, and the events that made us feel strongly about women’s issues. In others, one of us shared the challenges she faced at work. I remember sharing the many incidents of domestic violence that arose while mobilising women on ‘class’ issues of bank loans, health insurance and the like. How does one address both class and gender issues on an equal

footing? I remember, the group came up with several innovative ideas and strategies, which enabled (and emboldened) me to address the issues. One of our members was doing fieldwork in Kanyakumari district for her Ph D among women from the fishing community. She shared insights and analysis from her fieldwork. She was a researcher and I an activist, but the iterative processes of the CDS women's group gave each one of us the space and the opportunity to enrich our understanding and to apply it in our respective

areas of work! Often, the canteen became a venue for healthy debate with menfolk of the CDS community, who were extremely open to the lesson(s) emerging from the group. The exploratory journey of the CDS women's group continued for more than two years and some members made lateral linkages with women's groups outside, enriching the women's movement in Thiruvananthapuram!

Vanita Nayak Mukherjee

PUBLIC LECTURE

A. Vaidyanathan

Cooperative Movement in India

11 January

Major issues in the cooperative movement in India formed the focus of Dr Vaidyanathan's public lecture. He drew upon the report of the task force on the 'Revival of Rural Cooperative Credit Institutions (Long Term)' in India, which studied the deteriorating financial health of the rural cooperatives and came up with an implementable action plan. He explained the rationale for reviving sick cooperatives and discussed the major recommendations of the report. Cooperatives are of key significance as they provide a substantial proportion of the agricultural loans to the small and marginal farmers in India, especially in the face of the commercial banking sector's reluctance to channel credit to poor farmers.

The report recommends the promotion of self-governance and the bottom-up approach for restructuring the cooperative system. It has recommended that State(s) should finance the restructuring of cooperatives provided the latter show high levels of financial discipline, and are able to make good accumulated losses. State governments, however, have been asked to bear the losses accrued to cooperatives due to debt waiver announcements, the grant of loans for non-agricultural purposes and other State-announced measures. Cooperatives have been asked to maintain a CRR of 7%. Introduction of a uniform and standard accounting system with computerisation has been recommended to promote efficiency in the cooperative sector. The presentation was followed by a discussion on the major recommendations of the report.

William Joe & Amarendra Das

WORKSHOPS

Workshop on Solid Waste Management

Co-ordinator, K. N. Nair - 11 March

The one-day workshop was organised by the Research Unit on Local Self-Governments at CDS. Participants included the Mayors of Kozhikode, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram

Corporations, Chairpersons of Municipalities, experts from institutions like Pollution Control Board, and the Clean Kerala Mission, and representatives from NGOs.

K.N. Nair, Director, CDS, chaired the inaugural session. C. Jayan Babu, Mayor of the

Thiruvananthapuram Corporation in his inaugural address detailed the measures taken by the Corporation to tackle the menace of waste accumulation in public places.

The theme paper presented by R. Sridhar (*Thana*) was based on six research studies conducted under the Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development. The need for segregating different kinds of wastes at source, for small and medium-sized composting, for biogas plants and other technologies suitable to local and institutional needs, and for the development and production of alternative, eco-friendly substitutes for plastic was underscored. The importance of creating a general consensus and of legislation in extended producer responsibility and polluter punishment was also stressed. The paper ended with an appeal for a shift from costly and imperfect disposal-centric solutions to more eco-friendly, zero-waste solutions.

D. Narayana, CDS, chaired the interactive session that followed. Elected representatives from Corporations and Municipalities shared their experiences of intervening in waste disposal and spoke of the challenges they faced. Several participants argued that the choice of technology should be left with the people themselves and that the stress should be on an integrated approach. Others challenged the present model of development, which leads to resource depletion and waste accumulation. There was total agreement on the need for creating popular awareness about proper waste management and maximising decentralisation in waste management.

