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**The Political and Social Economy of Care:  
India Research Report 1**

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## **The context: Economic, demographic and social trends<sup>i</sup>**

<b>I Economic policy and political trends</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Political trends</i>	4
<b>II Economic, employment and labour trends</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Economic policy and growth rates</i>	7
<i>Employment, unemployment and underemployment</i>	8
<i>Sectoral distribution and forms of employment of women workers</i>	11
<i>Wages and working conditions</i>	13
<b>III Poverty, Inequality, and Social Policy</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Social policy</i>	20
<b>IV Social and Demographic Trends</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>Age structure, fertility and mortality trends</i>	23
<i>Households, Family, and Marriage</i>	25
<i>Young and old in households</i>	27
<i>Migration and female headed households</i>	27
<i>Education</i>	28
<i>Socio-cultural Composition and Diversity</i>	29
<i>Haryana and Tamil Nadu compared</i>	31
<b>V Conclusion</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix of Tables</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>41</b>

## **I Economic policy and political trends**

In 1991, India adopted a pro-market process of economic liberalization. The process had begun by 1985-86, though it was in July 1991 that the sharp shift in the economic policy regime was officially enunciated. The earlier Nehruvian model of a planned 'socialist' economy resting on state investment in infrastructure and industry, import substitution, subsidies to and protection of both the public and private sectors had been supported by the capitalist and middle classes in India (see Nayyar 1989: 164-67 on the Bombay plan) as well as a wide range of political parties. It had been viewed as necessary for the process of nation-building of the newly-independent country in a context in which the global economy was dominated by a handful of countries, as well as to provide the basics of livelihood to its citizens in a predominantly agricultural economy. The five-year plans, encapsulating government policy and directions of state financing in various social and economic sectors, were decisive exercises. Along with industrialisation, the 'green revolution' rather than land reform, and the Public Distribution System were critical in dealing with what had become endemic agricultural and food crises. While the welfare regime was minimally developed in terms of social security measures, education, health, economic development in both industry and agriculture, and anti-poverty measures were variously articulated as state responsibilities. Not only had this policy model enabled the growth of an educated, technologically skilled, and professional middle class which could compete globally, it had enabled the relatively small and young entrepreneurial class to establish itself, providing a base for all future economic development, even as India's democratic system took root. At the same time, levels of unemployment and underemployment remained high into the 1980s, simultaneous with high levels of overwork, child labour, poverty, and rural indebtedness and very low wages and labour productivity. Inequality between regions and of caste, gender, and class seemed not only to persist but in some ways increase.

From 1985-1991, LPG policies<sup>ii</sup>, as liberalization-privatisation-globalisation came to be known in India, negated this earlier policy model. An immediate balance of payments crisis, engendered by earlier loans taken from the IMF, made the Indian state vulnerable to the pressures of the neo-liberal agenda which pervaded international financial bodies. This crisis was also taken to suggest that earlier volumes of state investment were neither an economically sound policy nor sustainable. In a dramatic shift from the earlier political and economic consensus, the capitalist and large sections of the middle classes as well as major centrist and rightist political parties attempted to construct a new consensus in keeping with the neo-liberalism which was gaining sway the world over. The 'free market' policy was marked by changes such as liberalisation of the internal regulatory framework for the economy, the scrapping of the import substitution imperative and reduction in tariff rates, emphasis on export-orientation and adoption of appropriate exchange rate policies, divestment and privatization of public sector enterprises, and the entry of foreign investors into the hitherto protected sectors of the economy. The logic of reform was premised on the assumption that "both deregulation and external liberalization spur private investment, that curbing public investment is beneficial for aggregate growth because otherwise it tends to 'crowd out' private investment and that private agents acting on their own will deliver both more efficient and more dynamic outcomes" (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh, 2002:44). Pro-market reforms represented not only a move towards limiting state intervention in the economy and further integration into the global economy, it also signified a withdrawal of the state from the social sectors like health and education. While many had long said that state budgets in these sectors had not been anywhere near what was required, the 'new' policy model and logic now advocated minimal direct state intervention in both the economy and the social field. Care issues, which had figured only in terms of welfare and/or social justice, were now of even lesser priority.

The premise of the new policy model is that economic growth is to be its lynchpin, along with which two prognoses are argued, based on a reincarnation of the "trickle down" model. One is that if the economy is larger in terms of higher GDP, there will be more jobs and more income to

distribute, so that even without any step towards redistribution, poverty would decline. The second is that synergies will emerge such that earlier structures and relationships will be shaken by sheer economic gain and possibilities. Thus, issues of caste, class or gender structures and inequalities need not be tackled by the state/government for the dynamics of growth would make them irrelevant or loosen them. These prognoses seem to have held elements of truth, but not in the manner in which the advocates of the neo-liberal economic reforms admit to.

The substantial jump in middle class incomes, though nowhere near paralleling the jump in corporate profits, has dominated the public discourse. To this are linked three very visible features of the contemporary Indian economy and society. One is the vast expansion in the availability and consumption of household appliances, durables, and non-food items among the urban, middle class. Thus, according to a Global Retail Development Index report of Kearney, modern retail formats such as shopping malls, supermarkets, and hypermarkets grew in India by 25-30 percent in the last year. This expanding 'mall culture' and retail sector is reflected in the second feature - the expansion in the mass media, both print and satellite. Thus there has been an increase in the number of households with television sets from close to 10 lakhs in 1980 to around 12 crore<sup>iii</sup> households currently (Planning Commission 2001). The expansion in the print media is linked to the third feature - the growth of literacy levels and education-linked white collar employment aspirations. Both the growth in the mass media and in education are also indicative of the wider base and availability of various types of 'knowledge'. Along with the leap in mobile telephony - expected to reach 50 crores phones soon (Department of Telecommunications 2006) - these features are presented by advocates of the growth model as evidence of the inclusive, democratizing, and wide-ranging impact of liberal market reforms. Certainly, knowledge of middle class and elite values, gender and status models, life styles and consumer aspirations have become widely and visually available, going much beyond what (cinema and) school education curricula which also carried Hindu, middle class, caste mores were able to do. However, the hiatus between the knowledge of possible lifestyles, affinity with them, and the availability of livelihoods to attain them may have also increased.

Critics point out that rather than disappearing, the paradox of two Indias, a trope and an analysis long part of the country's imagination, has deepened, but that this paradox now receives less recognition in the policy agenda and public discourse. India "shining", the only India recognised in much of the media, is concentrated in the urban centres and upper middle classes (read also largely Hindu, upper castes), who buoyed by the burgeoning service sector enjoy living standards comparable to any industrialized developed country in the world. The other face of India is the rural hinterlands where more than 70 percent of the population reside, finding it increasingly difficult to meet their basic ends. Whether the proportion below the poverty line has reduced is much debated, but the agricultural crisis and stagnation, declining nutrition levels, distress migration, decline in rural jobs and livelihoods is evident. The increasing commercialisation and privatisation of education and health are differentiating access to these services. Yet, issues of social transformation, social justice, and the quality of life of the poor are pitted against the demands of a 'modern' and growing economy. Continuing disparities and inequalities, oppressions, and lack of 'choice' in social and economic relations, between social groups and the devaluation of 'non-marketed' labour are denied.

The approach paper to the 11th Plan of the Planning Commission (2007-2012) admits to the fact that "large parts of the population are still to experience a decisive improvement in their standard of living" (Planning Commission 2006:1) as was also recently acknowledged by the Prime Minister. Though the approach paper says little that is new in this regard, the renewed acknowledgement of these concerns is important. It notes the greater need to include communities like Scheduled Castes<sup>iv</sup> and Scheduled Tribes<sup>v</sup>, who have so far been marginalized and constitute the bulk of the poor in the country. The exclusion of the scheduled castes and tribes, minorities and women is to be

addressed in the plan through special programmes and schemes. The plan suggests that a more inclusive growth policy addressing the disparities between the rural and urban sectors, the rich and poor states and the between the poor and non poor groups is required. However, the approach paper fails to specify clearly defined goals and the measures to be adopted to achieve the desired results. Economic orthodoxies of growth and the trickle-down theory persist. The social sector and concerns about social relations and social justice remain add-ons, which will resolve themselves as the economy expands. Rather than social and economic transformation, the model is that a “faster” growth will lead to a more “inclusive” growth. The structural barriers to the enjoyment of economic rights, resources, and livelihoods, including caste, gender, regional disparities, and religious discrimination are not treated in their own right.

### *Political trends*

Before looking more closely at the economic, social and demographic trends over this period, it is necessary to place them in the context of both the policy of economic reforms and the marked political trends of this period. Causal links may be debated, but these latter trends and the LPG policies are intertwined in their impact on the social, familial and economic life of households, groups, and communities.

That India was among the few nations emerging from colonial rule in the middle of the twentieth century that maintained an electoral democracy, institutionalised the rule of law, civil and political liberties, a free press, and vibrant civil society organisations has oft been noted. Another significant feature of the polity was that the formal equality of a liberal constitution was sought to be concretised in “substantive equality” measures of positive discrimination. Decentralisation through democratically elected bodies was also legislated and is now institutionalised in most provinces, with a quota for elected women representations in local bodies. Many of the political parties who worked these democratic institutions, however, including local units of the Indian National Congress, did not question local caste, community or gender structures of rule. Rather, they mobilised links of patronage and community loyalty, such that these civic rights did not translate into economic rights or equality. Effective channels for claiming decent livelihoods and social welfare for the majority did not take root. Thus, for example, in the response to the starvation deaths in Kalahandi, Orissa, the endemic poverty was ‘misread’ by the state as a problem of drought requiring only emergency relief and at the most institutionalised charity rather than long-term measures to enhance livelihoods and entitlements (Jayal 1999).

The redistributive failures of Nehruvian economic policies had been highlighted by many political movements from soon after Independence. The seventies to the mid-eighties in particular were marked by protest movements and popular struggles of women, Dalits, Adivasis and various sections of the working class and middle class employees in which social issues were also raised (Velaydhan 1985). While many of these organisations and movements continued or were revived periodically, some of them became institutionalised in the form of non-governmental organisations. The latter have grown in number and spread exponentially in India. Some observers have read this as a strengthening of civil society and democratic processes, and others have argued, as with reference to publicity around the Kalahandi starvation deaths, that the voicing of protest was on “behalf of, rather than by, the affected people” (Jayal 1999: 95). The paradoxes of this democratic process were expressed most recently in the confrontation between elected representatives to local bodies in Rajasthan and right-to-information/employment activists who were castigated as “outsiders” by the former.

Provincial governments led by political parties other than that ruling at the centre had periodically been elected, ranging in their politics between socialist and populist, with a varied agenda of social and economic reform. However, the economic failures combined with democratic processes also

saw the growth of another stream of politics. From the mid-eighties, identity politics came to the fore. The Khalistan movement in the Punjab, the growth of the Hindu Right and Hindu communalism as well as religious fundamentalism of all types, including among Muslims and Christians; mobilisations of caste grouping, including the upper and various middle castes oft pitted against each other; and regional autonomy movements surfaced. Starting from the evidence of uneven development, they reified 'primordial' identity, tradition, culture, and particular gender constructs. Political parties based on a particular social group or ascriptive identity or which mobilised overlapping identities emerged. These included religion, caste, region, and ethnicity based parties.<sup>vi</sup> Even older centrist parties such as the Congress and various left-of-centre socialists groups did not remain untouched in this.

