

Poverty Of Orissa

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An appeal to Lovers of Man and Nature

1996 and 1997 are going to see one of the worst drought in the history of orissa . But in extent and in intensity, it is going to exceed all other calamities that have visited the State .The symptoms of famine or near famine conditions are already evident in some areas even before harvesting started. In some parts of orissa like undivided districts of Kalahandi, Bolangir, Koraput, Jhulbani and Padmapur areas of erstwhile Sambalpur District, the situation has become desperate. Hunger,starvation deaths are widely reported and migration of labour in thousands is taking place to neighbouring states in search of food and employment. In many villages drinking water has become scarce and even many people are going without a bath for days together because of scarcity of water.

In spite of prevarication, the state government has come round to the conclusion that it is one of the worst calamity. The union govt. is also in agreement with all.

As usual the Prime Minister Shri H.D.Devegowd has visited Kalahandi and Bolangir areas and he is the Sixth Prime Minister in succession after 1967 to undertake a ritual visit. The whole ask is again to spend more money to assist the people in their distress. There is no attempt to accept this situation as a challenge for the future. It seems as if all have a vested interest in the perpetuation of the poverty and miseries of the people. Nobody is asking himself why the same situation is repeating itself, despite crores of rupees pumped during every calamity for various programmes, either old or new.

As I have shown in this report, Kalahandi and its neighbouring districts are the victim of serious environmental

disaster and all the ghat districts of Orissa are gradually moving in the same direction. The situation on the ground has been rendered so critical, that they cannot withstand one drought even after six successive good weather and good crop. The forest and agriculture economy was the main support base of the people in those districts and that has been destroyed in course of several years. Even tons of money spent during critical years are not spent on reviving the economy, which could have sustained the people and provided a build-in capacity in the economy to meet future calamities. We are more interested in fattening the pockets of a few middle level agencies on the graveyard of the entire mass.

It is very late. Let us accept the present calamity as a challenge and implement programmes to revive the old economy so that guarantee against future is provided in it. *Every piece of land should be made green and every drop of rain water should be saved to be fruitfully utilised.* As long as this is not done and environmental degradation is not halted and natural eco-system is not revived, NEMESIS will overpower us for ever.

It is a battle for survival and nature only can be harnessed in such a battle. Let God inspire the policy makers to see the sunlight in this tunnel of hunger, starvation and despair.

Orissa Krushak Mahasangh

KALAHANDI'S DISTRESS - CAUSE AND REMEDY

OFTEN Kalahandi's distress hits the headlines of the press. Mass migration, selling of children, starvation deaths are recurrent feature of the district. It evokes much of sympathy everywhere. Some money is diverted to the district every time to alleviate the distress.

ACUTE poverty is the reason, no doubt, but why despite so much attention, the distress is deepening every year ? Successive Prime Ministers are often visiting this district raising high hopes in the minds of the distressed. But the seriousness of the matter gets lost in the very next day. Some money is pumped into the district after their visit, some new and innovative programmes are introduced, but in the result there is no effect or a little effect on the ground.

LARGE-SCALE leakage of funds, non-implementation of programme, increasing amount of unspent money in the district treasury, lack of monitoring of the programmes on the part of high officers and ministers and apathy and thick-skinned attitude of the administration including political heads are true. But that is not the whole story, when one finds a little change in the field.

AFTER studying in depth the background of the recurrent crisis, I am of the opinion that the real causes have not been identified. So proper remedial steps have not been taken. Historical reasons for this acute poverty because it was a feudatory state before 1948, are not relevant after a lapse of about five decades since independence. It takes us no where.

KALAHANDI is just a symbol of that distress what is happening there, is bound to spread to the neighbouring districts,

which are agro-climatically called ghat districts (Bolangir, Koraput, Phulbani and part of Ganjam and Sambalpur).

KALAHANDI constitutes 5.06 percent of the State's population covering 7.56 percent of the area. Males and females are even in number and the decadal population growth rate (19.50) is less than the State's average of 20.6. Density of population per square kilometre is only 136 which is much less than the State's average of 203. Urbanisation is one of the lowest in the State. 6.53 percent of the district's population live in small towns. But in the total population, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people constitute about 46.82 percent. The socio-economic profile of the district is very disappointing. Landlessness in this district is highest in the State. 38.52 percent of the main workers in the district are agricultural labourers against State's average of 28.85 percent. 32.70 percent of the population are regarded as main workers because they are able and also available for engagement in any work. Percentage of net irrigated area to net area sown is 15.6 percent, the lowest in the State and less than half of State's average. The figures are highly inflated according to knowledgeable circles. But in actuality it is 8 percent. Consumption of fertiliser per hectare of land is the lowest in the State - hardly 7.4 k.g. Though yield rate of rice, of cereals and of food-grains is less than one ton per hectare each, yet it is comparable to some non-irrigated districts. Because of low density of population, per capita food grains production is one of the highest in the State, that is, 314 k.g. as against State's average of 230 k.g.

INDUSTRIALLY, this backward region is so poor that it has no impact at all in the economy of the district. The total number of factories is 23 employing hardly 505 persons. The total number of small scale industrial units (S.S.I.) are 1820 which employ 12,487 persons. But most of them are sick and non-functioning.

TRADITIONALLY weaving was the main non-agricultural occupation of a large number of people, which provided supplementary income to a sizeable number of families. But most of them have lost it in face of competition from modern textile sector and are facing starvation.

SO employment in off-farming activities are almost absent.

POPULAR MYTH :

SOME argue that low rainfall and low percentage of holdings to population and uneven distribution of land are the major reasons for poverty and distress of Kalahandi district. This is also not true and statistics do not confirm this contention.

RAINFALL :

THE average rainfall of the district is not at great variance with that of the State from 1977 to 1991 - a long fifteen years. The average rainfall of Kalahandi district in nine years is higher than the State's average. Excepting in the year of 1988, when the State's average was 1357 M.M., Kalahandi recorded the lowest rainfall of 978 M.M. that is below 1000 M.M. Otherwise it varies from above 1000 M.M. to 2214 M.M. in 1990, about 348 M.M. higher than the State's average of that year. Like other regions of the State, Kalahandi suffers from drought occasionally. This is so for the last year, whose disastrous effect is felt in the current post-harvesting period (early part of 1993).