T.P. Sreedharan

Workshop on India Health Project

Co-ordinator, D. Narayana - 14, 15 March

The two-day workshop brought together experts on health in order to identify existing gaps in

health research in India. It also sought ways of generating better understanding of existing databases like NSS, NFHS, and WHS. Participants included the faculty and the students of CDS, besides scholars from other parts of India and abroad.

K. N. Nair, Director, CDS, welcomed the gathering. This was followed by presentations by D. Narayana, CDS, and J. F. Levesque, University of Montreal. They laid out the objectives of the workshop, and emphasised the need for research programmes in population and health and issues of access and utilisation of health care in India. An overview of the current issues in health and health systems in India was also presented.

Presentations during the post-lunch session largely focused on surveys and databases and their designs, limitations, and utilisation. Prof. Guruswamy, IIPS, Mumbai spoke on the WHS, particularly on survey design. This was followed by a discussion of other related surveys and databases on health. U.S. Mishra and T. R. Dilip, CDS, and Subrata Mukherjee, IDS, Kolkata, discussed emergent issues in health research and reflected on how they could be linked with the project.

The possibilities for generating research proposals were discussed on the second day. The major issues raised included conceptual and measurement problems in NSS health surveys and other NSS surveys like those on consumption expenditure, the unorganised sector and national accounts; the establishment of a time frame for the research protocol development; and the barriers to access to health care in rural Kerala. Efforts were made to develop a proposal for CIHR by exploring the WHS. The group agreed to work on the determination, description, evaluation and responsiveness of the health system in India. The moderator presented an evaluation of the workshop in the concluding session.

Shalini Rudra

SEMINARS

Sabina Alkire

Harvard University

Agency and Freedom - Sen's Capabilities Approach to Development

2 January

Sabina Alkire's presentation dwelt upon the operationalisation of Amartya Sen's capabilities approach towards human development. It reviewed the literature on human development, including critical assessments of it from different perspectives including political economy and Gender and Development. Noting that freedom was necessary for the translation of capabilities into functionings, she discussed ten necessary human capabilities. Democracy was identified to be the major instrument to achieve freedom.

Comments from the floor included questions on the assumption of an automatic link between the achievement of capabilities and human development, on the possibilities of capturing negative freedom within a game-theoretic approach and on the differing significance of individual and group capabilities for human development. It was also pointed out that democracy is a necessary but not sufficient instrument for human development, especially in situations of conflict over group interests, and in federal state systems, in which the central government could sustain itself independently of a State (e.g. Orissa).

Rathi Kanta Kumbhar

V. Santhakumar and U. S. Mishra

CDS

How do Inequality and Households' Position in Income Ladder Affect the Response towards Privatisation? A Study of Indian States

27 February

The presentation addressed the literature on the political economy of reforms, analysed the impact of the distribution of net costs of reform

among different sections of society, and reflected on the pace or implementation of reform. Questions were raised whether inequality obstructed socially beneficial policy changes or economic or institutional reforms, and on how different economic classes responded to strategies of reform such as privatisation. The focus was on the household response to proposed power sector privatisation.

Data on monthly per capita expenditure from the National Sample Survey of India on consumer expenditure were combined with data from a large primary survey of households in thirteen Indian States. It was argued that high levels of social inequality indeed pose barriers against socially beneficial policy changes, and that responses to privatisation, and the degree of inequality prevailing in the distribution of subsidy for electricity consumption, seemed to be negatively related. In conclusion, the presenters observed that there is a deepening of democracy in India, with middle class preferences getting increasingly reflected in political choices.

The discussant commented on the technical aspects of the paper, and suggested alternate interpretations. Comments from the floor questioned the use of unitary concepts like 'middle-class', and the non-availability of a common understanding regarding concepts like 'privatisation' across sections of the population surveyed.

William Joe and Priyajit Samaiyar

Dipendra Sinha

Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan and Macquarie University, Australia.