While some of these parties have been in existence in one form or another for a long time, along with non-party, identity-based formations they now have a much greater influence on social and political discourse than ever before. It is also imperative to note that parties of apparently opposing identities have come to power at the centre and in various states, not in opposition to each other but in coalitions. This requires some explanation, important in understanding possible directions of policy. Though the caste roots of these identity-based parties are vastly different, they have their roots in the emergence of regional elites and middle classes that earlier Nehruvian economic, employment and education policies enabled, a position which such groups may wish to restrict access to. The apparent disarray at the political level belies the fair degree of agreement there is among them on pro-liberalisation economic policies which are posited on the "growth failures" of Nehruvian economics. It is evident that only the alleged or actual discriminations tied to the particular social identity on which any of these identity-based groups/parties are premised, be it caste, religion, or region, are tackled by any one of them. It is only when their particular electoral base is threatened that specific aspects of the model of the market and the non-interventionist state are questioned. Most of them display a strong resistance to the introduction of quotas for women in the provincial and national legislatures.

In any case, the centralised federal structure of the Indian polity ensures fiscal control to the central government, which decides policy in areas such as industry and income tax, leaving agriculture and the social sector, including education to the states. The latter have few taxation and policy options. This is also true of those state governments ruled by parties of the left who argue against pro-market policies and for greater state investment in infrastructure, education and the social sector. Thus, the widespread, production-based, cooperative movement which the communists in Kerala had built has been undercut by the central government's import policy, which continues to undermine local producers. The dismantling of the public sector has meant a decline in the incomes of state governments, which has combined with curtailments in allocations and tight budgetary controls (see section III). In the last general elections, the plank which celebrated the neo-liberal, Hindu-nationalist agenda was defeated. A coalition of parties formed the government, consisting of the 'secular', neo-liberal party, the Indian National Congress, and various centrist, regional parties, which depended on the outside support of the communist left for its majority. Under the pressure of the last, measures such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act were introduced, but on a limited scale in both coverage and implementation of its clauses. Yet, while there is an active political and social discourse and movements questioning present economic policies even within official circles, the neo-liberal agenda continues to drive these policies and issues of work, care, and gender are marginal within them.

## II Economic, employment and labour trends

### *Economic policy and Growth rates*

Since growth rates have been critical to the policy model of the last 20 years, we look at them before turning to labour and employment patterns. It is only in the last few years that growth rates have reached anywhere near the hoped-for rates. During the 1970s, India's GDP growth rate was 3 % per annum. This went up to 5.7 % during the 1980s, further to 6.2% during the period between 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Jha and Negre, 2007), reaching an all-time high and indeed impressive rate of 9.4% in 2006-7. Chandrashekhar and Ghosh (2002a), however, basing themselves on the 2001 revised estimates of the Central Statistical Organisation posit a rate of 5.2% for 2004-05. A major thrust of the neo-liberal strategy was to tighten government expenditure and reduce government deficits. While agreeing that the 1980s pre-reform growth rates, based on public borrowing, were unsustainable, Chandrashekhar and Ghosh (*ibid.*) argue that the deceleration in growth is crucially linked to the decline in the public investment. The latter, from accounting for more than half the GDP in the 1970s, accounted for only 28% of capital formation in 1999-2000. This was also reflected in the decline in aggregate savings, including public and private corporate savings. Total public expenditure as a percentage of the GDP declined from 17% in 1990-91 to 13.8% in 2006-07 (*Economic Survey 2006-2007*, Government of India Ministry of Finance, New Delhi Page 21), while the government deficit declined from 6.6% to 3.6 % over the same period. The above suggests an inherent contradiction in the neo-liberal agenda in India between cuts in government expenditure and an emphasis on growth.

Over the 1990s, the growth rate fell in both the primary and the secondary sectors. In food grain production there was a decline in the output growth rate to 1.75 percent per annum, lower than the population growth rate of 2.9 percent for the same period. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) which stood at 7.8 percent between the period 1980-81 and 1989-90 fell to 6.7 percent between 1990-91 and 2000-01.<sup>vii</sup> Even one of the chief proponents of the reform programme, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, currently Deputy Chairman, the Planning Commission, has acknowledged that the reforms "were expected to generate faster industrial growth and greater penetration of world markets in industrial products but performance in this respect has been disappointing" (Ahluwalia 2002: 67). The unorganised/informal economy has retained its pre-eminence.

**Table 1: Sectoral and Aggregate Economic Growth in India (per cent per annum)**

Sector	1980-81 to 1990-91	1991-92 to 2004-05
Primary sector	3.1	2.5
Secondary sector	6.7	6.0
Tertiary Sector	6.6	7.8
GDP Total	5.4	5.9
GDP per capita	3.2	4.1

Source: Nayyar 2006

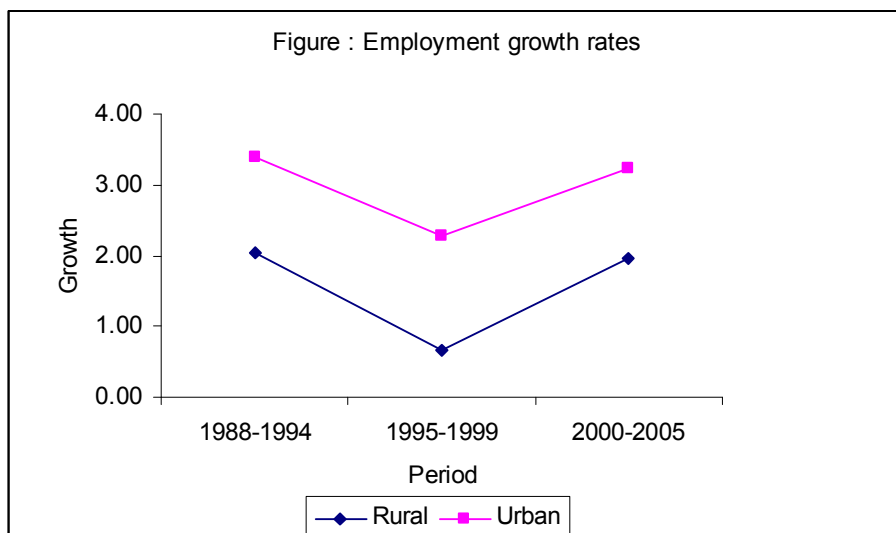
In fact the reform growth rates rest on the expansion in the tertiary, particularly services, sector, which has grown from 31.9% of the GDP in 1970-71 to 47.8% in 1999-2000 to around 54 per in

2005-06. As we discuss below, the relative expansion of the tertiary sector seems to have led the ‘jobless growth’ of the post-reforms period.

### *Employment, unemployment and underemployment*

The growth rate in employment in the reform period has not been impressive and there have been considerable fluctuations, with a deceleration in the late 1990s and then a recovery. Work force participation rates, particularly in the rural sector, have been fairly stagnant for both men and women, with some fluctuations.

**Figure 1: Employment growth rates**



[Note: Employment here refers to all workers (principal status and subsidiary status)]

A distinct feature of women’s employment in India is the low participation rate, particularly noticeable in urban areas. It remained at around 29 per cent (UPSS) with minor fluctuations across various periods. Despite some important variation, different modes of questioning and measures of counting such as usual status, weekly status, daily status all seem to come up with these low figures. This figure would be an underestimation, however, as the non-recording of many tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry, food processing, and fuel collection among others, which are done by women (which may be included as SNA with the changes in the UN System of National Accounts) leads to a substantial undercounting of women family workers.

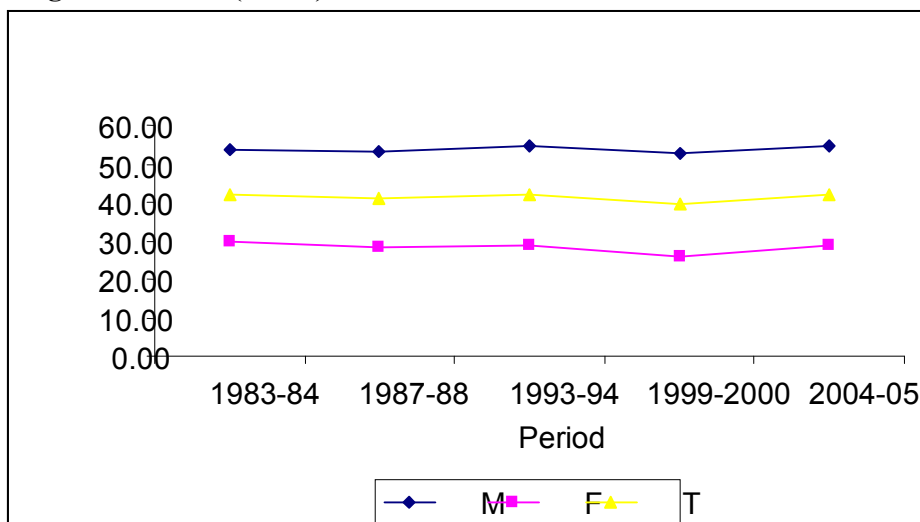
**Table 3: Work force participation rate**

Rounds	UPSS		
	M	F	T
Rural			
1983-84	54.7	34.0	44.6
1987-88	53.9	32.3	43.4
1993-94	55.3	32.8	44.4
1999-2000	53.1	29.9	41.7
2004-05	54.6	32.7	43.9
Urban			
1983-84	51.2	15.1	34.3
1987-88	50.6	15.2	33.7
1993-94	52.1	15.5	34.7
1999-2000	51.8	13.9	33.7
2004-05	54.9	16.6	36.5
<b>Total</b>			
<b>1983-84</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>42.1</b>
<b>1987-88</b>	<b>53.1</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>41.2</b>
<b>1993-94</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>42.0</b>
<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>52.7</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>39.7</b>
<b>2004-05</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>42.0</b>

Source: Various Rounds of NSSO Data

Key: UPSS: Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status

The figures indicate a decline from the mid-1980s to the end of the 1990s in the rural and urban female work force participation rates in both usual and subsidiary activities. Thus, at the aggregate level, there are no signs of the global trend of feminisation of the work force. This is also contrary to existing understandings of a positive correlation between the opening up of the economy and participation of women in economic activity. Only from 2004-05 is there an upward trend and the recovery is more significant for workers (male and female) in urban areas than in rural areas (table 3).

