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'*Reinventing Regional Development*', Festschrift to honour
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This Festschrift volume in honour of Prof. Gopal Krishan is a collection of twenty-one essays written by scholars drawn from several disciplines. There is an introduction by the editors, a felicitation tribute by G.K.Chadha, and a well documented essay on the life and achievements of Gopal Krishan, with an exhaustive summary of his writings, by Anu Kapur. The volume is organised in three sections: i. New Paradigms and Practice; ii. Comparative Development Experiences, and iii. Disparity and Poverty. The contributors coming from a variety of disciplines have brought their own perspective on the subject, enriching the content and style of the book, though often with a shift in focus. As development is a very comprehensive term, and subject to diverse and shifting interpretations as emphasised by T.R. Sharma in his paper, a variety of themes having diverse approaches in the volume is understandable. Yet there are some common concerns running through as undercurrent in most of the essays. These concerns relate to the negative consequences of economic reforms introduced in the early nineties, particularly the impact of globalisation, regional disparity following the concentration of economic growth in certain areas or some specific sectors of economy and mammoth metropolisation.

On opening the book, one encounters, after introduction, a biography of Gopal Krishan, with sub-titles like Genesis, Contours of Learning, Turn of Fate, Outstanding Teacher, To the West, On Home Turf and finally Academic Landscape followed by his achievements, and the positions he held - all with minutest details down to the names of his doctoral students.. The reviewer has never seen such a comprehensive biographical picture of any Indian geographer anywhere. Anu Kapur, no doubt, has done a splendid job and has breathed life in a simple biographical sketch by providing it a lyrical touch. But this is not the end. The book, as it begins with the biography of Gopal Krishan, ends with an annotated bibliography of his publications. There are, however, a few sore points, the reviewer would like to mention. Too much of embellishment or a melodramatic approach often makes a picture look less real. Even great personalities are not flawless, some specks in the perfect design, if any thing, enhance their humanness. Some vignettes from Gopal's personal or academic life, like a comic strip, could have relieved the boredom of reading through the text. But Kapur would have none of that and presents a biography like the chant of 'Shiva Stotra' or 'Vishnu Sahasranam'. Secondly, the reviewer feels uncomfortable with the

comparison of two distinguished teachers, stating who did what, under a sub-title 'Outshining Teacher'. Does one have to compare Buddha with Mahavir or Prophet with Jesus to project their greatness. Perhaps, Kapur is unfamiliar with an oft quoted Hindi couplet starting with 'Guru Govind Dono Khade...'.

A Look at the Contributions: 'Globalisation and its Socio-Cultural Disconnects' written by S.L. Sharma sets the tone of the book and is a fore-runner to a series of papers that allude to the adverse impact of economic reforms. His observations on socio-cultural disconnects rests on the premise that globalisation is not an innocuous process of unification and the socio-cultural disconnects generated by it require a social security policy that safeguards against the evil influences of globalisation. Quoting authorities, he asserts that globalisation is a project of the North to capture the markets of the South. Undermining of national culture, assertion of ethnic identities, obliteration of cultural traditions, invasion of the culture of consensus and above all the decimation of the intrinsic worth of culture as a normative system, witnessed in 'McDonaldisation, Cocalisation, pop music and Michael Jacksonian entertainment are to him the signs of social disconnect. 'Globalisation on our Own Terms' offered as an effective strategy leaves no room for disagreement. The questions this paper raises: Could culture be normative, some thing specific to adhere to? Should pop music disturb us? Should the traditions, the bed rock of existing cultural norms, often with a baggage of none too pleasant practices be retained? This is a very readable topical essay, well argued, understandably born out of the

author's apprehension of rapid socio-cultural changes one is not used to.