Export Instability and Volatility, Investment and Economic Growth in Asian Countries: A Time Series Analysis

2 March

Attempts to capture the relation between export instability and economic growth have largely

used cross-section data. The few attempts that used time series analysis limited themselves to short periods, and did not consider the issue of the non-stationary nature of data. In the light of this experience, the presenter examined the relation over a longer time period, using a more sophisticated methodology, for nine countries. The volatility aspect of exports was also examined, but only for two countries. It was argued that that for most countries there exists no significant relation between export instability and economic growth. Also, volatility was not found to be a major problem for both the countries studied.

The discussion that followed focused mainly on methodological issues. Since the export intensity as well as the export basket of different countries may be different, the selection of countries has to be done discerningly. Better attention to the structural changes that countries may undergo when a longer time series is used was suggested. It was further remarked that the question of export instability could be more pertinent for countries heavily dependent on primary commodity export; such countries may be more suitable for analysis. The possibility of including other variables was also raised.

Nandana Baruah

Hrushikesh Mallick

CDS

Modelling Interest Rate Cycles in India

3 March

In an integrated global financial set up which facilitates free movement of capital between domestic and international financial markets, the question of interest rates is of considerable interest. Interesting questions such as interest rate cycles observable in the Indian economy, and the transmission of cycles similar to the ones internationally observed, were also raised. At which lag length does the domestic financial market respond to such cycles, and what forces do determine such interest rates? The paper by Mallick

et al. indicates that interest rate movements depend on certain domestic macroeconomic variables such as yield-spread and expected exchange rate, and are also affected by movements in international interest rate, with a significant lag. However the impact of federal funds and bank rate is found to be insignificant.

During the discussion the question was raised why IIP was used to capture economic growth, and to what extent the adopted model captures the present practice of determining interest rate in the Indian economy. In response, the presenter pointed to the unavailability of monthly data on other components of GDP. He also added that the modelling is based on the assumption that India presently follows a middle path with respect to interest rate determination, a path that is partially market driven and partially controlled by RBI.

T.K. Subramanian

Srijit Misra

IGIDR, Mumbai

Suicide of Farmers in Maharashtra

10 March

The speaker presented the results of his investigation into the factors that provoked the suicides among farmers in Vidarbha district, Maharashtra. The substantial changes in policy were pointed out as a key reason. These include the reduction of import tariffs and the huge import of cotton from abroad, the procurement of cotton from the open market in Maharashtra and the involvement of middlemen therein, the decline in formal rural credit sources and the poor agricultural extension services, all of which increased the vulnerability of farmers. The major factors on the individual's side were identified to be the high levels of indebtedness and crop failure, which lead to a fall in social status, for example, through inability to amass dowries for daughters.

The discussion centered upon possible remedies to the situation. Suggestions put forth from the floor included those aimed at the structural

transformation of agriculture, enhancement of the role of government, and various policy measures for improving agricultural extension.

Amarendra Das

Chinnappan Gasper

CDS

'Education for All' in Kerala and Lakshadweep

24 March

The presentation examined the basic features of the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), an effort to universalise elementary education through community ownership of the school system, grassroots planning and a bottom-up approach, and its progress in Kerala and Lakshadweep. The presentation began with a discussion of the institutional set up of elementary education in India at the national and the state levels.

The presenter found that SSA was being effectively implemented in Kerala and Lakshadweep. Several skill-enhancing programmes for students have been initiated in schools. Teacher training to improve pedagogic methods and practice seemed to have varying degrees of success. The Panchayat's vigilance, and the interventions of the Parent- Teachers' Association appeared to be effective. Enrolment in primary education was declining in government schools, but increasing in private unaided schools. This issue was discussed in relation to the decline in fertility and increase in demand for private schools.

The presenter raised important concerns about the performance of students at the SSLC level especially in Lakshadweep. He also found that while the infrastructure facilities were adequate, budgetary allocations were required to improve the quality of education.

The discussion that followed centered upon aspects of the implementation and the financial flexibility of SSA.