WEEKLY rainfall recorded in Komna, heart of acute drought stricken Nawapara area of Kalahandi district and in Bhawanipatna, the district headquarter, within the last 22 years do not show any sharp difference, according to the Meteorological Survey of India. Even the survey Report of

Balasore, Puri and Cuttack districts, for the last 70 years indicate that the difference between rainfall in those regions and of Kalahandi is not significant. The rainfall pattern between June and October, the main kharif period, does not also vary sharply. So the argument that Nawapara Sub-Division and Bhawanipatna Sub-Division of Kalahandi district get differential rainfall does not hold good. The argument, that rainfall in Nawapara Sub-Division of Kalahandi district is the least does not hold good. Nor the argument that rainfall in Nawapara Sub-Division and of coastal districts vary greatly, is substantiated. Of course by this nobody dismisses the fact that occasionally certain pockets get less rainfall and suffer from drought. This holds good for the entire State and for entire country too.

LAND HOLDING :

ANOTHER important argument made in connection with Kalahandi's distress is that the number of land holdings in proportion to total population and uneven distribution of land holdings are the major contributing factors to the acute distress of Kalahandi district. This is not borne out by official record.

APPENDIX one, two and three at the end will clearly show that the arguments are far from the truth. Some of the districts including Sambalpur has worst picture in that respect. But the distress in those regions is not at all acute as it is evident in Kalahandi.

THE official statistics show that more households in Kalahandi district own land, more than any district barring marginally Bolangir, Mayurbhanj and Balasore, but equal to Dhenkanal. In all other districts, more percentage of households do not possess any land.

THE distribution pattern on the basis of quantity of land they own conform broadly to the same pattern. The gap is not too great.

SOME may argue that the farmers belonging to medium category (4 Ha. -10 Ha.) and large category (10 Ha. and above) are comparatively larger in number in Kalahandi district followed by Sambalpur and Bolangir in the State and they possess more land in the district. The disparity in number of holdings and land in their possession is definitely high, but they are by and large cultivators better in comparison to those of coastal districts and contribute greatly to the food basket of the State. Barring a part of Sambalpur and a very small part of Bolangir, the entire area is devoid of irrigation. Conceding that the land distribution in those districts are faulty, the great distress of Kalahandi and neighbouring part of Sambalpur and Bolangir cannot be attributed to that factor. By a little fair distribution, the number of small and marginal farmers might have been slightly increased to join the drought stricken destitutes, but the economic health of such farmers of small holdings will be no way better as long as infrastructural facilities for agricultural growth is not ensured.

P A R T - II

AGRO-CLIMATICALLY Orissa can be divided into four zones. Each zone has its own agro-climatic features and a uniform pattern of planning for development for the State as a whole, will never give the desired result. Though **SEN COMMITTEE** set up by the Reserve Bank of India (Committee on Agricultural Productivity in Eastern India) has divided the State of Orissa into four zones on the basis of 13 administrative districts of Orissa, in actuality some of the regions of another district may be included in the neighbouring district for reasons of agro-climatic characteristics. As for example Padmapur Sub-Division of Sambalpur district agro-climatically falls in Kalahandi district which is a part of different agro-climatic zone.

BUT for convenience, we may follow the defined zone according to **Sen Committee Report** based on old administration district. The zones are :-

1. Northern Plateau consisting of Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts.
2. Central Table Land consisting of Sambalpur, Bolangir and Dhenkanal.
3. Coastal Plain consisting of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam.
4. Eastern Ghat consisting of Kalahandi, Koraput and Phulbani.

FOR reasons of soil, rainfall, content of natural resources, socio-economic characteristics, each zone is distinctly separate from the other and has its separate problems, which any strategy of planned development can never lose sight of.

WE are now concerned with Kalahandi district, which form part of Eastern Ghat group of districts dominated by tribals and scheduled caste population. The pattern of living has been governed by its peculiar characteristics. Any plan or developmental strategy should not forget those characteristics. That is why the uniform pattern of development followed in the country or even in our State has not created any significant impact on the lives of the people. What we see in Kalahandi and its neighbouring areas will not be confined to that pocket in future years. It may deepen and spread to the entire agro-climatic region, if we are not careful from now.

IN earlier years Drought Prone Area Project was implemented and during the late eighties after late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the district to see the distress in his own eyes, he launched a special programme called

Area Development Approach for Poverty Termination (ADAPT). That also failed to make any dent in the acute problem of drought and distress. There is something basically wrong in the approach, though much of the blame may be laid at the doors of administrative apathy, corruption and leakage.

EASTERN GHAT DISTRICTS' ECONOMY :

THE entire economy of the eastern ghat districts including Kalahandi was based on agriculture and forestry. Both the life-nourishing elements sustained the life style and culture of the people, who were predominantly tribals. Once this base was attacked, the poverty became endemic because agriculture and forestry are highly and mutually supportive in that region. Wanton destruction of forest, caused soil erosion and gradually dried up the source of springs and rivers which functioned as protective irrigation to the agricultural fields in the kharif season.

KALAHANDI and neighbouring region has fallen a victim to this environment degradation and in course of decades the same phenomenon will visit the entire ghat region.

IN the lean season during the post-harvest period, the mainstay of the people for their sustained living has been traditionally the forest wealth, the minor forest products. For at least four months from February to May, the people live on them collecting bidi leaves (Kendu Patta), mohua, sal seeds, leaves for making plates, resin, tamarind and host of forest products. It creates many times more mandays of employment at a stretch than the normal development works of the Government. They were/are being exploited by Sahukars and middlemen traders. They were not getting their due, but it sustained their living. All the measures including the establishment of Tribal Development Corporation to save the tribals from the clutches

of the Mahajans and the tribal cooperatives have proved to be a damn squib. With depletion of forest wealth, the source is getting squeezed and the poorest of the poor had to resort to roots, fruits, and leaves sometimes, inedible vegetation for living resulting in acute diseases and consequent deaths.

ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER :

THIS environment degradation due to human and natural reasons, more human ones, has caused disaster to the people, particularly tribals. The big and medium dams which caused displacement of thousands and thousands of poor people without proper rehabilitation measures, has added to the misery. Beginning from Machkund and Balimela to latest Indravati Project, the woes and misery of the poor and the tribals have aggravated the socio-economic crisis of the region. They may have added to the wealth of the State, but at the cost of the local indigenious people who are eliminated gradually from the process of development making them more vulnerable.

THE tribals and the poor in those regions were more a part of environment than anybody else. So destruction of that environment hits them most.

THE people remained poor. So a slight visitation of abnormal climatic condition shakes them from the bottom. There is no alternative to agriculture and forest resource for them and those are the main assets for them to draw income for their living.

IF the State's plan would have taken cognigance of these hard realities of Eastern Ghat districts, and the planning strategy would have been built on that basis, they would have adequate resillience to abnormal conditions of drought. Koraput and Phulbani are still thick with forest and sustain the living, but for how long ?

P A R T - III

KALAHANDI is already facing disaster. With depletion of forest wealth and low level of irrigation facilities, both mainstay of living, it has faced disaster. It is not a fact that average rainfall is low, nor are the ground water resources scanty. Because of normal rainfall and sometimes more, the water resources have not been seriously affected. According to the report of Geological Survey of India some years ago, Kalahandi district was virtually floating on a vast reservoir of water.

SO nature is not the enemy of the famished and dyeing millions of Kalahandi people, but the men. A debilitated mass cannot resist the slightest attack of nature such as drought. That is why we read about starvation deaths, child selling, mass migration and it draws anger, anguish and sympathy from varied quarters.

MANY myths have been created about the cause of the distress of Kalahandi, because serious analysis has not been undertaken about the cause. If the basis of agriculture and forestry are resurrected, there will be a dramatic change and the people will have sufficient resillience to withstand any calamity. Both are complementary as in other regions of eastern Ghats districts.

FOREST :

BY the time of merger the district including Nawapara Sub-Division was thick with dense forests. Both sides of the road from Khariar Road to Khariar was a evergreen high teak forest, which was comparable to Burmese teak forest. The writer has passed through this road many times in those days. It was a part of Zamindari and at the time of abolition of land-lordism, it was completely destroyed. Such devastation has

taken place in other parts too. Soil erosion has taken place in great measure due to rapid depletion of forest. Hills and lands have become barren and water sources have greatly vanished and dried up.

IRRIGATION :

BUT more harm has been caused to irrigation potential of the district which was the main cause of the agricultural growth of this area even before the merger of this feudatory State. Nobody will believe now that just after the merger of State, 40 percent of the total cultivated area was under protective irrigation system, and the kharif crop even in medium lands were fairly good. But lately Governmental figures of irrigated land in Kalahandi district is hardly 11 percent.

WHEN everywhere new irrigation potential is being created for agricultural growth, the irrigation potential has sharply decreased in this district. In the land settlement that was conducted after independence in Kalahandi district during 1946-56 the land was classified into 20 different categories. All the lands having protective irrigation or supplemental irrigation were classified into seven categories. Out of 20 categories into which all the lands were divided, higher rent was charged for these seven categories. All these were supplied by Tanks, Katas and Sagars and other natural sources.

THEY were buttressed by a system of water shed development which was more scientific, though tradition-based. These micro-water-shed development was based on an indegenious system even on slopes of small hills down to the villages to conserve water at successive stages. They were locally called Munda, Katta, Bandha and Chahal. Because of typical landscape of Kalahandi, most of the villages were benefitted by such micro-water-sheds. In earlier days, these were being maintained by the gountias.

AFTER independence, most of the protective irrigation sources became State's property and many of the ponds etc. were handed over to the Gram Panchayats. They did not maintain it and this age-old scientific method got into disuse and destroyed.

NOW everybody talks of water-shed management and water harvesting system. Though Kalahandi like Ganjam had well-ried irrigation system, nothing had been done to analyse and improve on it. Even old-age system is not maintained. The recently introduced water harvesting system is a mockery of that old-age system. The recent reports show that most of those newly constructed water-harvesting projects have been rendered useless. Thereby the agriculture had been seriously affected.

THE proposed medium projects have not been given any attention, nor infrasture have been built for agriculture growth. Nobody even talks of projects like Lower Sundar, Indra, Sundal, Udanti etc., which would have benifitted the drought-hit areas.

SOME people lay great stress on Upper Indravati Project which is multi-purpose. It will irrigate a part of Kalahandi, which is comparately plain, but outside the worst pocket of Nawapara Sub-Division. It has been so badly conceived that it will create serious problem of water-logging in that part of Kalahandi which is going to be benifitted, unless remedial measures are taken. It will be rather a curse for Nawarangpur Sub-Division (Now a new district) which will gradually be desertified because of daming and closure of four rivers, Indravati and its three tributaries. The environmental disaster and problem of displacement of 30,000 families due to Indravati reserivior, is adding to the distress of the entire Nawarangpur Sub-Division, which may develop into a famine stricken area in future.

ANOTHER myth has been floated, that agriculture in Kalahandi is in a poor state. As State Government has not given any attention, so they talk of poor state of agriculture. The agriculture scenerio is as good as many non-irrigated region of the State from the point of productivity and production.

THE per capita cropped area of Kalahandi district is highest in the State, that is 0.592 Ha. (1984-85), the procurement of rice is second or third highest in the State (Next to Sambalpur, sometimes Balasore district exceeds). The per capita production of cereals is 220.90 k.g. per year (Orissa's is 217.59 k.g. and India's 118.10 k.g. per year). The per capita production of food grains is 331.86 k.g. a year in Kalahandi where as State's production is 253.03 k.g. and India's production is 203.13 k.g. (1989-90 figures).

(Production figures are drawn from Government of India and State Government sources and provisional population figures from Census of 1991).