T.R. Sharma, on the other hand, raises some very relevant questions that appear as dilemmas in the process of economic development. He briefly mentions some of the growth theories, but confronts the economic growth following reforms with sustainability that hinges on several issues like biodiversity, preservation of environment, and climate change etc. The latter may pose some constraints in the development process, and create a situation of conflict which has to be resolved. Being a political scientist, the politics of exploitation practised during the colonial period has not escaped his attention, and he expresses similar views and fears as S.L. Sharma. Tracing the impact of colonial regime, the author asserts that the 'bourgeoisie' that controlled power in the post-liberation phase did not resist the neo-colonial manoeuvres, tied as they were to the apron strings of colonial masters. The developed countries have been able to carve out their designs in the post-1990 period, and the whole world has been made to co-opt itself as a willing partner of the new world order, based on the ideological pillars of the democratic society and market economy. This analysis of the author demonstrates his conviction, not entirely born out of facts, and resembles the 'theme songs' of Polit bureaus all over the world. According to a distinguished Indian economist settled in the USA, speaking at least for India, he says "the increasing pace of outward oriented reforms has been associated with a growth rate of 6-6.5% annually: and after much controversy, there is a fairer degree of consensus that poverty has been dented contracting the anti-free-trade rhetoric that flows ceaselessly from the street theatre and even international

agencies. The facts show that the shift out of autarky into closer integration into world economy is producing better, not worse, results for poverty reduction" (Bhagwati 'Free Trade Today', Oxford 2002:89). Overcoming the dilemma posed by the principle of sustainable development is one thing and harping on history and colonial exploitation is another.

A similar apprehension as expressed by S.L. Sharma and T. R. Sharma is visible in Chadha's analysis, who in his paper 'Setbacks to Employment Growth in Rural India: Locating Policy Options', examines the adverse impact of economic reforms on rural employment, basing his analysis on the NSS data for five periods, grouped into 2 periods of 1983-93 as pre-reform and 1994-2000 as the period experiencing the impact of economic reforms. A decline in the number employed in agriculture, as reported by Task Force of the Planning Commission or inferred by his own analysis of data for different regions shows, according to him, a disturbing trend. But it may not be as disturbing as it appears, when viewed from a sectoral angle that may show a shift in the employment and a partial siphoning off the excessive load of semi-employed or unemployed people in rural areas to urban centres. The very fact that most states with the exception of Gujarat and Punjab show a negative trend also entertains the possibility of a gap in the time taken to adjust and respond to changing scenario. Secondly author's base period of the pre-reform of ten years cuts partly into the reform period of six years, which is comparatively short, and could affect the results. But to his credit, the author is very forthcoming in saying that "while the pro-reform analysts may throw up policy

packages (Employment Guarantee Act 2005 is one-reviewer) to remedy the situation, the critics (he is one of them) may do well to concede some more time to let the interim disturbances pass by. Let the next few years decide the shape of things to emerge on an enduring basis.'

This long, well documented empirical study of Chadha is close to ground reality, has regional dimensions and legitimately demonstrates the fears of an adverse impact of economic reforms, though the author rightly thinks that it is still premature.

The adverse impact of reforms, particularly related to Direct Foreign Investment, has received the attention of a couple of geographers. Surya Kant in his 'Regional Disparities of Post-Reform India' talks of economic reforms, policy instruments of the Government, process of liberalisation and market economy, and focuses attention on regional disparity in Foreign Direct Investment and its consequences seen in disparity in economic growth and state domestic product of different states. Though the per capita growth rate has increased, there is an increase in the percentage of poverty, showing that the distribution of benefits is highly skewed. The author is overtly concerned with the distribution of growth and income that is neither fair nor equitable. A similar paper 'Settlement Hierarchy and Corporate Locations' by Banerjee Guha shows the dominance of western region in attracting manufacturing plants and headquarters of MNCs in India. One might observe that the hierarchy of control and command in the MNCs and their location into towns in a hierarchical order is as true of MNCs as it is of domestic enterprises. Location, to the entrepreneur, is still a

resource and some kind of determinism in guiding locations of economic activities is still valid. At this stage of underdevelopment in our country, it is a tall order to expect the entrepreneurs, regardless of their character, to factor in equity and elimination of regional disparity, in their locational calculus.