William Joe

Pinaki Chakraborty

NIPFP, New Delhi

**Sub - National Fiscal Reforms in India –
Evidence from Selected States**

30 March

The focus of the presentation was specifically on the impact of multilateral structural adjustment loans (SAL) on State finances. The movement of macro fiscal variables in SAL-receiving States, and those that did not, were studied between 1987-88 to 2002-03. It was found that SAL-receiving States, more than their non-receiving counterparts reduced their fiscal and revenue deficits. Reduction in the growth of government employment in some SAL-receiving States seems to have ensured minimal growth of salary expenditure in them. After fiscal intervention, tax revenues are buoyant in SAL States, though tax reforms could also have contributed to this buoyancy. Fiscal intervention through SAL impacted on own revenue performance only in Karnataka and Kerala. While the decline in per capita social sector expenditure seems quite steep, expenditure in the economic sector has increased in SAL-receiving States due to increase in capital expenditure. Overall, it was argued that fiscal intervention has benefited SAL-receiving States.

In the discussion that followed, it was argued that the emphasis of fiscal intervention is on the fiscal deficit, and not on the revenue deficit. The focus ought to be on cutting revenue deficit, of which salaries and pensions are major components. The speaker replied that the quality of fiscal deficit has improved, as indicated by the decline in revenue deficit/ fiscal deficit ratio. Some states have in fact had revenue surplus. Further, employment is a major input in several government services and that the recent cut in government employment has affected these services, especially education and health.

Diana Abraham

TRAINING PROGRAMMES

CDS-ISS Training Programme

Co-ordinator: S. Irudaya Rajan

CDS has been co-hosting a short-term international training programme on “Universalising Socio-economic Security for the Poor” with the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague and SEWA, Ahmedabad. This three-month Diploma Programme starts in January at the ISS, then moves on to SEWA during February and its last leg during March 6 – 24, 2006 is held at CDS.



The segment at CDS involves exposing the students to Kerala’s experience of social security initiatives like various welfare funds and social security arrangements for unorganized sector workers. Besides lectures and interactive sessions with academics from within and outside CDS, activists, elected representatives of local governments and bureaucrats, the segment included several field visits of short and long duration.

This year, there were about 15 students – a mix of social activists, officials and researchers – largely from Southern countries, such as Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zambia, besides India.

U.S. Mishra

Short duration Programme on Using Internet for Social Science Research, Version 2.0

29-31 March

Internet has become a major source of information for social scientists, and users benefit from improved search and other tools that optimise one’s use of the Internet. In this context, CDS organised the second version of its short duration programme on ‘Using Internet for Social Science Research’ for research scholars in economics and other social sciences, across colleges and universities in especially Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The programme introduced the participants to a variety of Internet tools and data analysis. It was organised in collaboration with the Indian Institute for Information Technology and Management-Kerala (IIITM-K). Sunil Mani, CDS, co-ordinated the programme, which had 22 participants from these two states. Besides colleagues from IIITM-K, J. Muralidharan Nair and Chandan Mukherjee, CDS, were the other resource persons. The course has its own blog (<http://www.uissr.wordpress.com>) through which we continue to keep in touch with the participants and answer their queries on the use of this new technology. There is now some demand for conducting this programme, tailor-made for various types of users such as government officials and journalists.

Sunil Mani

FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR’S DESK

Hrushikesh Mallick, Vinoj Abraham and T.R. Dilip joined CDS as Research Associates on 31.1.2006, 7.2.2006 and 3.3.2006 respectively. T.R. Dilip will be exclusively working on an IDRC-sponsored research project on access to healthcare.

LIBRARY NEWS

A Committee was appointed by the Director in response to complaints received from external users about the recent changes introduced in the library rules and in the membership of external users, fees and other services. The Committee sought additional information on the types of external users, the number of defaulters by type, the cost of books outstanding, and so on. Members of library, administrative and academic staff, and the research scholars at CDS were consulted. The major task of the Committee has been to evolve a satisfactory procedure for permitting external borrowing, to encourage maximal utilisation of the facilities at CDS, given the high rates of default and the escalating prices of books. The report has been submitted to the Director.