**Figure 2: WPR (UPSS) between 1983/4-2004/5**

Disaggregating the figures further, it is striking that the growth rate of employment in the formal/organised sector declined from 1.26 per cent in the period 1988-1994 to 0.34 per cent in 1994-2000 (Sakthivel and Joddar 2006). Employment in the formal sector has stagnated over the years, while the share of informal or unorganised employment in the economy has been remarkably steady. The informal economy<sup>viii</sup> was estimated as comprising 60 percent of net domestic product, 68 percent of income, 60 percent of savings, 31 percent of agricultural exports and even 41 percent of manufactured exports (Sinha, Sangeeta and Siddiqui 1999). Along with internal differentiation of work conditions and income within the informal sector, the vast gap between the percentage employed (90%) in the informal sector and its share of income (68%) is to be noted. The latter points to the wage differentials between the formal and informal/unorganised sectors and indicates that the shift of employment to the latter sector can have repercussions in terms of increases in levels of poverty and inequality. The informal sector is estimated to employ more than 90 per cent of workers, functioning as a residual sector for those unable to find waged employment elsewhere. Yet, it too underwent a sharp slump between 1994 and 2000, with growth rates falling to 1.3 %.

Open unemployment in the country has remained low with the urban unemployment rate standing at 2.5% and the rural at 5.3% in 2005. The unemployment rates for females are higher than those of males and are highest among urban females (9.1%). Unemployment rates do not encapsulate the intensity of the problem, which is one of underemployment. The latter is captured to some extent by the unemployment measure based on current daily status, which shows an increase over the reform period. This increase was particularly sharp in rural areas where the female unemployment rate increased from 6.7 per cent to 8.7 per cent and that of males almost doubled from 4.2 per cent in 1988 to 8.0 % in 2005.

#### *Sectoral distribution and forms of employment of women workers*

A striking feature, despite some diversification, has been the dominance in overall employment of the primary sector, largely the agriculture sector. Notwithstanding the steady decline in its share in employment, it continues to account for the majority of male and female workers in rural India (67.1% and 83.5% respectively in 2004-05). Even in urban areas, agriculture accounts for a substantial proportion of workers. The shares of the secondary and tertiary sectors show only marginal increases, indicative of the inability of the non-agricultural sector to siphon off the surplus labour from the agricultural sector.

Table 4: Distribution of female workers across various industrial categories- UPSS

Industrial Category	1993-94		1999-00		2004-05	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
<i>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</i>	77.44	39.48	74.88	38.74	72.42	41.63
<i>Mining and quarrying</i>	0.43	19.51	0.32	17.14	0.28	16.52
<i>Mfrg &amp; repair services</i>	9.91	29.14	10.13	28.24	11.67	31.05
<i>Electricity, gas and water</i>	0.04	3.71	0.03	3.61	0.03	4.07
<i>Construction</i>	1.35	13.61	1.67	11.66	1.88	10.75
<i>Trade, hotels and restaurants</i>	3.23	12.84	4.30	12.78	4.11	12.31
<i>Transport, storage and communication</i>	0.27	3.06	0.36	3.01	0.40	3.19

<i>Finance, insurance, real estate and business services</i>	0.37	12.07	0.39	9.61	0.61	11.72
<i>Community, social and personal services</i>	6.96	26.35	7.93	28.94	8.59	33.93
	100.00	32.59	100.00	30.94	100.00	32.47

Source: NSSO Employment and Unemployment Data, Various Rounds

Note: 1- Sectoral share in total female employment; 2 – Female share in total employment

The female work force seems to be even more highly disadvantaged, with signs of further segregation into the lower rungs of the economy. There have been volatile shifts across employment categories in both rural and urban areas, but there has been continuity in the high concentration in agriculture, particularly as unpaid family workers, with absolute numbers increasing in the recent past. Looking at sub-sectoral variations (not given above), the share of women in their traditional sectors of employment, such as food products and tobacco, declined. A significant feature has been the huge increase in the number and proportion of women engaged in ‘wearing apparel’, in both rural and urban areas in 2004-05. This is particularly sharp when subsidiary workers are also taken into account (UPSS status) - indicative of the prevalence of subcontracted, putting out, home based work on a large scale in the sector and of the concentration of women in such markedly low paid, unprotected employment.

The service sector registered a clear increase, especially in the urban areas. The services and tertiary sector is even more heterogeneous than the secondary sector. Activities include domestic service (and commercialisation of previously non-marketed services), hawkers, vendors, and corporate retailing, hand-drawn and air transport, restaurants and hotels of all kinds, public and private medicine and education, administration, new IT and ITE sectors, banking and insurance. While many of these employment fields entail long hours and minimal or zero protection in terms of occupational safety or job security, they provide vastly different levels of income, work and job expansion, covering high and low skill, high and low pay, high and low productivity segments. For women at the upper income, upper skill ends, the quality as well as opportunities for employment have improved. For most women workers, however, the quality of work is poor, without opportunities for skill development or promotion and/or with very low income returns (Ghose 1999). An important trend is the growth in employment in categories such as trade, hotels and restaurants, and personal and community services, with an increase in the proportion of all women workers falling into these categories. The specific sub-sectors that registered maximum growth rates are retail trade, education, and ‘private households with employed persons’. The last category includes domestic workers, watchmen, gardeners, etc. The number of women working as housemaids/servants in both rural and urban areas has increased three-four times, doubling the share of this category in the total service employment of women. These aspects will be taken up for further discussion in later chapters.

In the above discussion, sectoral and gendered variations in forms of employment has been suggested. Though self employment has always predominated over wage employment in rural areas because of the weight of small-scale, peasant agriculture, there have been considerable overall fluctuations. The first and the foremost of these was the substantial increase in casual employment in the 1990s and a decline in self-employment as well as regular employment, with growing contract-based production. Reversing this, there has been an unprecedented expansion of self employment between 1999-2000 to 2004-05, particularly for women. This is attributed to an increasing difficulty in getting wage employment, both regular and casual (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2006a).

Table 5: Percentage of the female work force self-employed

	1999-2000	2004-2005
Female Rural	57.3	63.7
Female Urban	45.3	47.7
Female Total	55.6	61.0
Male Total	52.8	54.2

Source: NSS, 55<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> Rounds

The shift to self-employment was through a growing prominence of retail trade and street vending in urban areas, while in rural areas it was largely in low productivity agriculture. One feature which may be noted is that according to the 61<sup>st</sup> round of the NSS, 39-49% self-employed male and female workers found their work unremunerative (Chandrashekhar and Ghosh 2006b). A second feature to be highlighted is that female employment continues to concentrate in areas akin to their care responsibilities or which easily combine with them, and that the latter may not only obscure their work burdens, but also push them into low wage, low productivity areas. (See Table 5).

With rising unemployment and declining earnings there has been a steady increase in the number of employment-seeking migrants in the post-liberalisation period. The number of migrants during 1991-2001 showed an unprecedented increase of about 22% over the previous decade. Employment has been reported as the biggest reason for migration – the number of job seekers among all migrants increased by 45% over the previous decade and was more than 85% men at both census counts. The number of females migrating due to work/employment between 1991 and 2001 registered a growth (25 %) higher than that of the female population as a whole. It may be noted that there is likely underreporting of women who migrate for employment purposes for reasons discussed later.

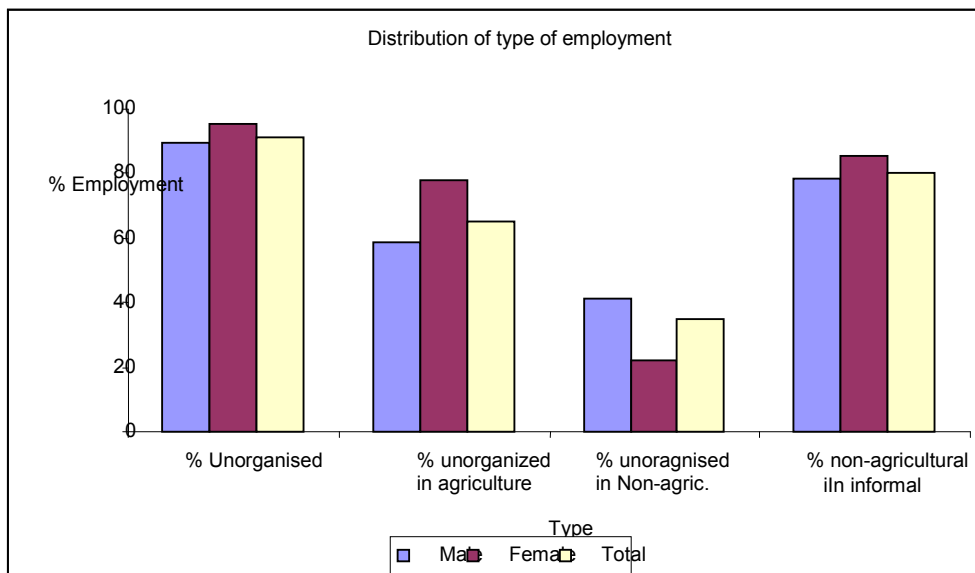
Most of this movement has been from the most populous and poorest states with net in-migration being higher for the more developed states. Yet, what is captured by the macro data is a small part of total labour migrants, as seasonal, circulatory, and short-term migrants tend to get left out. Much of the migration is within the same state, intra-rural and rural to small town. Seasonal urban migration is evident throughout India, where many migrants move into the city during periods of hardship and return to their native villages for agricultural work such as harvesting. Further, the figure for job-seeking female migrants is also an underestimation. The tendency is to place women and children in the category of “moved with household” assuming the male breadwinner model. Most female migration is reported as marriage migration. Over 1991-2001, however, the proportion of female migrants who had migrated due to marriage declined slightly to 64.9%, while that related to employment increased marginally. In practice many members of the migrating household - women, men, and children - are in search of paid work. All of this has implications for the organisation of care work and household reproduction, both at the place of origin and the place of migration. These migration patterns, placed along with the figures for employment discussed above, are illuminative of the gendered nature of the work-care regime in India.

### *Wages and working conditions*

Between 1989 and the mid 1990s, the unregistered workforce, i.e. the workforce without social protection, increased from 89 percent to 93 percent of the total workforce. Only a small proportion of the workforce in India receives regular wages and salaries and only half of the latter is unionized (Sinha et al. 1999). In the absence of any sort of social protection as well as unionization, wages tend to be low and working conditions abysmal. In fact, underemployment can be an euphemism for underpaid (despite long hours) or non-payment (for unrecognised family workers).

Unorganised employment grew to 92.4% in 2004-05 (NCUES 2007, based on the NSS 61<sup>st</sup> round). Looking at the expansion of the informal/unorganized economy through the reform period, it has to be remembered that it lies outside the scope of state regulation or, even if officially subject to state regulation, nevertheless does not operate according to the prescribed rules (See footnote 9). The lack of regulation may be because work is dispersed, units are smaller than the threshold for regulation, or because the state neglects to regulate it. The last is unfortunately more true than otherwise for the formal sector also. The NCUES stated that ‘the entire increase in the employment in the organised sector over this period has been informal in nature i.e. without any job or social security. This constitutes what can be termed as informalisation of the formal sector, where any employment increase consists of regular workers without social security benefits and casual or contract workers again without the benefits that should accrue to formal worker’ (2007:4). This appears to have been a desired outcome of liberalization, as reflected in growing contract employment within government and the public sector and court verdicts which have denied the right of security of employment.