WITH the above mentioned statistics which indicate comfortable cereal and food production and fair procurement year after year, one is driven to the conclusion that something serious beyond the myths circulated about the crisis is the truth. It is something to do with our approach, our planning, our apathy and gross administrative negligence. These all amount to lack of leadership and political will.

ONCE we revive the forestry and agriculture sectors with its proper infrastructure, Kalahandi's economic health will be much better than that of other districts. On this only the modern planning structure can be built.

IT has been stated that rainfall is normal and underground water even now is plenty and near at hand. It can be tapped for agricultural growth with ease.

ACCORDING to the Planning Commission, afforestation is the best anti-poverty programme which provided immediate employment opportunities and regular employment to forest dwellers. But proper species of plants which were growing in the past in that agro-climatic region should be chosen. That is one of the serious defect in our afforestation programme in the state. Let climate chose the species for the forest, not we, as is being done at present.

THIS may be a long term programme and if we are serious about Kalahandi district, this major aspect cannot be lost sight of. Our short term programme for immediate soccur to the distressed people can be dovetailed into the long term programme as immediacy takes care of permanency.

GRATUITOUS relief to the distressed, feeding programme for the children and pregnant women, work for the able-bodied persons to get income, purchasing power and to prevent mass migration, and easy availability of food and essential articles are a must for immediate remedial measures. But programme of assest creating work for creation of employment potential can be easily dove-tailed into the long term programme for revival of the economy of the area.

CONCLUSION :

SO Kalahandi is not different from any other district of the Eastern Ghat of Orissa and to some extent the Northern Plateau region of the State. Adjoining region of Madhya Pradesh (Bastar area) and of Bihar have faced the same problem. Though all these regions suffer from acute drought in some years, Kalahandi makes more news, because the staying capacity of the people of the district has been badly demolished. So any slightest climatic set back, uncovers the grim tragic scene that recurs. A poor can withstand one calamity, but poorest of the poor rendered

destitute in course of time - a debilitated mass - can never withstand a single calamity. That is the genesis of Kalahandi syndrome.

- Banka Behary Das -

This note on Kalahandi's distress was sent to Prime Minister Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao in month of May, 1993. It was also sent to Planning Commission and Rajiv Gandhi foundation at that time.

APPENDIX - I

Sl. No. Name of the District (Undivided) Percentage of No. of holdings to population Percentage of land holdings to total No. of house holds.

1	2	3	4
1.	Kalahandi	15.39	73.58
2.	Koraput	12.38	57.43
3.	Phulbani	15.30	70.01
4.	Sambalpur	12.92	61.28
5.	Bolangir	15.71	77.14
6.	Keonjhar	12.91	68.83
7.	Mayurbhanj	14.64	76.34
8.	Dhenkanal	13.28	73.94
9.	Sundargarh	10.48	53.19
10.	Cuttack	10.27	60.41
11.	Puri	11.36	65.22
12.	Balasore	14.34	87.07
13.	Ganjam	12.13	61.41

ORISSA 12.82 66.49

(SOURCE - AGRICULTURE CENSUS' REPORT AND CENSUS OF INDIA)

APPENDIX -II

PERCENTAGE OF OPERATION HOLDING UNDER

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

Sl. No.	Name of the district	Marginal (Below 1 Ha.)	Small (1Ha to 2 Ha.)	Semi-medium (2-4Ha.)	Medium (4-10 Ha)	Large (10 Ha & above.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Kalahandi	35.70	28.27	23.68	10.91	1.44
2.	Koraput	40.00	28.45	22.63	8.23	0.69
3.	Phulbani	51.32	26.34	16.37	5.46	0.51
4.	Sambalpur	43.09	27.50	20.43	7.83	1.15
5.	Bolangir	43.79	25.90	20.65	8.38	1.28
6.	Keonjhar	49.43	28.04	17.02	5.23	0.28
7.	Mayurbhanj	55.02	25.82	14.41	4.51	0.23
8.	Dhenkanal	52.30	28.43	15.01	3.80	0.46
9.	Sundargarh	36.82	29.22	24.22	8.77	0.78
10.	Cuttack	56.76	26.24	12.78	3.97	0.25
11.	Puri	66.11	20.79	10.04	2.81	0.24
12.	Balasore	60.32	21.33	13.23	4.76	0.36
13.	Ganjam	65.39	19.66	11.08	3.51	0.36
ORISSA		52.09	25.8	16.27	5.69	0.57

(SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL CENSUS-1985-86)

APPENDIX -III**PERCENTAGE OF AREA UNDER
DIFFERENT CATEGORIES**

Sl. No.	Name of the district	Marginal (Below 1 Ha.)	Small (1Ha to 2 Ha.)	Semi-medium (2-4Ha.)	Medium (4-10 Ha)	Large (10 Ha & above.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Kalahandi	9.9	18.8	30.4	30.1	10.8
2.	Koraput	12.6	22.2	33.7	26.3	5.3
3.	Phulbani	18.0	25.7	30.0	21.2	5.0
4.	Sambalpur	12.9	21.3	30.8	25.3	9.7
5.	Bolangir	12.8	19.7	30.2	26.6	10.7
6.	Keonjhar	16.2	27.6	32.8	20.5	2.9
7.	Mayurbhanj	21.4	27.9	29.7	18.7	2.3
8.	Dhenkanal	20.0	28.2	28.4	15.2	8.3
9.	Sundargarh	10.6	22.2	34.8	26.6	5.8
10.	Cuttack	21.5	28.7	26.6	17.9	5.3
11.	Puri	28.0	27.2	25.3	14.9	4.6
12.	Ganjam	27.3	24.4	26.2	17.4	4.7
ORISSA		17.5	24.2	29.8	22.2	6.3

(SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL CENSUS-1985-86)

**AVERAGE RAINFALL IN KALAHANDI AND
ORISSA DURING 1977-91 (IN MM).**

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>KALAHANDI</u>	<u>ORISSA</u>
1977	1354.7	1327.5 *
1978	1360.1	1333.2 *
1979	1068.8	951.0 *
1980	1353.7	1322.0 *
1981	1147.8	1480.0
1982	1116.9	1492.0
1983	1118.1	1660.0
1984	1395.9	1018.0 *
1985	1755.2	1607.0 *
1986	1362.0	1548.0
1987	1048.7	1040.0 *
1988	978.0	1357.0
1989	1073.0	1284.0
1990	2214.0	1866.0 *
1991	1568.9	1300.0 *
1992	N.A.	