Another recent initiative has been to recover overdue books from external members. Reminders were sent, with copies to recommenders, to the 128 defaulters. Out of these, only 37 returned the books.

An exhibition of around 100 books and other course materials on social security was arranged in the periodicals section from 2-24 March in connection with the ISS-CDS Diploma Programme on Universalising Social Security. The bibliography on Social Security was updated.

During the past quarter 520 books, out of which 319 were gifted to the CDS library by the family of the late Dr Sanjaya Lall, and 178 Working Papers were added to our collection. An official visit to the on-going book fairs was arranged. Members of the faculty and students participated. We have renewed the subscription to the online statistical database *indiastat.com*.

The reorganisation of the CDS library is now in full swing, on the lines recommended by the Library Reorganisation Committee. We are now

using the latest web-based version of LibSys. The backlog in cataloging is being cleared.

While the demand for information has increased over the years, libraries have been forced to discontinue scholarly journals, trim down the expenditure on books and databases, due to paucity of funds. In view of such constraints, a meeting of the librarians of ICSSR-funded Institutions was held at NASSDOC (National Social Science Documentation Centre), New Delhi, on 6 March 2006, to seek ways out of the present crisis. The meeting resolved to set up a network of Social Science Libraries and to implement Consortium Subscription, to prepare an online union catalogue of periodical holdings of the member libraries and an online directory of library professionals and social scientists, to conduct training programmes, workshops, and staff exchange programmes, and to encourage cooperative cataloguing and the Online Index Initiative (OII) which is an online database of index and abstracts of articles, book review and conference papers published in Indian social science journals. V.K. Anil Kumar represented the CDS Library at the meeting.

M. Chidambaram Pillai

CAMPUS NEWS

The first anniversary of the Vegetarians' Club, which seeks to promote vegetarianism, was celebrated on 30 March. The chief guests were K.N. Nair, Director, CDS and the well-known academic and health activist Dr C. R. Soman. While the former talked about the NSSO's definition of 'vegetarian' and data collection methods, the latter spoke on the benefits of vegetarianism. Vegetarian food, he said, provides more energy than any non-vegetarian food and most of the animal proteins are undesirable. Shalini Rudra welcomed the

gathering, and A.D. Manikantan gave the vote of thanks. Later, the fruit salad served by the members of the Club delighted all those who were present.

Holi revellers arrived early in the morning on 15 March at the faculty quarters, the guesthouse and the hostels, armed with packets and packets of colour. Part of the fun, one suspects, lay in pouncing upon utterly unsuspecting Malayalees and merrily dousing them with colour! While some Mallus hid themselves successfully in their rooms, most were smoked out and well-rubbed with bright shades. The children joined in first; finally even the prim Mallu crowd gave in to the gaiety. Sweets were shared and wishes exchanged, and what a wonderful holiday it was!

Women's Day was celebrated on campus with a screening of Deepa Mehta's film *Water*. Before

the screening, a note explaining the significance of Women's Day and emphasising women's right to safe and congenial workplaces was read out.

The Discussion Club met twice this quarter. On 3 February Amarendra initiated a discussion on the question 'Is sustainable development a necessary luxury for the developing countries?' and on 6 March Priyajit gave a talk on 'Using foreign exchange for financing infrastructure'.

The meeting of the Poetry Club was held on 3 March. Members read together Balachandran Chullikad's translation of Pablo Neruda's *A Song of Despair*. Diana, Gilbert, Gopi and Prabhat presented their own poems.

The Law and Economics Study Group had its third meeting in February. M. Parameswaran lectured on 'The economic consequences of a weak judiciary'.

PUBLICATIONS

Book

Zachariah, K.C, P.R. Gopinathan Nair, S. Irudaya Rajan. 2006. *Return Emigrants in Kerala*, New Delhi: IDPAD-Manohar Publishers, pp.197, Hardcover.