**Figure 3: Workers in Formal and Informal Employment (1999-2000)**  
(% of all workers)



*Source:* Computed from Table 2.2 in NCUES (2006), based on unit level data of NSS 55<sup>th</sup> Round, 1999-2000, Employment-Unemployment Survey.

The gap between the percentage employed in the informal sector and the percentage of the income accruing to this sector has already been indicated. The tertiary sector, with the low employment base of its modern segments and a vast spectrum of low paid jobs has lead to rapid shifts in income distribution with an absolute decline in real incomes for a major segment of the population combined with a rapid rise in real incomes for a minority. The NSS data show that during the 1990s the rate of growth of real wages for most categories (whether in terms of occupations or nature of contracts) of workers was lower than in the 1980s. Sundaram (2001), after analyzing the NSS data between the periods 1993-4 and 1999-2000, shows that female wages have remained locked at 70 % of male wages for casual labour in agriculture; however, there was an improvement from about 58 to 63 % for casual labour in non-agriculture. The trends between 1999-2000 to 2004-05 appear to be extremely disturbing. For instance, among regular workers, while rural males have managed to escape a decline in real wages in the later period, the other three categories, namely rural females, urban males and urban females have not been so fortunate. Since the late 1980s, the share of wages in value added has fallen sharply. For a considerable period it hovered around 30% in the 1980s but

had registered a sharp fall to 15% by 2003-04. This is far less than the average for developing countries. This clearly has implications for poverty and inequality.

### III Poverty, Inequality, and Social Policy

In this section, we turn to an examination of trends in poverty and equality/inequality in the reform period. We immediately face a conundrum. While the official figure in 2000 of the population below the poverty line was 28.6%, according to the Human Development Report 2004, this figure stood at 79.9% using the US\$ 2 a day measure. According to official figures, the poverty figure fell sharply by 1999-2000.

**Table 7: Official poverty ratios**

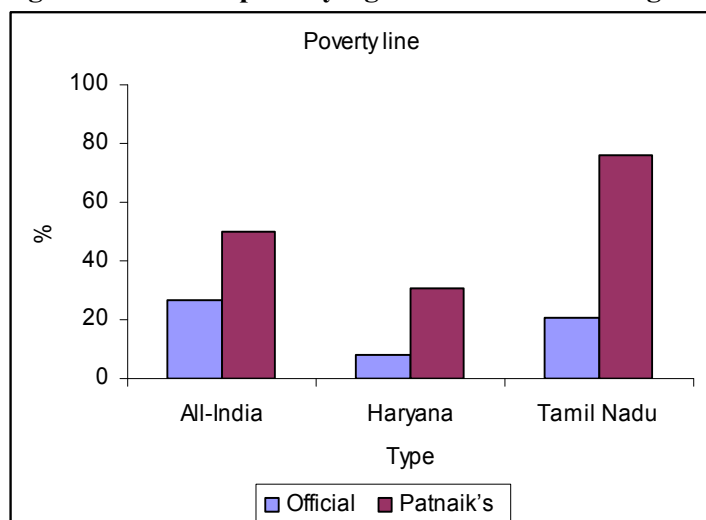
Year	Percentage below the poverty line
1987-88	38.9
1993-94	36.0
1999-2000	28.6

Source: GOI, Economic Surveys

The poverty line, trends in the proportion of the population below it, and the proportion of poor among various socio-religious groups is a deeply political issue in India, reflected in a veritable industry of research in the field and continuous debates in academic and policy literature. The extent of discussion is not surprising, since these trends are taken as a test of state economic and social policy. The consumption data of the various rounds of the NSS provide long-term trends on this, but methodological changes in the 55<sup>th</sup> round (1999-2000) created further controversy.

Patnaik's (2006) figures come close to that based on the US\$ 2 a day measure in the HDR 2006. She argues that poverty has increased over the 1990s and that in 1999-2000, 74% of rural India and 43% of urban India should be counted among the poor if nutritional norms, a correct price index adjustment and actual monthly per capita expenditure groups (NSS 55<sup>th</sup> round) are matched.<sup>ix</sup> Even on a lower calorie intake norm, she finds a figure of 50% as against the official figure of 27% below the poverty line. Her suggestion that there has been a lowering of the consumption standard over time from a 2200 daily calorie intake to less than 1800 by 2005 is important for understanding both inter-household differences and intra-household differences discussed below.

**Figure 4: Official poverty figures and Patnaik's figures**



Undoubtedly, the per capita daily absorption/availability of food grains has witnessed an unprecedented decline (since Independence) during the 1990s, coming close to the figures for the early 1950s. In 1991-2, it was around 485 grams, coming down to 419 in 2002-03, the major part of this decline being after 1998 (Patnaik *ibid.*). This would imply that a larger section of the population is further exposed to food vulnerability reflected in hunger and malnutrition. According to FAO estimates, 225 million people are chronically undernourished (Radhakrishna 2005). This situation reflects India's paradoxical situation. At one time the country had attained self sufficiency in food grains, but is now not only both exporting and importing grain, it has the largest number of underfed and undernourished people in the world.

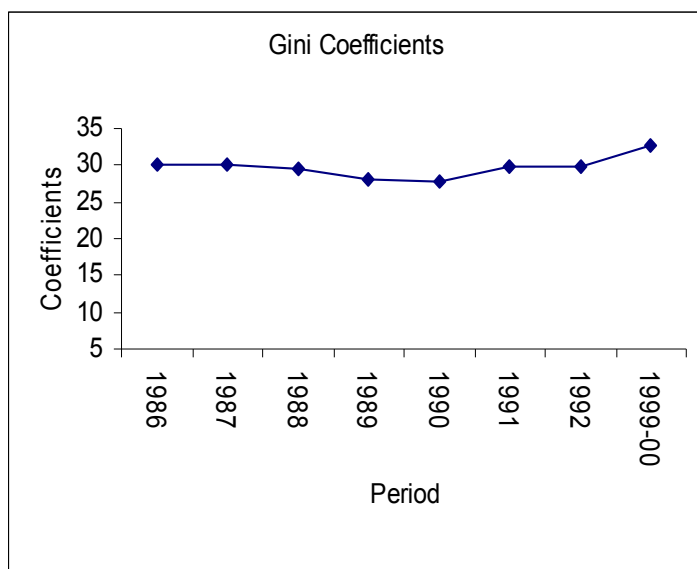
A range of articles, re-examining NSS data and taking a first look at the 61<sup>st</sup> round (2004-05), suggest that over the period 1983-2005, "in spite of higher overall growth, the extent of decline in poverty in the post-reform period (1993-2005) has not been higher than in the pre-reform period (1983-1993)" (Dev and Ravi 2007: 509). Himanshu (2007) points out that the annual rate of reduction was even lower than for the 1970s and 1980s. In an earlier paper, Sen and Himanshu (2004a) found, contrary to Sundaram and Tendulkar (2003), that the absolute numbers of poor had increased significantly.<sup>x</sup> Dev and Ravi (*ibid.*) remark that the higher decline in the period 1999-2005 as compared to 1993-2000 which the data suggests has to be investigated as the latter period saw slower agricultural growth.

Patnaik (*ibid.*) related the poverty levels to a stagnation in total capital formation in agriculture consequent to the sharp reduction in public investment and a consequent decline in the rate of crop output growth as well the growing unemployment. This takes us back to issues discussed in the earlier section. Earlier public works programmes not only helped increase agricultural productivity, through irrigation works for example, in 1987-88 they provided 22.3 percent of all casual labour days spent on non-agricultural activity (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2002a: 144). Himanshu (2007) also points to growing unemployment through the 1990s, even as he notes a reversal between 1999-2005, which included a growth in rural, non-agricultural employment and self-employment and a decline in casual labourers, compared to the sharp increase in the earlier decade. While this may be a factor in better poverty reduction rates since 2000, we again find a paradox. The real wages of all workers, casual as well as regular, rural and urban, male and female and at all levels of education, have decelerated compared to the earlier decade. On that basis, poverty reduction should have been worse between 2000-2005 as compared to 1993-2000, rather than better. However, the real wages of casual workers in the poorer states (Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal) rose and some of the latter (West Bengal, Assam) also show an absolute decline in unemployment. He

also points to the mixed picture if one looks at non-income indicators of poverty such as those regarding the well-being of children under 6 years of age traced by the three NFH Surveys.

Given that the average per capita income has been rising, poverty trends would suggest a worsening income distribution and decline in purchasing power for large sections. As we can see in the figure below, after declining in the late 1980s, inequality increased through the 1990s.

**Figure 5: Inequality trends**



Source: Wider Data base

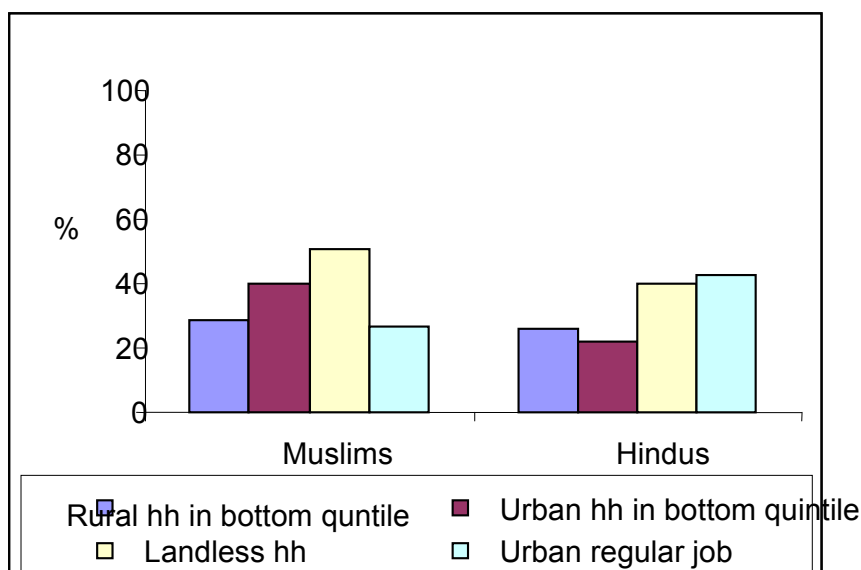
In fact, all the above authors suggest that it is the significant increase in inequality which had slowed down poverty reduction. Sen and Himanshu (2004b) found an increased inter-state inequality, rural and urban. They also showed that the lowest 40% of persons ranked by expenditure levels had an absolutely lower per capita total real expenditure by 2001-02 compared to 1995-96, despite increases during the 1970s and 1980s. There was no change in real per capita expenditure of the next 40%. What is also found are very large increases in consumption by the top quintile, the relatively rich, in the 1990s, unprecedented since Indian surveys began. Given the size of India's population, even if the proportion is small, huge numbers of people (numbers which are rare internationally) are experiencing increased consumption levels. Dev and Ravi (*ibid.*) found that, measured by the Gini coefficient, inequality either increased or the rate of decline slowed in 13 out of 17 states in the reform period compared to the pre-reform period. The levels of inequality were higher in urban than in rural areas.