Normal rainfall of the district is 1378.2

* Years in which Kalahandi received more rainfall than the State average.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF KALAHANDI

1.	Area (Sq.Km.)	-	11,772
2.	Population	-	15,91,984 (1991 Census)
			Scheduled Tribe 30.96 per cent
			Scheduled Caste 15.86 per cent
			Main workers (No.) 5,98,658
3.	Male : Female	-	1000 : 1000
			(7,96,000 : 7,96,000)
4.	Forest area (Sq. Km.)	-	5,144
5.	Net area sown (000 Ha)		564
6.	<u>Agricultural Production (000 Tonnes)</u>		
	(a)	Rice (1991-92)	340.90
	(b)	Cereals (1991-92)	370.25
	(c)	Total pulses (1991-92)	156.52
	(d)	Total food grains (1991-92)	526.77
	(e)	Total oil seeds (1991-92)	65.94
7.	Consumption of fertiliser (000 Mt.) (1991-92)	-	7.13
8.	Irrigated area (000 Ha)		- 45.37 or 8% of
	(Major, medium, minor and lift)		net area sown
9.	<u>Industry (1991-92)</u>		
	(a)	No. of reported factories	23
	(b)	Total No. of employed in factories	505
	(c)	Small scale industries (no.)	1820
	(d)	Person employes in S.S.I.	12,487
10.	<u>Education (1991-92)</u>		
	(a)	Primary schools (No.)	2294
	(b)	Enrolment in primary schools (000)	1,56
	(c)	Middle schools (No.)	348
	(d)	Enrolment in M.E.Schools (000)	34
	(e)	Secondary schools (no.)	160
	(f)	Enrolment (000)	17

ACUTE POVERTY OF ORISSA

Analysis of Regional imbalance and solution

WHEN India accepted the path of planning after independence, we inherited a colonial economy with all its attendant evils. The net result of that exploitive economy was abysmal poverty along with abnormal disparity between region and region and also between man and man . In this paper I am primarily dealing with inter-regional disparity and also poverty of the state not the aspect of inequality in the Indian society that has also widened further and further during the plan period .

AFTER four decades of planning , the inter-regional disparity has grown further. The main objectives of narrowing the gap of inter-regional disparity and also inequality in the income of individuals , have eluded the planners after each successive plan. Knowing fully well that the normal functioning of market economy can never solve the problem of disparity in income between regions and within society, we started our voyage on the path of planning to reverse the process with our open eyes. In fact during the era of national movement , the nation was committed to a planned economy as the panacea to all our economic evils of the colonial era.

BUT by the end of the second five year plan period, the nation was awakened to the fact that the rate of economic growth had been accelerated, but both the aspects of economic and social inequality have increased . So the country decided to follow the same path of planned economy, but to change some aspects of planning strategy by introducing certain new programmes and policies to achieve the objective.

SOME steps were taken to curb the concentration of wealth in the hands of upper sections of the economic ladder. Anti-monopoly measures in industrial field and land reform measures in the agriculture sector were implemented . Programmes for specific areas

like drought-prone areas were introduced . Specific programmes for targeted groups of people below the poverty line were also taken up.

IN the beginning of the seventies, poverty alleviation programmes were introduced and high-lighted for the speedy upliftment of the lower-income groups, who were not benefited by the trickle-down effect of even a planned economy.

SO by the end of the seventies or by the beginning of the eighties it was found that both the aspects of the disparity in the country's economy and the society, were far from solution. Inter-regional disparity further widened and so also the inequality between man and man.

WHEN the country was passing through this crisis, it was further complicated because of external factors like trade deficit, steep fall in foreign exchange reserve, burgeoning debt position etc. So like oscillation of pendulum, the country decided to go back to the non-plan era in which free play of market forces was found to be more acceptable as solution of economic evils.

I have no doubt in my mind that new economic policy, structural adjustment policy and globalisation of economy can never solve the problems of either the inter-regional disparity or social inequality . Rather both the problems are going to be worsened. Some of the crisis that the Indian economy is bedevilled with, may be solved, but the problem we are debating , will never be solved. How can those who are not in the orbit of the market or those regions that are outside the orbit, be the beneficiaries of the economic process of a market economy? After so many years of industrialisation and development, the western world still suffers from such ailments. Poverty, and unemployment still stare those countries in their face and sometimes global adverse scenerio affect them severely. Even those countries of East Asia, which are projected as Asian tigers, achieving economic miracles, did not resort to liberalisation and globalisation at one go as we have done. The pace of liberalisation and glogalisation in those countries were not determined by market forces, but by the state itself.

TOO much control, as was witnessed during the planned era, inhibited the growth. Liberalisation will release those forces from economic bondage and solve some of the external crisis, but it will never solve the problem of inter-regional disparity or socio-economic inequality. During planned period various incentives in tax and non-tax measures were provided to attract investment into backward regions of the country. Before that, public investment by central Government and sometime by state Government were made in backward regions in a disproportionately higher scale to remove regional imbalance. Still then disparity went on growing. Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh are typical examples, how higher public investments by central Govt. have been made in different branches of industrial sector, but all these three states remained in the lower stages of economic ladder. Per capita income and percentage of population below poverty line in Orissa remained constantly lowest amongst all the states in the country. When the state is gradually retiring from the field of investment and planning has taken a back seat, the scope of public investment has gone down. Private investment, which is assigned the responsibility for economic growth in a liberalised economy, will not be very much attracted to backward or developing regions, because market forces never operate in favour of those regions, where infrastructural or other facilities are comparatively low.