Journal Articles/ Chapters in books

Balakrishnan, Pulapre, M. Parameswaran, K. Pushpangadan and M. Suresh Babu. 2006. 'Liberalization, Market Power, and Productivity Growth in Indian Industry', *The Journal of Policy Reform* 9 (1), 55-73.

Devika, J. 2006. 'Negotiating Women's Social Space: Public Debates on Gender in Early Modern Kerala, India', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7 (1), 43-61.

Mishra, Udaya S. 2006. 'Making Comparisons of Demographic Aggregates More Meaningful: A Case of Life

Expectancies and Total Fertility rates, *Social Indicators Research* 75, 445-61.

Pillai, Vijayamohanan N. 2006. 'Causality and Error Correction in Markov Chain - Inflation in India Revisited', *Indian Economic Review* January - April (forthcoming).

Rammohan, K.T and M. Suresh. 2006. 'Anthropology Curriculum and its Discontents', *Economic and Political Weekly* 41(2), January 14-20, 128-30.

Srinivasan, Aravindan. 2005, 'Diffusion of Information and Communication Technologies in India: A case for E-governance', *Review of Development and Change* 10 (2): 199-220.

CDS has brought out one working paper between January and March 2006. It may be accessed from the CDS website (www.cds.edu).

Outreach

- Rajesh Komath, currently doing doctoral studies at CDS, has been selected as an Independent Fellow of Centre for Study of Developing Societies/SARAI, New Delhi for a study titled 'An Ethnography of Teyyam Performance from a Practitioner's Point of View'.
- Mythri Prasad, currently completing her MPhil dissertation, has been awarded a Student Stipendship by SARAI for her proposal titled 'Geographies of Capital and Labour in the City of Trivandrum'.
- Sunil Mani has joined the Editorial Boards of the journals *International Journal of Technology and Globalization* (Inderscience Publishers, UK), and *Science, Technology and Society* (Sage Publishers, New Delhi).
- Sunil Mani presented a paper, 'Mapping the labour market, competence profile and working conditions for scientists and engineers', at the BRICS Project workshop, Aalborg University, Denmark, 12-15 February, 2006. He has also been invited to be the Keynote Speaker at the International Workshop on 'Measuring Systems of Innovation: Inputs, Flows and Outputs', organised by the National Advisory Council on Innovation, Republic of South Africa at Pretoria 24-25 April, 2006.
- Sunil Mani and K.J. Joseph presented a paper 'India's Innovation System in Transition' jointly with Parveen Arora and Sudip Chaudhuri at the BRICS Project workshop, Aalborg University, Denmark, 12-15 February, 2006.
- J. Devika has been nominated member of the Board of Studies, Women's Studies, of the University of Calicut.

FIELD NOTE

Travelling 20 kilometres from Bhubaneswar, I reached Bhagabatipur by afternoon for my field survey. Jayanti Nayak, one of my prospective respondents in this tribal village, lives alone with three children after her husband died of cancer last year. Sitting on the rugged veranda of the fairly rundown thatched mud-house with just two rooms, she was feeding her one-year old daughter. The three teen-aged village boys who were accompanying me explained the purpose of my visit. Indifferently, she extended a wooden plank for me to sit. Her abject poverty was clear from her clothes and housing.

It is usually said that people hesitate to reveal two things — women, their age, and men their income. Jayanti did not answer my question about her age. But the hesitation was due to the fact that she has no clue about it — she has no horoscope, a substitute for a birth registration or high school certificate. Finally she asked me to guess her age

from appearance, and write it down.

It was getting late for her to go to the neighbouring village to sell the bundle of firewood that she had collected walking about fifteen kilometres in the morning, and to purchase grocery. Like all other households in the village, her house has no electricity, toilet or well. There is but one well in the village which is the source of drinking water to all households. Rice and kerosene are available in the public distribution system at subsidised prices. But from where is that small sum of money for food to come? For her, the sole source of income is the sale of firewood, an activity that fetches her twenty-five rupees a day. Dimly, she reveals to have been caught by forest officials. But there is no alternative: she must continue to search for firewood to sell... What is the meaning of forest conservation to her when her livelihood remains in jeopardy?