Patnaik (*ibid.*) points out that the inequality situation is worse than expenditure data tells us, as the lower deciles have been making asset adjustments in order to maintain their consumption flows. Or in other words, in the Indian context, 'inequality (measured by the Gini coefficient) in consumption expenditure is lower than inequality in income, which in turn is lower than inequality in wealth' (Dev and Ranade 1999:52). As per the NSS data, the proportion of households without any access to land in total rural households has increased from 38.7 per cent in 1994 to 40.9 per cent in 2000 and further to 43.1 per cent during 2004-05. In other words, the lower end of the peasantry, many of whom are also in the agricultural labour market, may have been forced to sell or give up their land due to the growing difficulties of cultivation. Within agricultural labour households, there has been a very significant increase in landlessness between 1987-88 and 2004-05 as the proportion of such households in total agricultural households increased from about 52 to 62 percent (Dabhi 2006).

Of the 40.9% of all rural households who were landless in 1999-2000, nearly 55.5% were SC households and 64.5% were SC agricultural labour households. The extreme poverty of such groups renders them most vulnerable to exploitation and violation of their human rights. It is not surprising that 80% to 90% of all bonded labourers in India belonging to the SCs and STs (Dabhi *ibid.*).

Looking at the two largest religious groups in India, we see from the NSSO 55th round countrywide survey (1999-2000) estimates that a larger proportion of Muslims than Hindus suffer from low levels of consumption and poverty.

**Figure 6: Poverty among Muslims and Hindus compared**



Source: NSSO 55<sup>th</sup> round

In the bottom quintile, average per capita consumption expenditure was less than Rs. 300 a month. If a regular salaried job in urban India makes it more likely that a household will enjoy a better economic position, then here again Muslims are at a disadvantage. Furthermore, 52% Muslims were self-employed and 15% worked as casual labourers. Community-wise literacy rates and various demographic measures, which show the disparity between Muslims, Hindus and other socio-religious groups are discussed in Section IV. The NSSO surveys show that during the 1990s the divide between Hindus and Muslims, inter-community inequality, was either constant or growing wider.

Other than the above discussed levels of poverty and economic inequality by region, caste, and religious group, there is the gender differentiation in poverty and inequality. Throughout the earlier section on employment trends, we pointed to aspects of employment and wage differentials between women and men in the rural and urban labour market, in the organised and unorganised sectors. Women are concentrated in low productivity and low paid or unpaid work, as casual, contract, and unpaid family workers, which is also work that can more easily be combined with household care tasks. The economic value of what they do as family workers continues to be unrecognised. Their income and wages are up to 30% less than that of men. While literacy and education levels of women have increased (see next section) and women are visibly present in many old and new fields of well paid or prestigious employment, female-male inequality even in better paid, high status, and supervisory work remains large. In the formal sector, they experience inequality and discrimination in promotions and categorisation of their work. It bears reiteration that NSS data shows that the gender gap in wages has increased for all categories of workers – urban and rural, regular and casual - between 1999-2000 and 2004-05, while regular women workers have seen a decline in real

wages (Chandrashekhara and Ghosh 2006b). Furthermore, while there is no figure, the gender gap in ownership of assets, especially in productive property and housing, is huge, with inheritance practices denying women rights in both their natal and conjugal families. In this context, female headed households, whose demographic characteristics are discussed below, tend to be without assets. Meenakshi and Ray (2003) demonstrate that female headed households register higher poverty rates than the general population for most of the states and India as a whole, for both the 50th (1993-4) and 55th (1999-2000) rounds of the NSS.

Women carry the greater burden of household poverty, reflected in the nutritional status of women, maternal mortality rates (MMR) and the sex ratio.<sup>xi</sup> Though there is a paucity of data regarding intra-household distribution, various qualitative studies have indicated the gender differential (against women) in the basics of survival - nutrition and access to health services, especially at maternity. In parts of India, anaemia levels among pregnant women has risen (Bose 2006a). In the common cultural practice among large sections of the Indian population, especially in extended households, men and women not only eat separately, women eat after the men and children and young unmarried women eat the very last. The valuation of men's rights to consumption as owners of family assets and as the main earners means that in situations of insufficiency, women are likely to get even less than the others. If we look at the declining levels of food absorption that Patnaik alerts us to, the implications are that the declining levels of poor women's nutrition will be particularly stark and contrary to their very high work burdens. This is quite apart from the inequalities and discrimination experienced by women in access to education, outlined in the next section, or in 'luxuries'.

In Section IV, where we discuss demographic and social trends, the effects of gendered inequalities emerge sharply, especially in the sex ratio and maternal mortality rates. The declining juvenile sex ratios and high maternal mortality rates are a result of not just sex-selective abortions found among the middle and rich, but also inequalities in nutrition and health care of male and female infants and adults, particularly where poverty seems to force a choice between household members.

### *Social Policy*

Poverty reduction and human resource development, under one term or another, have been articulated as central tenets of social policy in India. However, as various writers have suggested, the gap between promises and outcomes was glaring, more so when ambitions regarding welfare were the highest (Jayal 1999; Kohli 2007). The declines in poverty reduction and increasing inequalities of the nineties noted earlier were also marked by a shift in policy emphasis away from governmental responsibilities for welfare. Through much of the 1990s, social sector allocations, which could have ameliorated though not eliminated some of these inequalities, increased as a proportion of the aggregate public expenditures, but stagnated or fell as a percentage of the GDP, increasing again from 1997-98.

**Table 10: Social Sector (Social Services and Rural Development) Expenditure by Centres and States (Revenue and Capital) as % of GDP and % Aggregate Public Expenditure**

	As % of GDP	As % aggregate public expenditure. (revenue and capital)
1987-88	7.26	25.29
1990-1	6.78	24.85
1992-93	6.38	24.06

1994-95	6.39	25.01	
1996-97		6.30	26.46
1998-99	7.01	27.36	
2001-2002		7.18	25.31

Source: Dev and Mooij 2005, Table 6.1

According to the Economic Survey 2006, expenditure on social sectors as a proportion of total expenditure (not directly comparable to the figures in the above table from Dev and Mooij 2005) fell from 21.4 % in 2001-02 to 19.7 % in 2003-04 increasing to 22.2% in the budget estimate of 2006-2007. While external aid is an important component of social sector funding, this sector comes largely within the purview of state governments within India's federal structure. Social sector expenditure as a proportion of aggregate expenditure and as a percentage of the GDP declined for a majority of the states from the mid-1980s into the 1990s (Dev and Mooij 2005:101), in part due to the greater centralisation in collection and allocation of financial resources. By the late 1990s, less than 5% of the social sector expenditure was on infrastructure, most being on salaries and running expenses (Dev and Mooij *ibid.*). Thus, much of the increase in social sector spending would have been consumed by the tremendous rise in government salaries, implying that actual services and consumables for users would have shrunk.

Jayal suggests that the though in theory the state adhered to a needs-based conception of welfare and justice, in practice it was based on ideas of charity, benevolence, and paternalism (*ibid.*: 39). This was reflected in the formulation of schemes, in the emphasis on temporary and emergency relief, and in the low funding of the social sector. Family planning was perhaps the only coherent, explicit and continuous component. Anti-discrimination measures rarely combined with employment-enhancing programmes. Thus,, design and/or funding of livelihood-based programmes for historically discriminated groups, minorities or women was lacking.

The above can be elucidated through a look at the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), the pivotal body for 'improving women's position'. There is a clear conjunction of gender and class ideology in the construction of women as non-employed mothers in its fairly elaborate charter. Care is assumed to be a familial responsibility and the Indian family - resting on 'sacred traditions' - is assumed to take care of its young, old, and women. Their target groups of women can be divided into three categories. The first category - the fulcrum of CSWB activities - consists of women who need services to aid them in being better mothers. Maternity centres, home help services, family welfare services, marriage and family counselling services, and Mahila Mandals were proposed, wherein the old themes of eugenics, hygiene, and home science were pervasive, combined with family planning as the driving force. Women who failed – failed to be mothers – are the second group and required other services. These included hostels for working women (without children), training and rehabilitation of destitute women and widows, short stay homes for women in distress, and some income-generation projects. The last were centred on low-income work and uncertain markets and built on notions of paid work for women becoming necessary only when they were not attached to an adult male as well as their need for protection. The third category is the good mothers – the voluntary, charitable workers who did not require living wages, who provided services under the sponsorship of the CSWB, such as in running the *balwadis*, to the first two categories of mothers (Palriwala 2002). Fund allocation for all these activities was low, actual expenditure even less, particularly on childcare services. The conjunction of women and children development as subject matters of a single ministry carries forward the above approach.

A few disaggregated features of the social sector can be outlined. In the late 1990s, expenditure on rural development, one component of the policy on food security, actually fell and is reflected in the current agrarian crisis and import of food grains. With the shift from a universal to a targeted public distribution system, the other essential component of the policy on food security was also given the go by. Attempts to retain the public distribution system by those state governments which refused to do so, such as the governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, are hampered by massive cuts in grain allocation, which do not allow even the limited system to function.<sup>xii</sup> On the other hand, the share for rural housing increased sharply as did allocations to elementary education, in some part as a result of the increased outlays on nutrition programmes such as mid-day meals. This was accompanied by cuts at all other levels of education (Dev and Mooij *ibid.*), which in any case were nowhere near the levels required to ensure access to free and compulsory education for all. In Kerala, the present leftist government may spend more of its budget on education, but this comes in the aftermath of a pro-liberalisation government which had made a massive push for privatisation of education at all levels, including closure of government institutions. In Bengal, expenditures on education were continuously low.

The cuts in health expenditure, which had been declining over the years, became worse in this decade. Despite widespread mobilisations by NGOs, communists, and social activists, allocations to public health, other than to reproductive and child health programmes, have not increased. Investment on public health as a percentage of GDP declined from 1.3 % in 1990 to 0.6 % in 1999. In the states it declined from 7 % to 5.5 % (Duggal, citing the Draft National Health Policy, 2001). An obvious consequence was the acceleration of privatization and deregulation of the health sector that had become evident in the 1980s. India now has the most privatized health care system in the world. In 1997, an estimated 68 % of the hospitals, 56 % of dispensaries, 37 % of beds and 75 % of the allopathic doctors were in the private sector (Duggal 2002). Private spending accounts for 83 % of the aggregate expenditure on health in India. There has been a five-fold increase in treatment costs in the public sector. Prices of medicines have been increasing in which a major factor has been the systematic deregulation of the pricing of drugs which gathered momentum in the recent years. In the process, the access of the poor to health facilities worsens as does the tapping of such services for the socially devalued such as girls and women. The consequences are evident when we look at the slowing down of the declines in mortality rates, the IMR and MMR discussed below.

In the recent years, however, there have been important initiatives through the allocations in this sector, including the mid-day meal and other nutritional supplement programmes and the NREGA. At the same time, low and delayed allocations of grain and funds, delayed delivery, and other factors are part of the scenario. Yet, despite shoddy and even corrupt implementation, preliminary researches indicate that there have been important welfare benefits and potential beneficiaries are also mobilising to try and ensure this. Discussions regarding the extension of the NREGA to cover all rural districts of the country and proper implementation of the ICDS are in the air. Further results remain to be seen.