HENCE the problem of inter-regional disparity is bound to grow and states like Orissa, Assam and Bihar will be worst sufferers. Because of this the political leaders are going to foreign countries to invite private investors by dangling some incentives before them, but it is less likely that they will achieve any miracle. So also the case with Indian investors. As the new economic policy has been introduced for the last four years, the effect upto now is not felt either way. But nobody should have any illusion about compelling direction of private investment. No where in the world, the private investor is motivated by any emotion of compassion for the downtrodden or backward region. He is more interested in the

efficiency of investment and for specific sector of economy, where maximum return to his capital is ensured. India cannot be an exception to this general pattern.

AFTER the second world war, to mitigate the inherent adverse effect of the market economy, the developed world concentrated on welfare measures and various social security measures. Each developed country wanted to be converted to a welfare society. But the expenditure of those security measures have been so great, that those measures are under severe attack in these countries and in some countries it has been curtailed. If that is the case with rich and affluent countries, how can a poor country like India afford to take countervailing measures like social security programmes, very effectively? That scope is also not open to us. Already the central and many state governments are in severe debt crisis, though our subsidy to the agriculture sector in shape of procurement price and fertiliser rebate is too meagre in comparison to the heavy subsidy given to agricultural sector in all developed countries including Japan, USA and European community union countries. Many economists are advocating to withdraw it in the name of fiscal discipline.

I have firmly believed even in the planned era, that agriculture and agro-based industries provide the solution to the Indian syndrome. The more I study the problem of inequality between different states and regions and also in the society, I come to the conclusion that by missing this basic step, we have erred and erred to a disastrous extent. We may need many more things but a slightest neglect to this sector, as has been done upto now, can never be excused.

NONE of the developed countries ever neglected this sector. Even now they are heavily subsidising agriculture and its allied sectors like dairy to guarantee food security and to provide to the burgeoning consumer community the basic food materials at a fair price.

INDIA was regarded as a fairly well-to-do country during the precolonial era because of its strong agriculture and cottage industry. It was deliberately decimated during the colonial era and with modern industrial technology, the balance shifted to the colonial powers.

IN spite of planning adopted from 1951, the different states in federal India gave priority to different sectors according to their own objective. From the point of view of statistical convenience. I have equated regions with administrative states to prove my contention, though broadly it applies to different regions based on agro-climatic conditions and resource endowments.

I have divided the major states of India into three categories to prove my contention that the states(A) that gave priority to agriculture, marched ahead in practically every aspect, whereas traditionally industrial advanced states(B) marched slowly and others (C) fell far behind. For convenience of space. I have selected some of the states in each category.

PUNJAB and Haryana states that gave a thrust to agriculture from the beginning and were least beneficiaries of central public investment, have been included in category (A). Maharastra, West Bengal and Tamilnadu have been classified as (B) category. I have deliberately included Gujrat, Karnatak in it, because the former was a part of Maharastra and the latter has a strong industrial base.

ORISSA, Bihar and Assam belong to the third category which have remained poor despite fairly heavy central public sector investment in industry and have very poor agriculture base. Successive govt. of these latter states talked of industry for their growth with a very poor infrastructure and neglected agriculture and agricultural industries. As a result they were neither here nor there. They continue the same policy now, whatever might be their public pronouncements.

ONE of the criteria for judging their economic performance is the per capita net domestic product and how it has varied during successive periods. The following table will show how these states of three categories have moved in the economic ladder.

Table-1

Per capita Net Domestic product (Rs.)

Sl. No.	States	1980-81	1990-91	1993-94 (current prices)	At constant price (1980-81) for 1991-92
"A"					
1.	Punjab	2674	9977	12,319	3869 (1)
2.	Haryana	2370	7503	10,359	3455 (2)
"B"					
3.	Maharastra	2435	7315	10,964	3381 (3)
4.	Tamilnadu	1498	5076	7,352	2309 (5)
5.	West Bengal	1612	4679	6,055	2015 (7)
6.	Gujurat	1940	5877	7,700	2321 (4)
7.	Karnatak	1527	4608	7,029	2255 (6)
"C"					
8.	Orissa	1314	3907	4,726	1530 (15)
9.	Bihar	917	2649	3,850	1122 (16)
10.	Assam	1317	4014	5,916	1887 (8)

Source : Economic survey, Govt. of India 1995-96

THE above figures in bracket indicate their place amongst sixteen major states in India in the income level. From the above table-1, one will find that Punjab and Haryana have retained their number 1 and No. 2 position practically throughout this period. If we take the constant price for 1991-92 with the base year 1980-81, then the same position emerges. In these states public investment from the central govt. was least and throughout the planned era, agriculture with the active support of the state government, provided the main thrust for economic prosperity. The green revolution gave

a further fillip because they have the basic infrastructure of irrigation and consolidation of holdings for availing of the full advantage of new technology. During the last two decades the surplus from agricultural sector has created a base for industrial growth, both small scale and medium scale.

NOT only they have provided abnormal surplus in foodgrains to stall the food deficit of the country, but also a diversified agricultural sector for food processing and agro-based industry. The traditional cotton growing states of Maharashtra and Gujrat have now fallen behind Punjab in total production of cotton.

THE second category states were industrially far advanced by the time the planned economy was introduced. Lately they all have given some importance to agriculture. Still then they continue to be in the middle ladder of economic performance. On the basis of per capita net domestic product. Maharashtra, Gujrat, Tamilnadu, Karnatak and West Bengal are continuing to occupy no. 3,4,5,6 and 7 place in the list.

BUT Orissa and Bihar all along since independence continue to be poorest in the country occupying the position of 15 and 16 amongst all the 16 major states of the country. Assam is somewhat advanced because of tea garden's economy and propotionately higher central investment than that of Orissa and Bihar. The other specific reason is that it is strategically situated from security point of view and has a weightage in central allocation of funds.

SOME argue that due to green revolution, the agricultural growth has been phenomenal in Punjab, Haryana but it has brought sharp disparity of income in the rural sector. This argument has lost its relevance after land reform measures, and particularly after New Economic Policy based on market economy. In the present context,

such arguments do not hold any ground because from the statistics, it is found that the poverty is least in Punjab and Haryana and the rural and urban divide in those states are minimal (Table-2). The objective of achieving an egalitarian society, has been given a go-bye in the present day. No body excepting a few talk of socialism or even of a welfare society.