Not related to development, yet quite relevant is the contribution of Dutt and Tettey who have demonstrated a close link between stages of economic growth and the type and structure of cities, under different political systems, perhaps one more egalitarian than the other. This emphasis is more on the structure of cities and urban growth pattern and less on the level of urbanisation. In the process, they have followed Rostow's model of economic growth and related the level of urbanisation with the phases of economic development. The authors have ignored the compulsions of population density and land management in the resulting urban landscape, as is clear from the contrast in the urban structure of Japan vis-à-vis USA.

In such a volume, a review of regional development studies must find a place and this has been fulfilled by Nina Singh. Her short yet pithy review of existing literature on development studies, more significantly those emanating from Indian geographers, laments the fact that the input of geographers in the formulation of development theories has been minimal. Her analysis of the disinterest in development studies among geographers does not appear factually correct. There is a large segment of Indian geography, including some of the very senior geographers, some of whom have contributed in this volume, who swear by regional planning and development as their specialisation. Have the economic disparity

studies, regional surveys for planning, like the one for Mysore and Planning Atlases of different states outlived their utility? Even in the present volume, there are contributions by geographers who are seriously concerned and seem to be devising different approaches to regional development. In the pen-ultimate paragraph of her paper Nina Singh raises many questions which are as legitimate as appropriate, but the solution may lie beyond a geographer's expertise.

Sundaram's 'Capillary Mechanism for a convergent Approach to Participatory Local Area Development' lays stress on the method of keeping territory with its natural resources as the basic unit area on which planning is sketched. The author recommends village cluster planning exercise to be undertaken by each geography department. The latter half of Sundaram's paper is a prescriptive address to the geographers and geography departments of this country, prescribing what they should do, and even undertakes to offer support through Bhu Vigyan Foundation which he founded himself. R. Misra and Chattopyay talk of 'Gram Swaraj, Gandhi' Vision, Ground realities and New Initiative' the paper incorporates the Gandhian economic philosophy, religiosity and ethics. They emphasise the role of Gram Panchayats, Panch Parmeshwar Movement, Panchayat Resource Mapping, consistent with the objective of Gram Swaraj. These, indeed, form a very important link in national planning. Of the three approaches, viz. conventional approach, usual participatory approach and Panchayat Resource Mapping Approach, they find the last one very appropriate, as 'it is different from regular participatory exercises as this programme attempts to create replicable data base and involve the people to complete the

planning exercise from data collection to plan execution'. Yet, Chattopadhyay, the co-author of the paper, finds it difficult to resist the temptation of using NSS data in his own on 'Poverty and Environmental Degradation in selected Areas of Kerala Coast'. Krishna Mohan 'Backward Area Development Programme in India' is a useful review of the governmental plans for backward areas. He has evaluated briefly the development programmes in these areas. Misra & Misra advocate the use of electronic tools and outline the advantages, with a review of the progress made in different states. Giving a case study of Markham city (Canada), they think that GIS, Land Information Systems and GPS could be effectively used in development administration.

Of the geographers of Europe, Bahrenberg discusses the Impact of Government Policy on Regional Disparities. He views this disparity, firstly in the dual structure of the settlements, urban versus rural, in which the latter were deprived of some vital services because of their sub-optimal threshold and secondly in the economic inequality born out of the poor economic base in some states vis-à-vis others, witnesses in their revenue budgets. The relative advantage of rural location in receiving services was remedied, according to him, not by an intended policy initiative of the German Government but by an auto-mechanism of *laissez-faire* economy, following the development of road network and spurt in automobile transport, and changing residential preference from city to suburbs. The financial equalisation policy of the German Government was implemented through the budgetary instrument of horizontal transfer of income from the surplus (donor) state to deficit