#### **IV Social and Demographic Trends**

According to the 2001 Census, the Indian population stood at 1,028,610,328 of which 72.2% lived in rural areas and 27.8% is urban. The population is large and also very diverse: religious, ethnic, linguistic, regional, and caste differences cut across each other and class and gender inequalities. Hence, economic processes have even more differentiated impacts and any macro indicator - demographic, social, or economic - can be belied by the particularities of some part of the Indian population. This section attempts to summarise this complexity while outlining the social context of care, demographic dimensions and features of inequality, and pointing to issues of discussion.

### *Age structure, fertility and mortality trends*

In 2006, the proportion of the Indian population in the working age group of 15-64 years stood at 62.9%, giving what demographers call a demographic dividend<sup>xiii</sup> which they expect will continue till 2045 (Economic Survey 2006-2007). This “dividend” reflects the high rate of population increase that India had been experiencing (2.1-2.5 % per annum between 1971-2001) resulting in a very young population. However, since 1981, the population aged 14 and less has shrunk as a result of declining fertility rates as well as declining mortality rates. The Total Fertility Rate<sup>xiv</sup> has fallen and is projected to hit 2.1, which is the replacement level of fertility, in the decade beginning 2010. The average number of children ever born per ever married woman<sup>xv</sup> indicates that the childcare ‘burden’ remains high, but is reducing. At the same time, the proportion of the population aged 60+ has grown to 7.35 in 2004.<sup>xvi</sup> This reflects the steadily upward trend in life expectancies at birth in India, from 32.1 years in the 1940s, to 64.8 in the early 2000s.<sup>xvii</sup>

**Table 11: Age groups and fertility rates**

	Percentage of Population 14 years and less	Percentage of Population 60+ years	Total Fertility Rate	Average no. of children ever born/married woman (MNB)
1981	39.6	6.3	3.61	3.38
2001	35	7.1	2.52	3.03

Source: Census of India

Age specific mortality rates among children, as well as that for the total population also indicate a secular decline.

**Table 12: Age Specific Mortality Rates in India (1971, 1981, 1991, 2001)**

Age Groups (Years)	1971	1981	1991	2001
0-4	51.9	41.2	26.5	19.3
5-9	4.7	4.0	2.7	1.9
10-14	2.0	1.7	1.5	1.3
All Ages	14.9	12.5	9.8	8.4

Note : 1991: Excludes Jammu & Kashmir.

Source : Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India.

The infant mortality rate, though remaining very high, has fallen from 110 (per 1000) in 1981 to 80 in 1991, 66 in 2001 and 58 in 2005 (Statistical Report, Registrar General of India 2004).<sup>xviii</sup> It has to be noted that the decline in infant mortality and child mortality rates as well as in overall mortality rates was not as sharp or as great in 1991-2001 as in earlier decades (Ved and Dua *ibid.*), and the increase in life expectancy was also less than in the earlier decades.<sup>xix</sup> Further, these aggregated declines hide the wide variation by sex, region, caste, urban-rural location and class/income level. Ved and Dua (2005) point out that a large proportion of the IMR is due to perinatal and neonatal mortality in which the young age of the mother at first birth, short birth intervals and lack of safe

and proper delivery facilities are critical.<sup>xx</sup> This cluster of features also makes for the continuing high maternal mortality rates which stood at 407 per 100,000 live births in 1998-99.<sup>xxi</sup> The decline in post-neonatal mortality has been the major component of the decline in the IMR. Indications are that this has been influenced by changes in childcare, nutrition, and health services available, such as the programme of nutritional supplements through *anganwadis* under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). However, the lack of performance of the latter in recent years has come for much criticism, an issue to be discussed in a later chapter. The decline in the number of births itself may also be a factor in the decline in mortality rates, particularly of female infants.

In 2001, only 48.26% of the Indian population was female, continuing the century old trend of a low sex ratio, in which high maternal mortality rates, low nutritional levels, lack of access to health, and heavy work burdens of women are important factors. A newly noted feature in 2001 was the declining juvenile sex ratios (measured as the number of girls to 1000 boys of age 6 and less) which showed a sharp fall at the all-India level and in most states and union territories. While sex-selective abortion and female infanticide are major factors, another direct causal feature is deliberate and unconscious neglect of the girl child, in terms of nutrition, health care, and supervision, along with an early work burden in both care work and other home-based tasks (Ongoing Action Aid/IDRC study on Addressing Adverse Sex Ratio in Selected Districts of MP, HP Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana). This work burden is also a reason for persisting lower enrolment in schools and higher drop-out rates of girls above this age in many states.

#### *Households, Family, and Marriage*

The universality of marriage is evident from Table 13, derived from the 2001 Census of India, Tables C2.

**Table 13: Percent of age group ever-married**

AGE	Males	Females
All ages	45.6	55.1
0-14	0.3	0.9
15-19	5.3	24.9
20-24	34.8	77.1
25-29	72.3	94.3
30-34	91.3	97.8
35-39	96.7	98.7

Table 14 indicates the young age at which marriage continues to take place for a substantial number of women and to a lesser extent for men. A large proportion of marriages are taking place at ages contrary to the legal age for marriage and consent, which is 18 for women and 21 for men. Census of India figures show that while the average age at marriage increased steadily from 1951 to 1991, the figures for 2001 (22.6 for males, 18.3 for females) declined to levels slightly below that in 1981 (23.4 for males, 18.6 for females). This goes against the earlier and commonly assumed trends and needs exploration, not possible here. Proffered reasons include increasing dowry, declining sex ratios and fears for the chastity and sexual safety of unmarried women.

**Table 14: Summary of some marriage and fertility data from the NFHS**

Particulars	NFHS-3 (2005-	Residence		NFHS-2 (1998-	NFHS-1 (1992-
		Urban	Rural		

	06)			99)	93)
1. Women aged 20-24 married by age 18 (%)	44.5	28.1	52.5	50.0	54.2
2. Men aged 25-29 married by age 21 (%)	29.3	16.7	36.5	N.A	N.A
3. Women aged 15-19 who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey (%)	16.0	8.7	19.1	N.A	N.A
4. Median age at first birth for women age 25-49	19.8	20.9	19.3	19.3	19.4

Source: National Family Health Survey-3 for India, (2005-2006)

We also see in the above table the continuing young age at which Indian women, particularly rural women, have been having their first child and becoming mothers, taking on the responsibility of childcare. Given the pattern of childbirth and household living these young women may have already carried responsibilities of child care - of siblings, cousins and nieces and nephews.

Till 1981, the average household size showed an increase at each census, but since then the trend has reversed (from 5.1 in 1983 to 4.8 in 2004-05 in rural India and 4.7 to 4.3 in urban India according to NSS data). This has been read as 'indicative of growing nuclearization of families in the society which is more evident in urban areas than in rural' (Tables HH5-HH7, Census 2001:8-13). The extent and reasons for this 'nuclearisation' may be debated. Clearly there is also a continuing complexity in household and residence practices. The number of married couples per household with at least one married couple has declined minimally, from 1.3 in 1981 to 1.29 in 2001, and the percentage of households with more than one married couple has decreased marginally, from 20.22 % in 1981 to 19.6 % in 2001 (calculated from Census of India, Household Tables). This means that a substantial number of children continue to grow up in households with adults other than their parents, who possibly share child care and other care work among themselves.

This is also the case in those households which have one or less than one married couple. In 1981, a good third of these households were not nuclear families, but contained additional unmarried/separated/divorced/widowed relatives of the head or her/his spouse other than their children (Shah 1998). This would have included households of siblings of various ages, including one or two adults, without their parents (see below). Data on detailed kinship composition of households and typologies as in the 1981 Census have not been made available for the 1991 and 2001 censuses. However, varied and many studies report the articulation of the value that rather than living on their own, currently unmarried, lone adults and orphaned children should be incorporated into the household of a relative. "People should not live alone and young children should not live without adults. Family should step in where needed" are the sort of statements which are made. Of course, these avowals are not true descriptions of the practice, as is evident in the many homeless children found in urban centres in India, as well as in orphanages. It has also to be kept in mind that many of these latter children may not be orphans, but either abandoned or

runaways. In any case, the reported institutional and houseless populations stood at only 0.51% and 0.24% respectively in 1991, the latter declining very marginally to 0.23% in 2001.

### *Young and old in households*

The policy and concerns of the Indian state get expressed in official surveys and the official data and tables made available. Indeed a very wide, if disconcertingly changing, range of information is available from the Census, the NSSO and other instruments. Thus, a range of trends pertaining to demographic, familial, health, and educational characteristics of the child population is available. The distribution by household of children below the school going age is not available however, perhaps reflecting the lack of recognition of the labour of childcare in state policy. From the total number between the ages of 0-6 - 163,819,614 (15.9% of the total population) - the average figure of 0.85 children per household can be calculated and is indicative of the childcare 'burden' but only indicative, as this includes childless households, households with more than 2 adults, and children in institutions.

Due to the concern with schooling, figures for children between the ages of 5-14 by household in school and out of it are available. There were no children in this age group in 39.2% (non-institutional) households. It would be of interest to know in how many of these households there were children below the age of six. There was one child in the age group 5-14 in 22.1% households, 2 in 19.6 % households, 3 in 11.8 % households, and 4 or more in 7.3 % households. Another point of interest would be the number of children living in non-institutional households in which there are no adults. Again it is not easy to find such a figure. What can be gleaned is that 0.97% household heads or 1.88 million are less than 20 years old of which 78% have never married (Census of India 2001, HH-6).

According to the 2001 Census figures, approximately 30.2 per cent of households have at least one elderly person (60 years and above) as a member of the household. The rural-urban differential is apparent with a higher proportion of the elderly population reported from rural households compared to the urban households. Old people living alone or with only another old person add up to 5.7 million. The sex of all the aged persons living as single member households is predominantly feminine, which essentially means that a larger number of females than males live alone (Census of India, 2001). Widows' lack of secure rights to property and housing and thence practices contrary to the stated ideals of joint living, support, and care for old parents by sons when the parent is a widowed mother are among the factors evident here. Other factors are men marrying women younger than themselves, much higher remarriage rates for widowed and divorced men than for women, and higher life expectancies of women at older ages, but in conjunction with higher mortality ratios for widows than for widowers, have also been discussed in this regard (Chen 1998).