Table 2

Percentage of population below poverty line 1987-88

Sl. No.	States	Rural	Urban	Combined.
"A"				
1.	Punjab	7.2	7.2	7.2
2.	Haryana	11.7	11.7	11.6
"B"				
3.	Maharashtra	36.7	17.0	29.2
4.	Tamilnadu	39.5	20.5	32.8
5.	West Bengal	30.3	20.7	27.6
6.	Gujurat	21.2	12.9	18.4
7.	Karnatak	35.9	24.2	32.1
"C"				
8.	Orissa	48.3	24.1	44.7
9.	Bihar	42.7	30.0	40.8
10.	Assam	24.5	9.4	22.8

(Source:- Basic statistics relating to Indian Economy : Sept. 1994
Centre for Monitoring India Economy.)

IF percentage of people below poverty line is a criteria, then I think the performance of "A" category states are ideally the best and of "C" category states are the worst. Those who heavily depended on industry, traditionally in colonial era and now also

like "B" category states, are no good performers because about 30% or round about that percentage (barring Gujarat) are steeped in poverty. Even in urban sector, the poverty is rampant, what to speak of rural sector where impact of industrialisation was not visible.

WE draw the attention of all to the performance of category "A" states because there is virtually no difference in dimension of poverty between rural sector and urban sector. The effect of green revolution has equally percolated to the urban areas also. In Punjab it is only 7% and in Haryana it is hardly 11%. In these States, the rural prosperity has percolated into urban areas and lifted them up economically. In industrial developed states, the reverse process does not operate, that is urban prosperity does not percolate to the rural areas.

MERE economic growth or expansion of Gross National Product (GNP) does not indicate enrichment of the people. This has been well stated by the reputed development Economist Richard Jolly who is the Principal author and co-ordinator of the Human Development Report (HDR) published every year by UNDP, "All the HDRs have maintained that economic growth by itself is not enough. Mere expansion of GNP per capital is not enough. The focus has to be on people and what it takes to enrich peoples' lives". (Interview to times of India).

THE importance that I give to per capita income, is less than that I give to the quality of life that a citizen enjoys in those group of states. The several rounds of National sample survey conducted in the country for consumer expenditure clearly proves that Punjab and Haryana again lead in most of the areas like food, health, education, clothing, milk product and footwear that give a healthy style of living contributing to quality of life. The industrial developed states fall far behind. The question of "C" category states need not be considered in that context.

FROM the 47th round of National sample survey conducted in 1994 (July to sept.) it is found that in all respect the quality of life

both in rural and urban areas of category "A" states are much better. The following Table-3 will indicate the trend.

Table-3

Average per capita monthly expenditure (Rs.) for rural areas

Sl. No.	States	All commodities (Rs.)	Food (Rs.)	Clothing (Rs.)	Foot wear (Rs.)
	"A"				
1.	Punjab	359.90	213	17.88	6.22
2.	Haryana	324.22	190	25.64	5.49
	"B"				
3.	Maharashtra	301.14	152.08	16.27	1.24
4.	Tamilnadu	233.13	148.26	14.84	0.58
5.	West Bengal	236.21	164.41	12.53	0.96
6.	Gujurat	232.12	161.45	8.39	1.02
7.	Karnatak	216.33	143.37	9.65	0.87
	"C"				
8.	Orissa	214.42	149.70	11.07	0.74
9.	Bihar	186.85	143.99	5.08	0.36
10.	Assam	213.50	153.67	8.03	1.51

Source :- Survekshana -47th round (July to Sept. 1994)

THE same survey also shows that the average quality of life in urban areas of Punjab and Haryana is no less good in comparison to urban areas of Maharashtra, though it is far superior to other states in the same category of "B". So industrialisation of more than half a century has not made the people of even urban areas, where the impact of public and private investment was very high, more prosperous or decent.

IN this context it will be relevant to consider the agricultural growth in each of the states in all the three categories. The "B" category states have tried to give some impetus to agriculture, though the thrust area remains to be industry. They have also tried to diversify their agricultural sector during recent days. Rains and Climate still determine their total production, but Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttarpradesh have to a great extent by

concentrating on irrigation, provided an insurance against drought and such conditions. So they do not suffer under any adverse condition whether climatic or man-made like insecurity and terrorism. There has been continuous growth of agriculture year after year, even though climate has failed or the state machinery has collapsed. In otherwards agriculture sector has provided a shock absorber in the states' economy against all hazards, natural or man-made. The following table-4 will show how Punjab and Haryana despite its very limited area, even in comparison to Orissa, have progressed abnormally in foodgrains production, and have contributed greatly to the food security of the country.

Table-4
Food-grain Production, (Thousand tonns)

Sl. No.	States	1975-76	1980-81	1985-86	1990-91	1994-95 (provisional)
	"A"					
1.	Punjab	8827	11902	17189	19140	21726
2.	Haryana	5040	6044	8140	9561	10993
	"B"					
3.	Maharashtra	9103	9757	8779	12184	11527
4.	Tamilnadu	7183	5486	7173	7438	9541
5.	West Bengal	8592	8281	9127	11269	13526
6.	Gujurat	4519	4475	2737	4843	5246
7.	Karnatak	7083	5879	5861	6399	8233
	"C"					
8.	Orissa	5565	5977	6833	5856	6678
9.	Bihar	9177	9911	10955	12258	12852
10.	Assam	2411	2705	3030	3441	3489

THE table-4 clearly shows how within two decades from 1975-76, Punjab and Haryana have more than doubled its food production and even in the worst year of drought of 1980-81, it maintained its steady growth. All other states whether of "B" group or "C" group, have made marginal growth during this period. The only exception amongst all states in group "B" is West Bengal, which has made significant growth in the agricultural field. That is why despite its set-back in industrial field, it has maintained its place in group "B" very close to Tamilnadu.