Amarendra Das

COOLING OFF - A PICNIC

We, the junior M Phil students decided to take a day off on 11 March. The destination was Ponmudi. We were ready to leave by 7:30 in the morning and you wondered if this is the same bunch of people who find it so difficult to make it to the class even by 9:15. Right at the start, most of us made full use of both hoarse and melodious voices. Breakfast was at a rustic-looking restaurant, where we all ate like economists, taking advantage of the low cost and devouring a much larger quantity than usual. Full stomachs made the rest of the journey noisier, but the greener and quieter surroundings caught our attention and imagination.

We reached Meenmutty waterfall by 10:30. The signboards there, marking 'Family', 'Bachelor', and 'Fish' at separate points, were intriguing indeed. The trek to the waterfall became truly adventurous with the discovery of a "new route". We had a whale of a time at the waterfall. Some of us tried our hands at swimming, in "fishy ways". Others tried to emulate our forefathers by climbing up rope-like tree roots. We were ravenous, and

returned to the eatery at Meenmutty, thoroughly restless about the delayed lunch.

The afternoon ride to Ponmudi was hair-raising. Our driver seemed determined not be pinned down by hairpin curves; indeed he flew the bus, well, almost. Coffee plantations, making a many-shaded green-gray canopy, lined the road. Ponmudi was significantly cool compared to Thiruvananthapuram. We warmed up before mountaineering and rock-climbing, making a preliminary round, and taking pictures. We were probably brimming over with life at 'suicide point'. The leeches seemed to have taken offence; all of us were "well-leeches" there. Walking up the cloud-capped hill was truly dreamy; we were literally on Cloud Nine. The rocks were tough and the wind gutsy, though we were not exactly rain-drenched. Some of us were brave and made it to the top. By the time we returned it was pretty dark and we had been mellowed by our exertions.

What a great trip it was, worth cherishing, in the scorching heat – both of the summer and the coursework!

Prabhat Kumar

The Kerala Human Development Report 2005

The Kerala Human Development Report 2005 prepared by the CDS for Kerala State Planning Board was launched by the Chief Minister of Kerala, Shri Oommen Chandy on 8 March 2006. G. Vijayaraghavan, Member, Kerala State Planning Board, received the first copy. Apart from State Government officials, K. N. Nair, Director, CDS, Mridul Eapen, CDS and K. Navaneetham, Co-ordinator, KHDR Team, CDS, were present at the release function held at the Chief Minister's office. United Nations Development Programme, New Delhi and Planning Commission, Government of India, supported the preparation of the report.

K. Navaneetham

POLICY-POINTERS

P.L. Beena's Working Paper, 'Limits to Trade Liberalisation: The Contemporary Scenario for Textiles and Clothing Sector in South Asia' (No. 379, March 2006) tries to locate the textiles and clothing sector of five major South Asian countries in the light of theoretical debates surrounding the export-orientation and import substitution strategies. This study showed that the proposed export-led industrialisation has not yielded the expected return to these countries. The developed countries are not only 'kicking away the ladder' of protecting domestic industries in the developing countries but also designing protective shell around themselves, preventing market access to the developing countries. Therefore the pragmatic approach has to be one of importing country-specific trade and industrial capabilities rather than adopting universal trade liberalisation policies or integrating SAARC with a view to building sustainable industrial structures.

P. Mohanan Pillai

ADMISSION 2006

MPhil Programme in Applied Economics
PhD Programme in Economics

Applications are invited for admission at CDS to the MPhil Programme in Applied Economics of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and PhD Programme in Economics of JNU / University of Kerala (KU) commencing on **August 01, 2006**.

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I N T E R F A C E

Sabina Alkire teaches at Harvard University. She is also the Secretary of the Human Development and Capability Association. She was recently at CDS in connection with a project on measuring empowerment. **Mridul Eapen** spoke with her on Amartya Sen's economics and the goal of gender equity.