### *Migration and female headed households*

Female-headed households, which at first sight appear to contradict the patrilineal, patrilocal, patriarchal family-household that defines the kinship and family ethos in much of India, has increased from 9.7 per cent to 11.3 per cent of all households in rural areas and from 10.6 to 11.1 per cent in urban areas between 1994 and 2005 (NSS 50<sup>th</sup> Round; NSS 61<sup>st</sup> Round). The increase has been particularly marked in the last 5 years, yet these figures are low in a global comparison. While more than 90 percent of male heads of households are currently married, among females the majority of the heads (66 percent) fall into the 'widowed' category. Only about 27 percent of female household heads are of the 'Currently Married' category (Census 2001). Between 1971 and 1991 the percentage of all women who were widows fell substantially from 12.5 to 6.5<sup>xxii</sup> and those divorced or separated from 0.5% to 0.35% (National Commission of Women 2001). This may

represent an undercounting of divorced, separated and abandoned women, due to the continuing social stigma attached to this status. Subsequently, over 1991-2004, the combined figure for widowed, divorced, and abandoned women had risen by about one percent to 7.81% of all women (SRS 2004, Registrar General). Meantime, some women's groups have been expressing the view that in their experience there has been an increase in the abandonment of women by spouses.

Other than 'marital mishap', another factor producing female-headed households is that of husbands living away from the family on account of business or employment - i.e. migration (see below), possibly distress migration.<sup>xxiii</sup> Though the average size of female headed households increased between 1994 and 2000, it still stood at more than one person less than the average size of all households in 2000 (NSS, 50<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> rounds). This absent person was possibly the adult male. In all these cases, women become household heads due to compulsion or circumstances out of their control or they present it as such, rather than choosing to contravene the dominant patrilineal ethos. They then carry alone the responsibilities of ensuring a livelihood and caring for household members without the same access to assets or livelihoods that men have.

### *Education*

India still has the largest number of illiterates in the world, though literacy rates have been increasing - from 36.2% (as % of population 6+ and above) in 1981 (48.9% males and 24.8% females) to 64.8% in 2001 (75.3% males and 53.7% females). 29.7% men and 54.6% women aged 15+ years had had no formal schooling in 2001. However, school enrolment ratios show a significant increase across the country and educational aspirations are on the rise.

**Table 15 : Educational level by Sex (% of population)**

Educational level	All	Male	Female
Primary or less	30.33	35.5	27.3
Secondary or less, but more than primary	20.2	24.8	15.2
Some tertiary	4.1	5.4	2.6

Source: Census of India 2001

While public education budgeting assumes a school starting age of six, children may enrol any time between 5-7, higher entry ages being prevalent in rural areas. The NSS shows a significant increase in "participation in education" for the age group 6-11 years and 11-14 years in 1999-2000 compared to the previous round of large surveys of 1987-88 and 1993-94 and the increases are more for females than for males during this period. However one needs to interpret this increase with caution. Chandrashekhar and Ghosh (2002b) observe that while the "usual status" category (which shows the response to the question 'what do you usually do over the course of the year') shows a substantial increase for the specified age groups, the weekly and daily status reports register a much lower participation in education. This is more pronounced for girls. This reveals that even when children may be formally enrolled in schools they may not be attending it regularly even though it is their usual activity.

Drop out rates also continue to be high, though declining. The reasons can be various.

**Table 16: Drop Out Rates at Elementary Schools in India  
(1976-1977 to 2004-2005)**

Year	Elementary (I-VIII) Classes		
	Boys	Girls	Total
1980-81	68.0	79.4	72.7
1990-91	59.1	65.1	60.9
2000-01*	50.3	57.7	53.7
2004-05*	50.49	51.28	50.84

Note : \* : Provisional.

: Total dropout during a course (stage) has been taken as percent of intake in the first year of the course (stage)

Source : Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India.

[www.indiastat.com](http://www.indiastat.com)

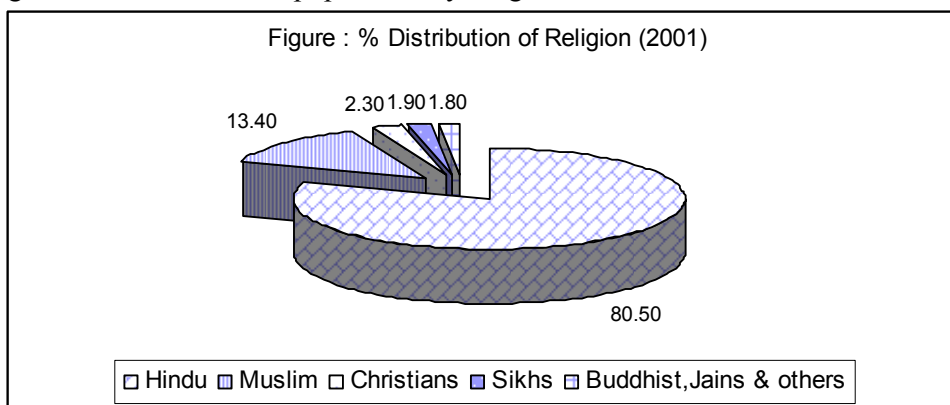
While education has long been held in great prestige, since the last century the desire for and accessing of formal education has been closely tied to aspirations for white collar, salaried employment. Such employment was seen as primarily a male sphere, in which class and caste networks operate and hence propping up the idea that that formal education is for better-off men to attain and for women to avoid. While this has changed somewhat, it is still thought that education takes young persons away from the household and other income-earning work, makes them unfit for manual labour, and means entering a public space which was forbidden to high caste women. Critically, the labour of young girls and adolescents in care and other work in the home is seen not only as their rightful work, but is required if older women are to work in the fields or elsewhere. To what extent all this remains true will have to be investigated.

### *Socio-cultural Composition and Diversity*

The multiplicity of religious, ethnic, linguistic, and regional groups as well as the caste system is not only a critical factor in understanding socio-economic practices and trends. It is also closely tied to inequalities and hierarchies which operated between and within these social groups (discussed in this section and section III). These aspects will be elaborated in the following sub-section through some demographic characteristics of various socio-cultural groups. The discrimination against women and gender inequality is one aspect they all have in common, in greater or lesser degree.

The relative size and proportion of socio-religious communities are points of discussion in India, particularly as they are tied to positive discrimination measures as well as social policy and anti-poverty programmes. Between 1991 and 2001, the Scheduled Caste (See footnote 4) population declined very slightly, while that of the Scheduled Tribe (See footnote 5) population increased. This may be to do with re-classification of these groups, which have historically experienced discrimination and oppression, reflected in deep and continuing inequalities. The changes in the religious composition of the population, particularly the increase in the proportion of Muslims, has been a deeply politicised issue in the country, more so since the rise of Hindu communalism and identity politics since the end of the 1980s (Bhat and Xavier 2005; Bose 2005).

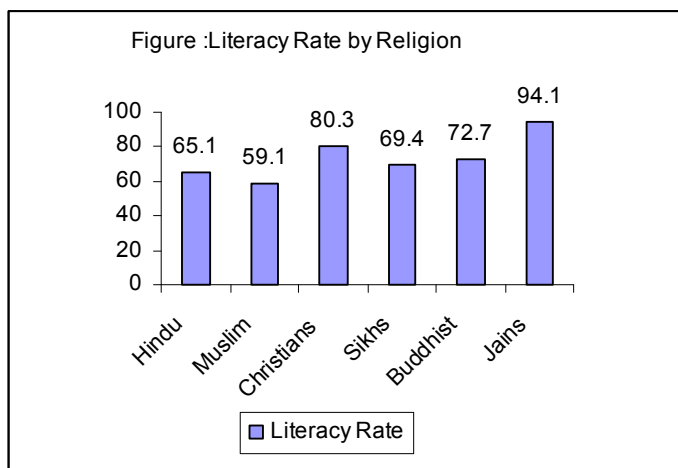
Figure 7: Distribution of population by religion



The MNB for Muslims (4.92), Scheduled Castes (4.19) and Scheduled Tribes (4.11) has been much higher than the all-India average, though in the latter two groups there has been a sharper decline. These three groups have higher levels of poverty than other socio-religious communities. Infant and child mortality rates and life expectancy are taken as indications of a group's socio-economic status. In 1998-99, the life expectancy of SCs was 62, of STs 61, and of all others 66. The infant mortality rate for SCs stood at 83 as against 68 for all other groups (NFHSII). However, while on all other counts Muslims conform to the demographic constructs of poverty, they refute the link made between poverty and high IMR. They have the second-lowest infant and under-five mortality rate of any socio-religious community in India.

Literacy and education, including female literacy, being closely related to the economic ability to access schooling and withdraw children from paid and unpaid work at home, are another indirect measure of the economic strength of a social group.

Figure 8 :Literacy Rate by Religion



While in 23.26% of the households (all groups) with children between 5-14, none of the latter were going to school (Census of India 2001, HH-14), the comparable figures among SCs and STs were 26.56% and 34.45%. Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes reported the lowest literacy rates - 54.7% and 47.2%. The female-male literacy gap<sup>xxiv</sup> is highest among Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Hindus (23%) and lowest among Christians (8%) and Jains (7%).

Sex ratio (the number of women to 1000 men) is viewed as one measure of the value of women and their labour in a community/group and of intra-community gender equity. The sex ratios for

Christians (1009), Muslims (936), Buddhists (953) and Jains (940) are higher than the all-India (933) average, while that of Hindus (931) and Sikhs (893) is lower. Sex ratios of SCs and STs are also above the average, 938 and 973 respectively. The juvenile sex ratio does not follow the same pattern, being 964 for Christians, 957 for Muslims, 942 for all communities, 939 for Hindus, 889 for Jains, 887 for Buddhists and 786 for Sikhs, the most prosperous religious community. The juvenile sex ratio, as already indicated, points to issues of differentiated preferences and care of children by their sex.

### *Haryana and Tamil Nadu compared*

In order to capture some of the regional, ethnic and linguistic diversity and complexity of issues, one can compare the northern, Hindi-speaking state of Haryana and the southern, Tamil-speaking state of Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu is 6<sup>th</sup> most populous of all states and union territories in the country, Haryana is the 16<sup>th</sup> (in 2001), and both have similar population densities well above the national figures. On the basis of the composite index of industrial development, Tamil Nadu ranked second and Haryana ranked 12 in 1999-00 (Subramanain 2003), but Haryana had a higher per capita income and lower poverty ratio over the last decade. The last is reflected in a statistic regarding housing: In 2001 in Tamil Nadu, less than 50% married couples had their own sleeping room, compared to 75% in Haryana.<sup>xxv</sup>

While Tamil Nadu was marked by social reform movements and movements of the middle-castes against upper caste domination and is religiously a very plural state, Haryana had no such movements, with a large chunk of the Muslim population having left the province at the time of Partition and Independence. Tamil Nadu has had a woman chief minister and Tamil women of the middle and lower castes have long worked in the non-domestic, non-family sphere. They have been relatively mobile compared to Haryanvi women, who may still keep 'ghunghat' or the veil. The latter tended to work only in their family's fields or within the home, though education levels have risen there too.

The following table summarises some indices of comparison, of which some are also taken as measures of gender difference and the treatment of women in these two states. Not only do we see some of the contrasts between the two states, we also see some of the paradoxes. Thus while sex ratio, juvenile sex ratio, female literacy, and female 'work' participation and mobility is higher in Tamil Nadu than for Haryana and India as a whole, reported spousal violence is also higher (NFHS III).