THIS economy has also been reflected in the budget of the state govts in the matter of tax revenue and expenditure in social services. There is no agriculture income tax in the country. In trade and industrial growth, Maharashtra is far ahead of any other states, leave aside Punjab and Haryana, But per capita tax revenue in Punjab is highest in India and Haryana is next to it. The prosperity that agriculture has brought to the country-side has not only benefited each individual, but also the entire state along with its exchequer. As a result, the states have been able to spend much more in social sectors including education and health than other developed industrial states. The very fact that each village of those states have been provided with all weather road, with electricity and optimum irrigation facilities, clearly shows that the state has been richer and each village has got the basic minimum facilities. The benefit is both vertical and horizontal. The following table No. 5 will speak for itself.

Table-5
Per capita Revenue and Expenditure(Rs.)

Sl. States No.	Per capita own revenue	Per capita Tax revenue	Per capita exp.Medical	Per capita exp.Education	Per capita Milk Product. (Kg.)
"A"					
1. Punjab	1315.8	1100.6	116.6	381.3	302.0
2. Haryana	2080.1	1020.9	85.8	296.3	221.0
"B"					
3. Maharashtra	1260.5	964.5	82.8	313.8	53.2
4. Tamilnadu	884.5	788.9	106.4	337.5	67.7
5. West Bengal	527.6	480.5	76.4	297.3	42.7
6. Gujrat	1233.6	1013.5	87.0	345.0	87.1
7. Karnatak	1242.6	1019.6	111.4	348.3	65.0
"C"					
8. Orissa	452.9	319.1	74.3	241.8	17.5
9. Bihar	314.3	190.6	61.2	184.2	34.2
10. Assam	514.8	362.5	82.8	320.2	33.5
India	764.1	584.7	85.6	286.2	70.0

Source :- Reserve Bank Bulletin, October, 1994 and Basic statistics relating to Indian Economy September, 1994 of CMIE.

IT need not be mentioned that villages with all weather roads in Punjab and Haryana was 94% and 99% respectively (1987-88) with electricity to all villages in both the states (March 1995) The net area irrigated was 93.5% of the net area sown in 1991-92 in Punjab and it was 76.0% in Haryana. In case of Orissa the percentage is 15% (all weather road), 71% (electricity) and irrigation (30.5% from all sources). All "B" group states also fall far behind in providing these amenities to their people. The same situation is about per hectare fertiliser assumption. It is 174.7 Kg. in Punjab, 126.4 Kg. in Haryana and 22.5 Kg. in Orissa in the year 1994-95.

WHEN more than two-third of the population in the country depend upon agriculture after four decades of planning and about one third of the net domestic product is derived from this sector, it is natural that agriculture is the key to prosperity of the largest section of the people living in all regions of the country. They provide not only the food for all, but also raw material to most of the industries which still employ highest number of people. This largest section of people also provide the biggest market to the developing economy. Unless their capacity is built up and improved, the secondary sector cannot expand or grow. So the agricultural sector and the agro-based and agri-supportive industrial sector provide the best solution to the problem of regional imbalance and socio-economic inequality. Orissa has neglected it long and has already paid a heavy price for it. It cannot afford to neglect further. How we wish the present year of acute drought and near famine condition will open a new economic era for Orissa and for such other poor states. Is it a far cry ?

ACCORDING to the latest census of (1991) 274 lakhs of people out of total population of 316 lakhs in Orissa, live in the villages. Those who live in villages are mostly dependent on agriculture. The self-employed artisan section are very small and they also directly or indirectly live on agriculture.

SINCE independence there has been a talk to shift gradually people from agriculture to industrial sector because too many people are depending on it. So emphasis has been laid on non agriculture sector, particularly industrial sector to relieve the burden on it. For that purpose, heavy investment has been made. Still then within these fifty years after independence the shift has been marginal, that is, less than five percent. So whatever promises or plans we may make, there is no possibility of any major shift from the agricultural sector within a few decades, even if we achieve some success in attracting industries during this era of liberalised economy.

The present rural scenerio of Orissa is also dismal. According to the latest survey of Govt. of Orissa, about 41 lakh households out of 51 lakh households in rural Orissa are living below poverty line. That is about eighty percent of rural households are poor and are devoid of two square meals throughout the year. Without pulling them up, it is futile to talk of eradication of poverty. All anti-poverty programmes have not touched the fringe of the problem. They are ridden with rampant corruption. Without providing them with work, one cannot imagine to banish hunger and poverty from the land. Can any other sector than agriculture provide the solution to this vexed problem? It is better to provide two square meals to each of them than to allow them to remain in hunger and starvation. So Punjab and Haryana Pattern of growth is the only model before us. Rural prosperity will flow to urban areas, not the vice versa.

The present drought year (1996) is not only a challenge, but also an exposure of the weakness of our economy. We have not provided upto now, any built-in capacity in the state's economy to withstand the failure of rains of a single year, despite successive five years of good climate and good crop. Even we have kept the poor agriculture sector so fragile that one year of drought invites hunger, starvation deaths and migration of labour to neighbouring states in large numbers in a large part of Orissa (undivided Kalahandi,

Bolangir, Koraput, Phulbani and neighbouring similar agro-climatic ghat region). The State Govt. has admitted that hardly 12 lakh hectares of land out of 21 lakh hectares of irrigated land (from all sources, flow, lift, minor etc) have been benefited by irrigation during current Kharif season (1996). This shows that when State Govt. claims that the net irrigated area of the State is more than 30 percent of the net sown area, in actuality, it is hardly 15 percent. How can one dream of banishing poverty and unemployment from the land, when not even one sixth of the sown area is under assured irrigation, inspite of the efforts of the colonial power and also of the efforts of independent Orissa.

Those who promised us to convert Orissa into Bombay city by having marine drives and fire-proof houses with water pipes thirty years ago, failed to understand the implications of their objectives. Those who promised us thousand industries in thousand days and not one, but thirteen Steel plants, failed to appreciate the real problem of Orissa. Costly dreams are only day dreams. The people of Orissa have a small dream, *"every piece of land to be greened and every drop of water to be utilised"*.

Let us achieve it first to provide a sense of honour and dignity to the people of the State.

(On the basis of a paper presented in a National Seminar on regional imbalance organised at Bhubaneswar.)

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