Both Amartya Sen and many feminist economists talk of women's autonomy/empowerment. What do you think distinguishes the two approaches?

Sen describes himself, in part, as a feminist economist, and gender recurs throughout his writings. Drawing on various empirical studies, Sen regularly consolidates evidence for the positive effects of women's agency on other family members, and the public. Further, he develops distinct theoretical insight on cooperative conflicts, first clarifying them with respect to the women-men relationships within the household, and subsequently using it as the basis on which to scrutinize globalisation. In cooperative households, while a comparatively higher standard of living may be enabled; all too often, women's share of the gains is much less than men's. Sen recognises the bargaining that occurs in such situations of 'cooperative conflict' to be largely implicit and occurring under the guise of cooperation.

Sen's work is also distinct from work purely focused on women's empowerment in reach in that he writes on the value of agency of other deprived and excluded groups, and of the well-off who could act in solidarity with the disadvantaged, and so on.

What is the concept of 'adaptive preference'? Can it be considered a critique of Sen's approach to autonomy?

Simply put, those who are destitute and deprived often find it more constructive to adjust their hopes and aspirations down to the realm of the possible - to become grateful for small mercies, to be even happy, in the midst of quite miserable living conditions. Sen's criticism of Benthamite notions of utility - which forms the basis of economics - drew attention to this fact. This led Sen to propose that we look not at people's happiness, but rather at their capabilities, at the real freedoms that lie open to people - the valuable beings and doings they could actually pursue. Thus adaptive preference is a signal feature of Sen's work rather than a criticism of it, and it has given rise to a fast-growing literature.

At the same time, some have observed that there may be a disjunction between capabilities and well-being, caused by adaptive preferences, in another way. Social constraints may work to limit people's choices through values and norms. A similar line of argument, I would think, could be used with respect to autonomy - that is, to have full autonomy will require attention not only to the external constraints that keep people down, but also to their own hopes and aspirations, which may need to be revived and cultivated. I would understand this to fall squarely within an adequate development of Sen's capability approach, although others might disagree.

What in your view is the most elusive aspect of autonomy, which makes it difficult to measure?

We are, as Lionel Robbins wrote, "sentient creatures with bundles of desires and aspirations, with masses of instinctive tendencies all urging us in different ways to action". But the time and opportunities we have to express these tendencies are limited. Our fellow-beings have other objectives. Yet we can use our lives for doing different things, our materials and the services of others for achieving different objectives.

I think that the problem with autonomy is deciding what to measure. What is it that makes a deeply autonomous person also constructive, caring, generous, and nurturing of others' talent and hopes as well as their own? I don't know. In many cases, it is (thankfully) clear that more autonomy is better - so this is not a fundamental problem, for example, in our current research at CDS. But it is an elusive aspect when you step back and think conceptually about the goal of increasing autonomy. Another issue, obviously, is distinguishing between a person who is not empowered and takes a decision and a person who is fully autonomous and makes the same decision. This issue is one we are running into - we can't inspect people's minds. But I hope we find a better way of addressing this thorny issue, and do not fence it off and run away altogether as we did previously.



CHRONICLE 5
January - March 2006

Teaching Innovations Programme for College Teachers in Economics

CDS has developed a new short-duration programme for undergraduate teachers of Economics in the various colleges affiliated to the universities in Kerala. The first version will be offered between 25 July and 18 August 2006. The programme seeks to improve undergraduate education in Economics by offering instructors opportunities to expand their teaching skills and to participate in advanced scholarship and teaching in Economics. It will introduce the participants to the recent advances in economic theory and pedagogic techniques as well.

The programme is divided into four modules of equal duration, focused on Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Statistics, and Indian Economy respectively. Resources persons will be drawn from CDS, IIM, IGDR and the University of Delhi. Details of the course can be found on the blog, <http://www.tipe.wordpress.com> or by sending e-mail to mani@cds.ac.in. Applications can be downloaded from the CDS Website: <http://www.cds.edu>.

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