**Table 17: Selected comparative indicators for Tamil Nadu and Haryana**

Indicators/States	India			Tamil Nadu			Haryana		
	NFHSI (1992-93)	NFHSII (1998-99)	NFHSIII (2005-06)	NFHSI (1992-93)	NFHSII (1998-99)	NFHSIII (2005-06)	NFHSI (1992-93)	NFHSII (1998-99)	NFHSIII (2005-06)
Infant Mortality Rate	78.5	67.6	57	67.7	48.2	31	73.3	56.8	42
Child Mortality Rate	33.4	29.3		20.1	15.9		27.4	21.2	
Total Fertility Rate	3.40	2.85	2.7	2.48	2.18	1.8	3.98	2.84	2.7
Ever-married women who experienced spousal violence (%)			37.2			41.9			27.3
Life expectancy at birth (2001-2006) #		64.11 (Males)	65.43 (females)		67.00 (Males)	69.75 (females)		64.4 (Males)	69.3 (females)
	1981	1991	2001	1981	1991	2001	1981	1991	2001
Sex ratio @	934	927	933	977	975	986	870	865	861
Juvenile sex ratio @		945	927		948	939		879	820
Mean age at marriage @	23.4 M 18.6 F		22.6 M 18.3 F		19.1	25.5 M 19.9 F		17.9	21.6 M 18.0 F
No. of married couples per household with married couples @	1.3		1.29			1.1			1.37
Average household size @	5.55	5.51	5.3			4.3			5.7
Female household heads (% of all hh) @			10.4			14			8.1
Literacy rates (%)@	36.23	52.2	64.8	52.63	62.66	73.47	41.65	55.85	68.9
Female literacy rates (%)@	24.82	39.29	53.7	39.37	51.33	64.55	25.79	40.47	55.31
Female literacy rate (SC) (%)@			41.9			53.0			42.3
Female Work Participation Rate (Principal Workers -Rural, 2004-5 NSS)			24.2			43.8			11.4
					2002-03	2004-05		2002-03	2004-05
Per capita income (Rs)*					12,696	13,999		24,676	28,119
Head count poverty ratio (NSS 2004-05)						28.31			13.92

Source : # Health Information of India 2002, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India; @ Census of India, various volumes; \* State Planning Commissions

## **V Conclusion**

Economic growth is essential in the pursuit of development objectives, but it cannot be sufficient. The role of government in creating basic capabilities for a more equitable and humane economic system is essential for the success of economic reforms. In this connection, state investment in the social sector, including education, health and direct anti-poverty programmes are regarded as important. If we take both the centre and the states together, the overall per capita anti poverty and social development expenditure increased in the reform era, but nevertheless it was low in comparison to the proportion of GDP that India spent on the social sector in the 1980s. This is also the case if we compare other developing countries, especially the East Asian economies. The expenditure level is way short of the benchmark suggested by the UNDP for comparing social sector expenditures at the country level (Dev and Mooij 2005).

However, this alone is not the issue. The failure throughout the second half of the 20th century was the inability to transform economic growth into equitable, sustainable and socially just development. It is true that in the decades after Independence, particularly the 1970s and 1980s, some changes were seen, in which not only the rich and super-rich benefited, but sections of the middle classes and the poor also improved their economic and livelihood situation. Much of this appears to have been reversed from the end of the 1980s. According to the Central Government's own estimate, more than 100,000 farmers had killed themselves between 1998 and 2003, a poignant reminder of the acute crisis in agriculture. The negative impact of the economic reforms and related developments has been particularly on the already poor, but also on those whose poverty is tied to social inequalities. The reification of the market has hidden and exacerbated many inequalities which are imputed to culture or the social, even while some have become more visible or questioned. If economic growth is to enable a better life for people, a social safety net or increased expenditure on the social sector is not likely to be enough. The range of inequalities which structure the Indian economy and society have to be brought into the centre of economic policy. In particular, assumptions regarding work, value and productivity and the normalisation of practices which discriminate against women, particular occupations, castes, and other social groups have to be rethought and require examination.

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## Appendix of Tables

**Table 2: Employment growth rates**

Period	Rural	Urban
1988-1994	2.03	3.39
1995-1999	0.66	2.27
2000-2005	1.97	3.22

Note: Employment here refers to all workers (principal status and subsidiary status)

Source: Calculated from NSS employment rates and Census

**Table 6: Workers in Formal and Informal Employment (1999-2000)**  
(% of all workers)

Type/sector of employment	1999-2000	1999-2000	1999-2000
	Male	Female	Total
Unorganised Employment	89.3	95.6	91.2
Agriculture	58.7	77.7	64.9
Non-agriculture	41.3	22.3	35.1
Percentage of non-agricultural which is informal/unorganised	78.7	85.2	80.0%

Source: Computed from Table 2.2 in NCUES (2006), based on unit level data of NSS 55<sup>th</sup> Round, 1999-2000, Employment-Unemployment Survey.

**Table 8: Inequality trends**

Year	Gini coefficient
1986	30.2
1987	30.1
1988	29.5
1989	28.2
1990	27.7
1991	29.9
1992	29.9
1999-2000	32.6

Source: Wider Data base

**Table 9 : Poverty among Muslims and Hindus compared**

Religious community	Rural households in bottom quintile (consumption expenditure) %	Urban households in bottom quintile (consumption expenditure) %	Landless or near landless households %	Urban households with a member in a regular salaried job %
Muslims	29	40	51	27
Hindus	26	22	40	43

Source: NSSO 55<sup>th</sup> round

**Table 15 : Educational level by Sex (% of population)**

Educational level	All	Male	Female
Primary or less	30.33	35.5	27.3
Secondary or less, but more than primary	20.2	24.8	15.2
Some tertiary	4.1	5.4	2.6

Source: Census of India 2001

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> We wish to thank Subhadepta Ray, research scholar at the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi for providing very valuable assistance in tracking down data and material for this chapter.

<sup>ii</sup> LPG also stands for liquefied petroleum gas, probably the cheapest domestic fuel available in India, but which continues to be available only to urban, middle class and elite households.

<sup>iii</sup> A lakh is one hundred thousand and a crore is hundred lakhs or ten million.

<sup>iv</sup> Scheduled Castes are those castes who have suffered severe discrimination and deprivation as 'Untouchables' in the traditional Hindu hierarchy and continue suffer it to a greater or lesser extent. They can now avail of specific and special provisions of positive discrimination.

<sup>v</sup> Scheduled Tribes denotes categories of people who are distinguished by their 'tribal characteristics' and by their spatial and cultural isolation from the bulk of the population. Like the SCs, they can avail of specific and special provisions of positive discrimination. The formal mechanism for designating the Scheduled Tribes is identified with that for Scheduled Castes. Both SCs and STs are listed in Part xvi of the Constitution of India. Articles 330-342 relate to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Schedule 5 of the Constitution specifically deals with scheduled Tribes.

<sup>vi</sup> Religion-based: BJP Bharatiya Janata Party, Shiv Sena, SAD Shiromani Akali Dal, Jammata e Islami Hind, Jammata e Ullema Hind; Caste-based: BSP Bahujan Samajwadi Party, SP Samajwadi Party, RJD Rashtriya Janata Dal, JD (U) Janata Dal (United); Region/ethnicity-based: TDP Telegu Desam Party, DMK Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, AIADMK All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, NC National Conference; Ethnicity-based: AGP Asom Gana Parishad, JMM Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, TRS - Telengana Rashtra Samiti. The DMK and AIADMK also have strong roots/links to non-Brahmin castes as does JMM to tribal groups.

<sup>vii</sup> In the manufacturing sector, the rate of growth of manufacturing output fell from 7.6 percent to 7.1 percent between these two periods (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2002a: 56).

<sup>viii</sup> The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector defined informal/unorganised workers as all those who are working in (1) unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the production and sale of goods and services and operated on a proprietary or a partnership basis and employing less than 10 persons and (2) the workers in the formal sector without any employment security and social security provided by the employer. It further stated that these "The employees with informal jobs generally do not enjoy employment security (no protection against arbitrary dismissal) work security (no protection against accidents and illness at the work place) and social security (maternity and health care benefits, pension, etc.) and therefore any one or more of these characteristics can be used for identifying informal employment" (2007: 3)

<sup>ix</sup> Sen (2005) examining actual consumption baskets of the various classes, state-wise, argues that while the per capita calorie intake of the poverty-line classes has declined significantly between 1973-74 and 1999-2000 all over the country, their present calorie intake has much to do with the chosen consumption basket rather than the lack of purchasing power. He also points out that the average calorie consumption has declined for all three broad classes: those below the poverty line, those at the poverty line and those above it.

<sup>x</sup> Sen and Himanshu (2004a) argued that the reduction in poverty was much below that which the pro-reformers were suggesting using NSS data unadjusted for methodological changes and placed the reduction between 1993-2000 at 3% at the most.

<sup>xi</sup> See Bhat and Xavier 1999; Bose 2006a,b for further discussions on the debate on nutrition, disease and poverty linkages and on nutrition trends among women.

<sup>xii</sup> In West Bengal allocations by the centre for the PDS were cut to less than 4% of the monthly allocation of rice and to about half in wheat between March 2007 to April 2007 (Letter from Brinda Karat, MP to the Minister for Agriculture, 11 October, 2007).

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<sup>xiii</sup> Meaning an increasing proportion of the population falling in the working age group of 15-64 years.

<sup>xiv</sup> TFR- total fertility rate - the average number of children a woman produces during her life time.

<sup>xv</sup> The MNB measure also points to the fact that nearly all births take place within marriage or are made to appear as if they do.

<sup>xvi</sup> Source: *Ageing Population of India, An Analysis of the 1991 Census Data and Sample Registration System: Statistical Report 2001*, Registrar General of India.

<sup>xvii</sup> Source: CSO; Ministry of Health and Family Planning.

<sup>xviii</sup> Nearly 25% of deaths of under-fives per year globally are in India (Ved and Dua 2005).

<sup>xix</sup> This may be related to declining nutrition levels, discussed in Section III, as well as access to health care under privatization which, as Ved and Dua (*ibid.*) state, points to equity issues and the nature of governmental spending on child and maternal health programmes.

<sup>xx</sup> "Infant mortality can be classified as perinatal (from 28 weeks' gestation to seven days of birth), neonatal (birth till the first four weeks of life), and post-neonatal (after the first four weeks of life)" (Ved and Dua *ibid.*: 94).

<sup>xxi</sup> The MMR has remained around 400 per 100, 000 live births through the last five years.

"Evidence from parts of India and elsewhere demonstrates that it is possible to substantially reduce maternal mortality by addressing health system factors alone to ensure that all women have access to safe delivery services" (Ved and Dua *ibid.*: 87).

<sup>xxii</sup> See Chakravarti and Gill 2001; Chen 1998; Dreze 1990 for discussions on widowhood and its decline in India.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See also Bose 2006a for one take on the various factors in female household headship.

<sup>xxiv</sup> The difference between the percentage of males who are literate and the percentage of females who are literate.

<sup>xxv</sup> Calculated from the 2001 census, Tables on Houses, Household Amenities and Assets, Series 7 and 34.