(receiving) states, with certain conditions. Hajdù & Hajdù in 'Territorial Disparities and Regional Planning: A Hungarian Experience' provide a historical perspective on Hungarian economy and regional policy. They demonstrate that despite a change in the political regime (or because of it), there still persist wide intraregional and interregional disparities, seen in the per capita income and GDP of Budapest in contrast to Pest, an example of intraregional disparity, and between Budapest and the southern Transdanubian region as an example of interregional disparities. This situation is not very dissimilar from that of India. Bronger's comparison of the economic growth between India and China, traces the growth of these countries over half a century when "China and India were roughly at the same point in their evolution as modern states with war devastated China arguably worse off, and half a century later China is fifty years ahead". Posing the question - what happened during 1950-2000, Bronger answers by suggesting that an earlier adoption of Foreign Direct Investment, in 1976, coupled with the speed and intensity of economic transformation, brought China in the fast lane of development. But regional disparities are 50% higher in China than in India. May be, rapid economic growth invariably leads to increasing regional disparities.

Kundu examines the benefit of adoption of tenurial system and its impact on improving the living environment of metropolitan centres. Taking the case of Delhi and Ahmedabad, he concludes that 'a tenurial status of slum dwellers, short of ownership, gives them a sense of security and certain entitlements to urban amenities, while a legal title of the land exposes the

poor to market mechanism and induces him to part with his land leading to his displacement. A tenurial occupancy is a better option, which while guaranteeing a minimum security, induces him to upgrade his dwelling without the temptation of selling it.

Analysis of the development process in education and the attendant disparities is the subject matter of the two papers: 'Historical Roots of Regional Disparities in Educational Development in India' by Sinha and 'Regional Disparity in literacy in Meghalaya' by Mohapatra and Panda. Sinha builds his case, on the basis of a study of 50 years (1891-1941) of educational development in colonial India and concludes 'that policies of the colonial rulers promoted selection, differentiation and discrimination in the process of educational development and the result was that education became a near monopoly of some traditionally literate classes, Bengal being the higher beneficiary. The inequality in horizontal spread of education during the colonial regime may have been guided by the vested interests of rulers, but one wonders if the situation has changed in the 21st century India. How is the Government's policy today different from that of the colonial rulers?

Mohapatra and Panda's study of regional disparity in literacy in Meghalaya on the other hand, investigates a temporal trend over a period of a decade (1981-91). What is unique is that they have examined gender inequality, rural-urban duality and even inequality related to ST. and non-ST classes. An unusual trend of dominance of female literacy over males as a result of matrimony and cultural preference for girl child is revealing.

The essays are a mixed bag of some thoughtfully written, well argued and documented papers, some presenting results of statistical and historical analysis of data, some presenting a factual picture, while some are just casual. This is understandable in a volume of this size with contributions which could not be uniform. But what is very characteristic of this volume is that there is greater focus on regional disparity than regional development. In fact, regional development has receded into the background. Not a few contributors appear afflicted with 'disparity syndrome'. There is more of apprehension and caution than optimism. We seem to be still labouring under the aftermath of forty years of experimentation in socialism and the impending fear of exploitation from the west. There is not a single contribution that, even briefly, talks of the benefits of reforms. It seems, not much planned regional development has taken place in the country despite half a century of regional planning studies by geographers and others. The most, the geographers could claim to have achieved, is the publication of some monographs.

The book, besides being a felicitation volume, brings into focus the state and status of regional planning studies in this country and may spur those interested in, and committed to, regional planning and development studies to sit up and devise strategies to infuse some vigour in the pursuit of regional development studies.

One could not expect more from the editors; they have done an admirable job in presenting the papers in a well organised manner and even supplementing them with abstracts, and prefacing them with an

introduction. The text is entirely error free. This speaks volume for the dedication of the editors and publishers. Rawat publications deserve appreciation for meticulous printing.

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